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workbook**

Lead Through Growth Making Decisions that Shape Scale

Funding. Talent. Manufacturing. The decisions that quietly compound risk.

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Joanna Ghayad, PharmD, PCC

Joanna has 15 years of leadership and strategic partnership experience in healthcare, biotech, and pharma, having worked at top institutions like the University of Pennsylvania and Fortune 100 companies like Bristol Myers Squibb.

Joanna uniquely brings a broad understanding and expertise in AI-informed research, AI-run business operations, academia & industry research & development, including patient, provider & payor perspectives.

Joanna is a mentor in the HiveBio accelerator that supports underrepresented founder scientists on the startup journey through business value creation, product positioning, and enables peak team performance through disciplined decision making for scale.

Move faster →

Hire the
CRO

Don't miss
the window →

Raise
now

Everyone else
is doing this...



**38% of startups fail
because they run
out of cash**

Case study: Strategic pivot decision

- A founder-led biotech for platform technology
 - Initial concept for oncology applications
 - Potential for neurological applications
 - Interested parties and partners
- Decision on the table:
 - Continue to solely focus on oncology applications
 - Enter partnership to begin work on neurological applications

**What growth decision is
currently keeping you up
at night?**



Decision Examples

- Senior hire
- CRO / manufacturing partner
- Funding timing or structure
- Strategic direction for the science
- Business partnerships
- Geography for manufacturing or clinical trials



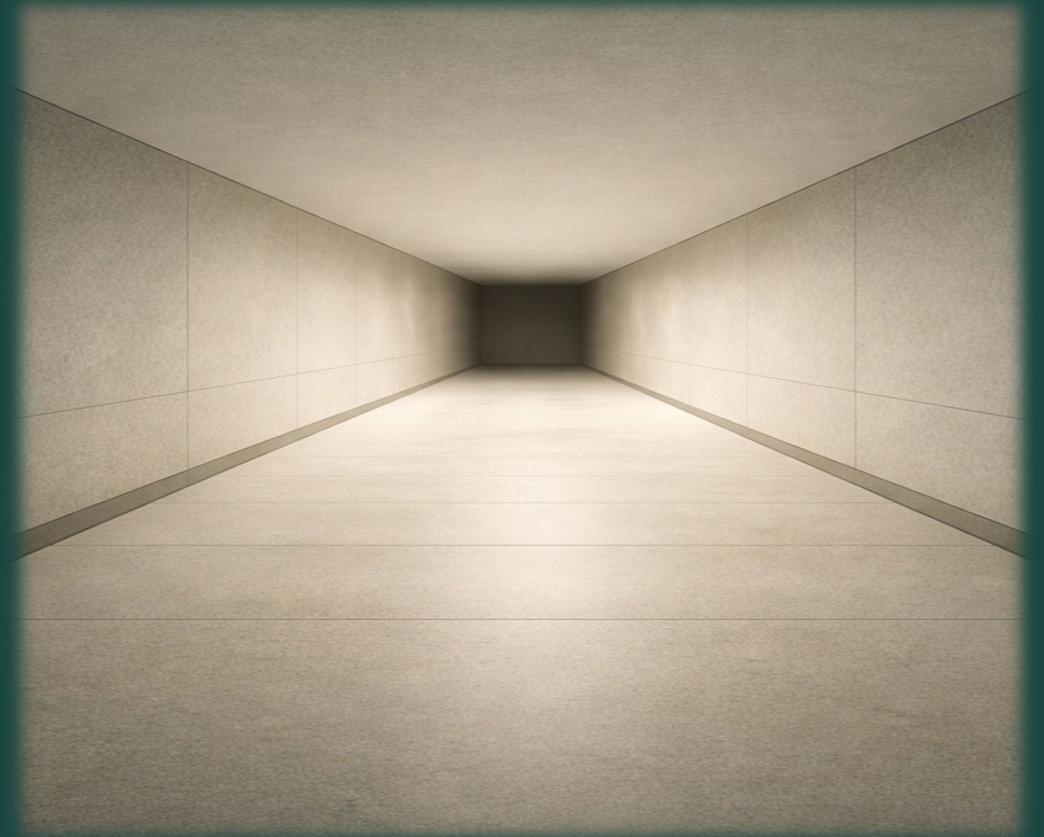
Why these decisions feel heavy

- Early stage decisions feel personal
- Small teams = fewer buffers
- Some decisions aren't reversible



The Founder Decision Trap

- “We can always change later”
- “They’ve done this before”
- “Speed matters more than perfection”



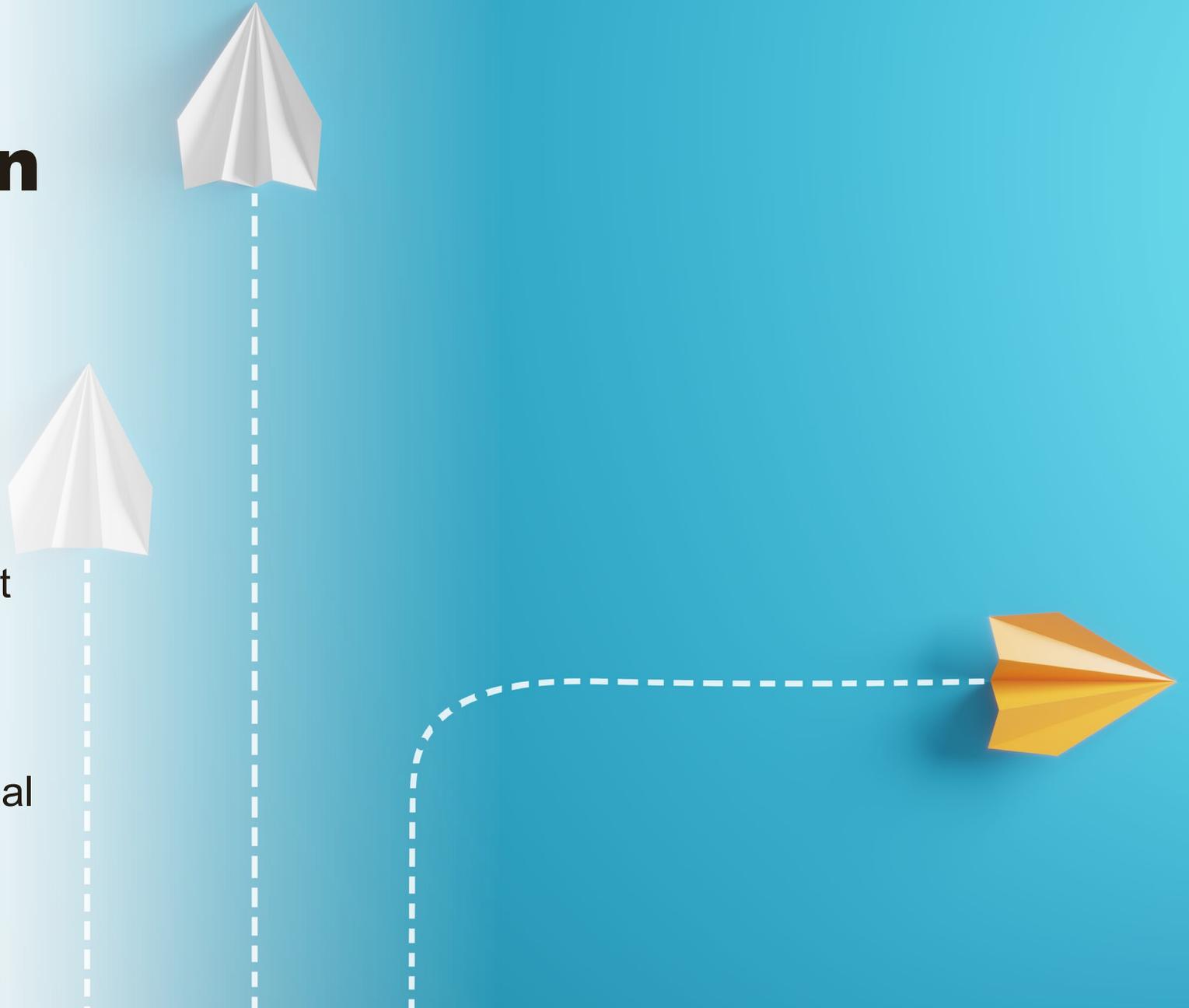


One-way vs. Two-way Decisions

- One-way: hard to undo
 - Senior hires, CROs, manufacturing, funding structure
- Two-way: reversible
 - Experiments you can walk back

Case study: Strategic pivot decision

- Early stage decisions feel personal
 - Initial concept for oncology applications
- Small team
 - How would they support the work?
- Reversible vs. irreversible decision
 - Licensing deal vs internal work





The Pattern Where Founders Get Stuck

What is the ~~real~~ problem?

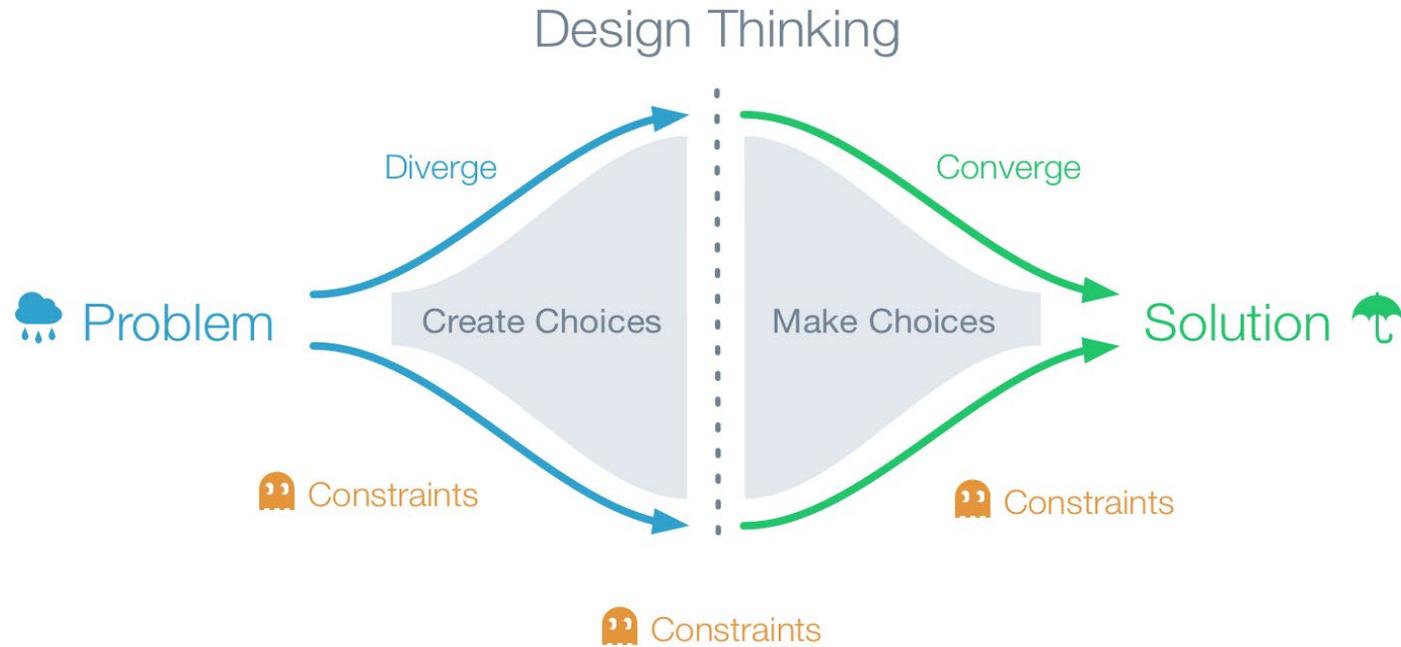




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- Decision on the table:
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- Actual Problem
 - Needed Cash to sustain oncology work

Design Thinking for Decisions



Decision Lab



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Decision Lab: Stress-Test Before You Commit

- Instructions (20 minutes)
 - Break into groups of 3
 - Choose one decision in your group
 - Be specific. Not hypothetical

Decision Lab: Answer these questions

- What problem are you solving with this decision?
- What other options exist to solve this problem?

- Choose a decision to solve your problem. Then, assume your decision failed 6-12 months from now. What went wrong?



People

- Capability gaps
- Role confusion

Partners

- Incentives
- Communication under stress
- Who owns decisions when things go sideways

Capital & Timing

- Burn assumptions
- Fundraising dependencies
- “We thought we’d raise by then”

Execution Reality

- Hidden dependencies
- Regulatory / technical lag
- Founder bandwidth

Group Debrief

- What decision did you work on?
- What risk surprised you?
- What assumption surprised you?
- What other options surfaced?
- What patterns did you notice?
- What became clearer?

Pre-Mortem Decision Testing

**Surfacing risk early is how
founders move fast without
getting blindsided**

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Move Fast

Just Do It →

They're the Experts

Pressure-Test

Own the Decision

Judgment →





Speed isn't king.
Judgement is.



Lock in the Decision

- Write down:
 - One assumption you are making you need to validate
 - One person and conversation you need to have
 - One risk you can't ignore and needs a mitigation plan

Next Steps

- Examine decisions and their reversibility
- Get clear about what problem you're solving for with a decision
- Avoid outsourcing your judgement
- Implement Design Thinking and Pre-mortem Decision Testing as tools to help your decision making

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feedback**



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