One Decision, Two Explanations

A working sheet for business owners and leaders

Choose one decision. Write briefly. You can use this alone or in a conversation. Leave out confidential customer, employee and financial details.

Decision owner: _____ Date: _____

1 What needs to be different?

What decision is in front of you, and what would a useful change make possible?

2 What have you actually observed?

Note a specific event or pattern, its source and period. What remains unknown?

3 What else could explain it?

Compare two plausible explanations. Both may contribute.

	Explanation A	Explanation B
What might be happening?		
What supports this view?		
What would change your mind?		

4 What is the smallest useful next step?

Choose a limited observation, conversation or reversible test. Waiting or seeking specialist advice may be appropriate.

Question to resolve: _____

Action / owner: _____ Time / resource limit: _____

Who must agree? _____ What must this step protect? _____

5 When will you reconsider?

Review date: _____ Review sooner if: _____

At review, what does the evidence support: continue, adjust, stop or learn more?

Worked example

Enquiries waiting for an answer

Hypothetical example only. These details are invented to demonstrate the worksheet. They are not a client case or a promise of results.

The decision

Should we buy a new enquiry-management system? The aim is a useful first response without adding an unreasonable workload for the team.

What we observed

In a sample of 20 enquiries from the previous month, six waited more than two working days for a reply. The shared inbox and website enquiry log supplied the records. The sample may not represent all enquiries.

What remains unknown

Were those enquiries waiting for an owner, information, capacity or something else?

Explanation A

Responsibility for replying is unclear.

Evidence: Four delayed enquiries had no named owner in the log.

Reconsider if: Assignment records show owners received the enquiries promptly.

Explanation B

The person replying lacks information.

Evidence: Two delayed enquiries had requests for technical details.

Reconsider if: Complete information was already available when they arrived.

A limited next step

The owner arranges a 30-minute review of those six enquiries with the people involved. Ask when responsibility became clear, what information was missing and what other work affected the response. Use anonymised examples and existing records.

Protect current work

Keep responding to current enquiries. Address an urgent customer issue through the existing service process. Make the review a way to understand the work, rather than find someone to blame.

The review decision

At the end, record what the evidence supports, what is uncertain and whether a small process test is warranted. Both explanations might contribute, or neither may explain the pattern. Buying software remains an option.

A thinking aid, with no score or required submission. You retain responsibility for your decisions; seek specialist advice where needed.