

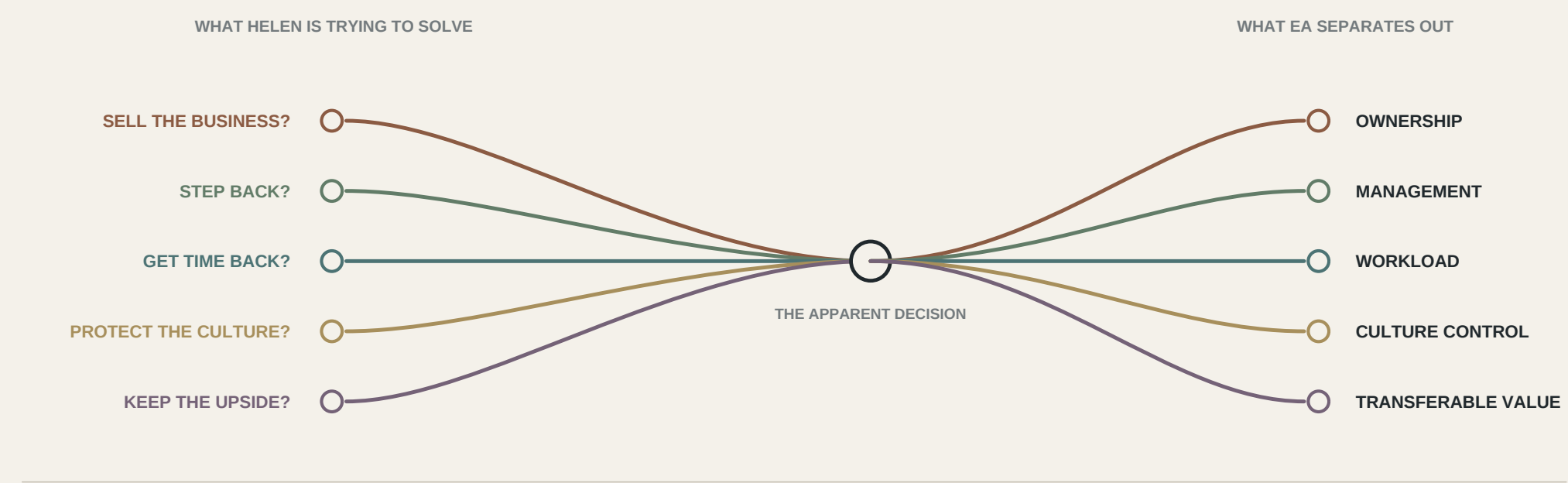
THE QUESTION CHANGED

HELEN'S SITUATION

Helen is 54 and owns 70% of the specialist environmental consultancy she founded 18 years ago. It has 22 staff, £2.4m revenue and about £420k operating profit. She still generates roughly 35% of new business. A larger consultancy has offered £1.6m for her shares - £1.1m on completion and £500k if she stays for two more years. Helen wants less responsibility and more time, does not need to sell financially, and worries about what a sale could do to the culture. She has built a business valuable enough to give her freedom, yet the extent to which its value still depends on her is preventing her from feeling free.

BEFORE

“Should I accept the £1.6m offer?”



AFTER

“Can the value currently dependent on Helen be transferred into the business?”

A better question opens different choices.

DECISION ARCHITECTURE IN THIS CASE

See the whole situation. Find the question carrying the most leverage. Open better choices. Create evidence before an irreversible move.

WHAT CHANGED?

Selling ownership was not the same as leaving management or getting time back. The buyer's two-year earn-out could solve liquidity while delaying the freedom Helen actually wanted.

THE LEVER

35% of new business depended on Helen. That dependency appeared to constrain both her freedom and the transferability of the company. The useful next question therefore became testable rather than binary.

CLAIMS BOUNDARY

This is a fictional demonstration of EA Decision Architecture, not a valuation, tax opinion, legal recommendation or claim about a real transaction.

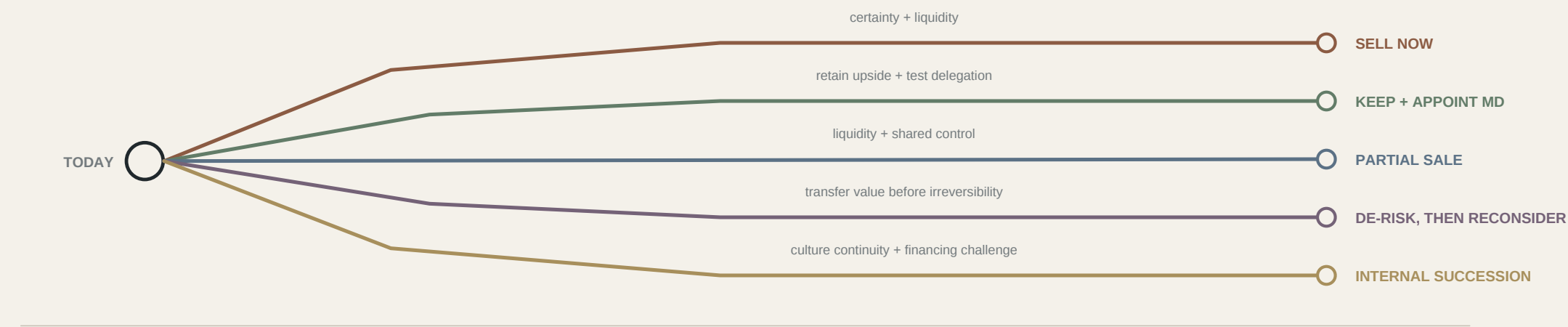
The first projection changes what deserves attention.

A BETTER QUESTION OPENS DIFFERENT MOVES

Once the sale stops being the only organising principle, several materially different routes appear - and some of them can be tested before Helen makes an irreversible ownership decision.

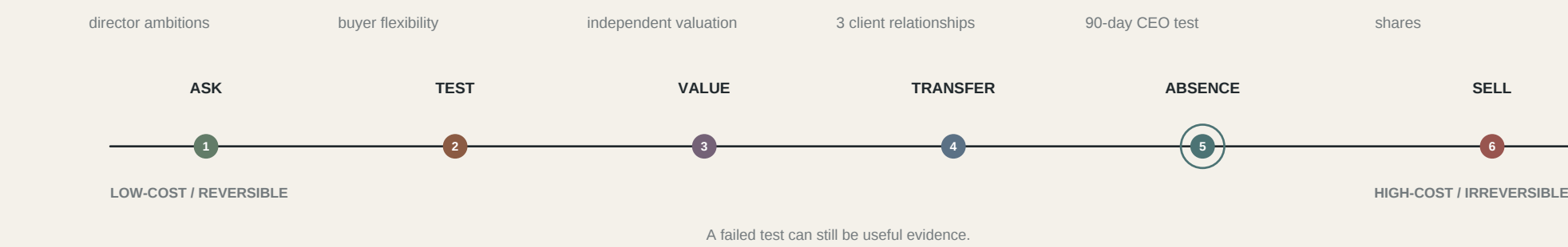
1 PATHWAYS

The original binary becomes a landscape of choices.

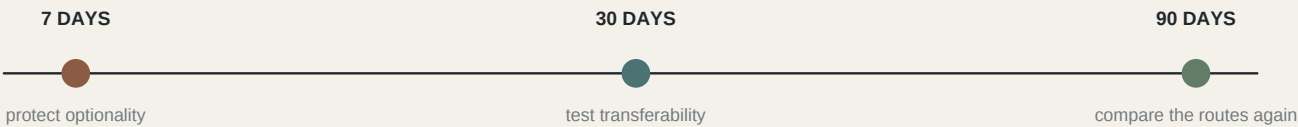


2 BUY INFORMATION BEFORE IRREVERSIBILITY

What can Helen learn cheaply before she commits expensively?



3 RETURN TO THE DECISION WITH EVIDENCE



WHAT BECOMES POSSIBLE?

Decision Architecture does not force Helen to choose a preferred route. It reveals options that the original sell / do-not-sell framing concealed. Each route changes freedom, liquidity, culture, control and future value differently.

WHO ELSE CARRIES THE CONSEQUENCES?

Helen is not the only person affected. Twenty-two employees, two senior directors, clients, the buyer and the culture of the firm experience different consequences. A route that optimises one variable may create costs elsewhere. Those realities belong in the map.

WHY THE DE-RISK ROUTE MATTERS

De-risking does not assume that selling is wrong. It asks whether founder-dependent value can be transferred before the ownership decision becomes final. If it can, Helen may gain freedom and optionality. If it cannot, that is equally useful evidence.

THE PRINCIPLE

Use smaller reversible moves to learn before making the largest irreversible one. The purpose of the first 90 days is not to avoid the decision, but to return to it with a better evidence base.

No pathway shown here is a transaction recommendation.

HOW DECISION ARCHITECTURE WORKS

A repeatable EA sequence for seeing the whole, finding leverage and testing before commitment - while leaving the final judgement with the person who must live with the consequences.

1 MAKE THE WHOLE VISIBLE



What is actually here?

The Situation Atlas takes the problem out of the person's head and makes the interacting realities visible together.

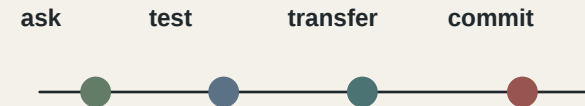
2 CUT THROUGH TO THE LEVERAGE POINT



Go deeper before deciding.

EA looks for the question that, if clarified, would change how the rest of the situation is understood.

3 CREATE EVIDENCE BEFORE COMMITMENT



What can fail cheaply?

The aim is not endless analysis. It is to discover what can be learned before the expensive or irreversible move is made.

ONE SITUATION / SEVERAL PROJECTIONS: WHOLE -> LEVERAGE -> PATHWAYS -> EVIDENCE -> NEXT MOVES

A SPACE EA DOES NOT FILL

evidence + analysis
lived experience + intuition
meaning + responsibility
human judgement

DECISION ARCHITECTURE IN ONE LINE

See the real problem. Open better choices. Test before irreversible action.
EA Decision Architecture is designed for consequential situations where several legitimate realities interact and the obvious question may not be the most useful one.

DESIGNED TO BEGIN IN WRITING

You describe the situation in your own time and send whatever relevant material already exists. From there, you receive a considered visual analysis, concise synthesis, narrated walkthrough and written follow-up.

WHY NOT JUST ASK AI?

AI can greatly extend analysis: retrieving information, comparing possibilities, exposing patterns and challenging assumptions. EA uses those capabilities without outsourcing the human act of discernment. The person still brings lived context, intuition, conscience, relationships, meaning and responsibility for what happens next.

A LOW-RISK FIRST STEP

If the example feels relevant, the next step is a short EA Situation Signal: five written questions about the situation. I reply with a brief Fit Note saying whether I believe a full **EA Decision Architecture** engagement is likely to add enough value to justify doing one.

There is no charge for the Situation Signal or Fit Note.

Does this remind you of a situation you are carrying - or someone you advise?
Ask for the EA Situation Signal. The process begins in writing.