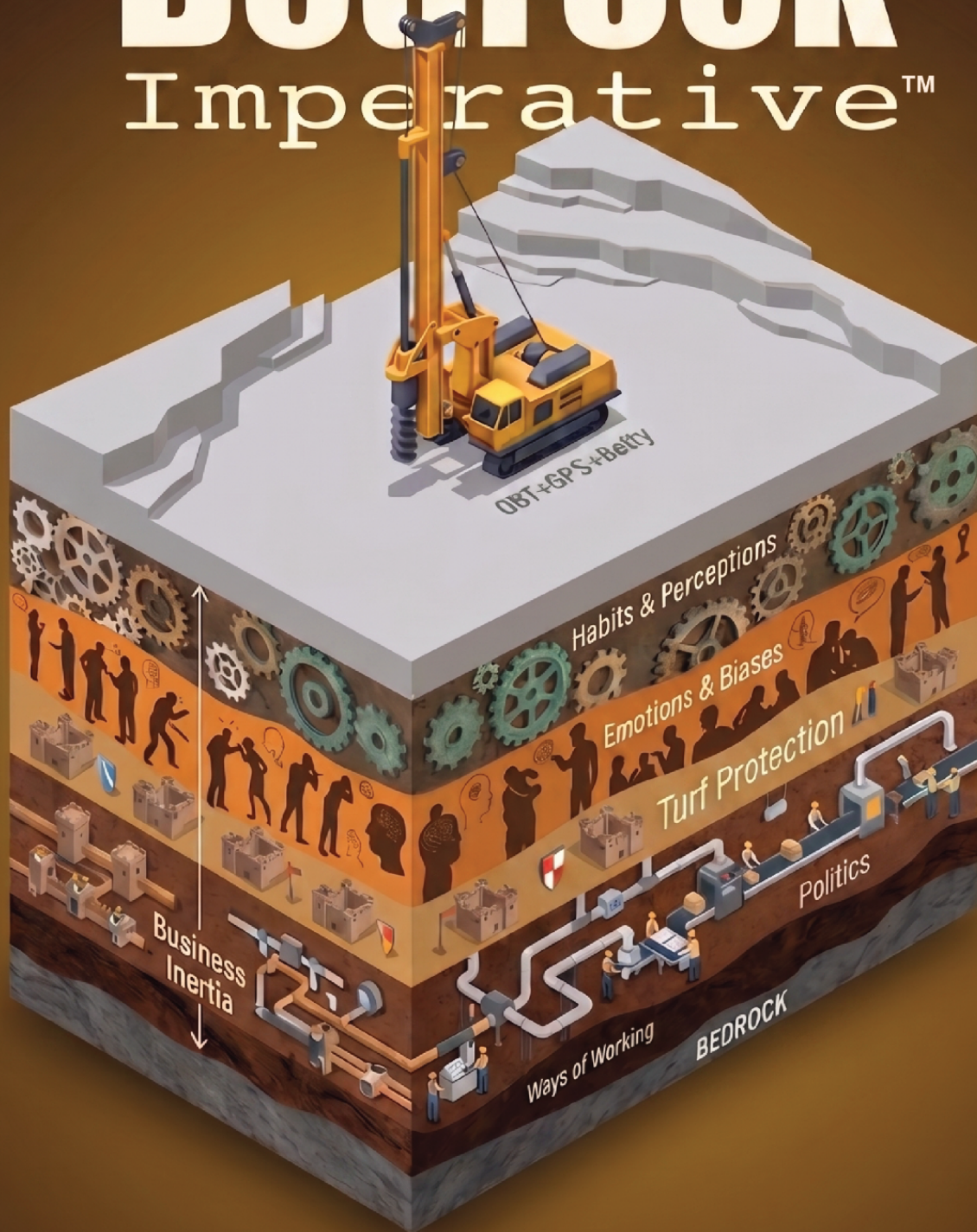


The
Bedrock
Imperative™



Bore through years of organizational sediment to
Human-Proof™ the way leaders decide

Steven Wilt and Tony Begum

Praise for the Bedrock Imperative

"I have engaged BoldArc as the CEO for four companies, with revenues ranging from approximately \$100 million to \$2 billion and employee counts from 300 to 10,000.

In every case, the impact was substantial. The outcomes-based approach dramatically improved the quality of our strategic planning, forced clearer rationalization of initiatives, strengthened leadership and management alignment, sharpened our thinking around new product offerings, and contributed meaningfully to improved EBITDA performance.

What makes this approach so powerful is that it moves leadership teams beyond goals, KPIs, and activity lists, and helps them define the outcomes that truly matter. *The Bedrock Imperative* captures that discipline clearly and practically.

For any executive team serious about improving decision quality, strategic clarity, and enterprise performance, this book is well worth reading."

Dave Falter - Managing Partner at Acorn Growth Partners

"It's now almost platitudinous to observe that we're living through one of the most consequential periods in human decision-making—and yet, it remains a cogent observation. Artificial intelligence is advancing at a pace that seems to outstrip our capacity to absorb the changes. What once required years of effort now unfolds in months, even days; what once demanded coordinated teams can now emerge from a single, well-formed prompt. The initial reaction to this shift has been predictable—a blend of awe, unease, and a growing sense that human judgment may be receding in relevance as AI rapidly gains autonomy.

Yet, to the astute observer, something more subtle—and perhaps more important—is beginning to come into focus. As AI grows more powerful, the value of distinctly human capabilities is not diminishing but increasing. Judgment, interpretation, context, and ethical reasoning provide the ability to see not just what is, but what ought to be. Rather than being replaced or overshadowed, these are becoming the defining inputs into a new kind of intelligence—one that doesn't reside in humans or machines alone, but in their interaction.

AI is undeniably gaining a form of agency—an ability to act on its own and generate results—but it does so without experience. It doesn't feel, sense, reflect, or derive meaning from the world it helps to shape—not in the way humans do. And it's precisely this absence that renders human judgment not obsolete, but indispensable.

What's emerging isn't artificial intelligence in isolation, but a form of augmented intelligence, a dynamic system in which human and machine capabilities combine to create something greater than either could achieve independently.

And it is precisely here that The Bedrock Imperative makes its most important contribution.

Because while AI can process information at unprecedented speed and scale, it can't determine what ultimately matters. It can't define purpose or meaning, or resolve the competing priorities that shape real-world decisions—not as humans can, at any rate. The ancients understood—and modern science has since confirmed—that reason completely detached from emotion generally yields poorer, not better, decisions. Without that grounding, even the most sophisticated AI systems risk creating confusion rather than resolving it.

This is the problem Steven Wilt and Tony Begum confront directly.

Their concept of *Outcomes-Based Thinking* reframes the entire decision-making process. It shifts the starting point away from activity, metrics, and analysis, and

toward a far more fundamental articulation of the outcomes an organization exists to achieve.

The shift is structural, not subtle.

By anchoring decisions in outcomes rather than actions, the framework allows strategy to emerge organically, guided by purpose rather than inherited habit. It creates the conditions for what I have elsewhere described as the Multiplier Effect—the amplification of human intelligence through alignment, clarity, and disciplined thinking, now further accelerated by AI.

In this sense, Outcomes-Based Thinking does something profoundly important: it doesn't attempt to orchestrate behavior directly. It allows the end state to shape the pathway, enabling organizations to adapt fluidly in environments where rigid plans quickly become obsolete.

Equally important is the integration of AI through the system the authors call "Betty." This is not AI as a replacement for human leadership, but AI as a partner in it—a mechanism for surfacing hidden assumptions, revealing trade-offs, and challenging the cognitive biases that quietly distort even the most well-intentioned decisions.

This points to a deeper truth about the future of leadership.

The challenge is no longer simply to lead or to follow. It is to know when to do each, and how to move fluidly between them. To lead where human judgment, ethics, and meaning are required—and to follow where machine intelligence can process, model, and optimize beyond human capacity.

This is not a static relationship. It's a dance. And like any dance, its effectiveness depends on timing, awareness, and alignment. The *Bedrock Imperative* provides a practical, intellectually serious guide to navigating that relationship. It offers leaders not just a framework, but a discipline—one that strengthens the cognitive foundations upon which all meaningful decisions are built.

In a world where the speed of change is accelerating and the margin for error is shrinking, that foundation is no longer optional.

It's bedrock."

Dr. David Ragland, DBA, MS, PMP - Partner, FuturePoint Digital and Published Author

Preface



Every few decades, the ground under business leadership shifts. At first, the change is easy to miss: planning cycles tighten, new technologies appear, and familiar strategies begin producing uneven results. Organizations work harder, add more dashboards, and hold more meetings, yet confidence in their biggest decisions does not improve. The business looks informed, but feels unsteady.

This book comes out of that tension. After more than four decades working across industries, one pattern keeps repeating: companies have more data and analytic power than ever, but many still struggle to make timely, high-quality decisions they trust. The barrier is rarely information itself. It is the accumulated layer of habit, assumption, and institutional “wisdom” that shapes how leaders interpret reality and choose a course of action. This book calls that layer cognitive and organizational sediment.

The *Bedrock Imperative* makes a simple but demanding claim: before an organization can make consistently intelligent decisions, it must drill through that sediment and reach bedrock, a clear, explicit understanding of what it truly exists to achieve. Outcomes-Based Thinking (OBT) is the discipline for doing exactly that. Instead of starting with goals, initiatives, or KPIs, OBT begins with bold outcomes: specific, ambitious statements of what the organization will become,

deliver, and make possible for its stakeholders. These outcomes are not another form of metric. They are the foundation that gives metrics meaning.

From that foundation, strategy becomes navigable rather than static. OBT builds a living network of outcomes and the relationships between them, creating a business GPS. Like a navigation system, it shows where the organization is, where it intends to go, and which pathways, constraints, and trade-offs lie between those points. It allows leaders to test decisions against the full web of outcomes, spot implications before they become problems, and adjust in real time as conditions change.

The rise of generative AI has made this approach more urgent and more valuable. AI can process information at a speed and scale no human team can match, but without a clear, outcome-anchored map, that capability can accelerate bad decisions as easily as good ones. That is why this book introduces Betty, an AI decision-support agent built on OBT and the business GPS. Betty is not designed to replace human judgment, but instead strengthen it by making assumptions explicit, surfacing options, and tracing the consequences of choices across the outcomes that define the business.

The ideas in these pages have been tested in organizations facing competitive pressure, regulatory complexity, technological disruption, and the human realities of change. Readers will recognize familiar problems: misaligned priorities, strategies built on outdated beliefs, and initiatives that fail not for lack of effort, but for lack of shared clarity about what matters most. They will also see what becomes possible when that clarity is built deliberately and maintained over time.

This book is for leaders and teams who know that incremental improvement and more tools are no longer enough. It is for those who want a repeatable way to strengthen the cognitive muscles of their organizations so human judgment and machine intelligence can work from the same foundation. OBT is that discipline, a

cognitive fitness practice that, when exercised consistently, reshapes how leaders and teams perceive their work.

Over time, it trains organizations to shed expert assumptions, escape habitual routines, and see past surface-level activity to what is truly at stake. In the chapters that follow, OBT will appear not as a framework on the shelf, but as a way of thinking that becomes instinctive—a clarity instinct that makes it natural to distinguish between what is being done and what is actually being achieved. The goal is not to add one more framework to the shelf. It is to offer a practical way of thinking and operating that can be embedded in everyday decision-making.

If this book succeeds, it will change how strategic conversations begin. Instead of starting with projects, budgets, or technology, they will start with outcomes: explicit statements of what the organization is trying to bring about, paired with disciplined attention to the sediment that obscures that view. In a world where the window of competitive advantage is shrinking and the pace of change is accelerating, that shift is not optional. It is essential.

Welcome to *The Bedrock Imperative*.

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About the Authors and Boldarc Advisors

Introduction

The Decision Crisis Hidden in Plain Sight

Every organization believes it makes good decisions. Leadership teams study reports, hold strategy sessions, and hire talented people. They invest in data warehouses, dashboards, and management frameworks. Yet again and again, strategic decisions fail to deliver their intended outcomes.

McKinsey found that organizations making faster, higher-quality decisions generate returns nearly three times higher than slower competitors, yet most companies still struggle to achieve speed and quality at the same time¹. Why? Not because they lack data. In an age of information abundance, data is rarely the bottleneck.

The bottleneck is harder to see. It hides in plain sight, disguised as experience, institutional knowledge, and established process. The real obstacle to intelligent business decisions is the invisible web of habits, assumptions, biases, and organizational politics that governs how leaders interpret reality and choose a course of action.

This book is built on a single conviction: before an organization can make truly intelligent decisions, it must first build on bedrock. Just as engineers drill through layers of sediment before pouring the foundation of a skyscraper, leaders must drill through years of cognitive and organizational sediment before they can build anything of lasting value.

What follows is grounded in more than forty years of business experience across insurance, manufacturing, financial services, and hospitality. It is called Outcomes-Based Thinking, or OBT, and it sits at the center of everything Boldarc

¹ McKinsey & Company, "Decision Making in the Age of Urgency," 2019.

Advisors does. Paired with a business GPS built from structured outcomes, and an AI decision-support agent named Betty, OBT offers a fundamentally new way to lead, operate, and compete.

Business is moving faster than ever. Generative AI has compressed timelines that once took years into months, months into weeks, weeks into days, and days into minutes. The window of competitive advantage is narrowing. In that environment, the winners will not simply be the organizations with the most resources or the most sophisticated technology. They will be the ones that make better decisions, faster, and do so with confidence grounded in something solid beneath their feet.

That solid ground, that bedrock, is what this book is about.

Chapter 1

The Invisible Enemy: Cognitive Sediment in Business



The Challenge That Is Hiding In Plain Sight

There is a challenge that confronts every business, every day. It is more damaging than competition, more costly than inefficiency, and more persistent than any market downturn. It is the trap of our own habits, perceptions, assumptions, and biases. And because it hides behind what feels perfectly normal, most leaders never recognize it is there.

Cognitive scientists have identified well over 180 distinct cognitive biases that affect human judgment. In business, however, the most destructive biases are the ones that become institutionalized, woven so deeply into an organization's culture and operating processes that they no longer register as bias at all. They register as wisdom.

Research published in *Frontiers in Psychology* found that professionals across management, finance, medicine, and law are consistently and systematically prone to cognitive bias in decision-making, with overconfidence emerging as the most pervasive distortion among senior leaders. The danger is not merely that executives make poor decisions. It is that they can make distorted decisions

while feeling entirely rational, and the culture around them often reinforces that confidence instead of challenging it².

This is the invisible enemy in business. It is not a market force that arrives from the outside. It is an internal layer of accumulated thinking that shapes what leaders notice, what they ignore, and what they believe to be true. It distorts judgment long before a decision is ever made.

Why Sediment Hardens

Habit research helps explain why this invisible web is so resilient. Charles Duhigg, summarizing behavioral and neuroscience studies, reports that a substantial portion of what people do each day, roughly two-fifths, is driven by habit rather than conscious choice. In the boardroom, that means many “strategic decisions” are not fresh acts of insight, but well-rehearsed routines playing out below the surface of awareness³.

Duhigg also describes a simple habit loop. A cue triggers a routine, and the routine delivers a reward the brain has learned to expect. Over time, the loop tightens. Faced with a familiar cue, a disappointing quarter, a new competitor, a regulatory shift, the organization defaults to its familiar response: more meetings, more analysis, and the same narratives and metrics. The reward is the feeling of diligence and control, even when the underlying clarity does not improve.³

That is the deeper risk. Biased decision-making stops feeling biased. It starts feeling responsible, rigorous, and familiar precisely because the process itself has hardened into habit.

² Blanco F. et al., "The Impact of Cognitive Biases on Professionals' Decision-Making," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2022.

³ Charles Duhigg, *The Power of Habits*, 2012, 2023

RESEARCH INSIGHT

A study of enterprise decision patterns found that confirmation bias, overconfidence, and groupthink appeared across most strategic decision processes and measurably weakened both decision quality and business performance.

The Geology of Organizational Behavior

Think of an organization the way a geologist thinks about the earth's crust. Over millions of years, layer upon layer of sedimentary rock accumulates as compressed deposits of ancient material that obscure what lies beneath. The same thing happens in organizations.

Over years and decades, layers of habit, culture, legacy process, institutional memory, and received wisdom accumulate on top of what the business actually is and what it actually needs to accomplish. These layers are not inherently bad. Experience is valuable. Culture matters. Institutional knowledge speeds execution. But sediment becomes dangerous when it masks reality. When the comfortable norm diverges from competitive necessity. When what worked in the past blocks what the future requires.

This sediment manifests differently depending on where it sits in the organization. At the executive level, it shows up as unchallenged strategic assumptions, market beliefs held long past their expiration date, competitive assessments built on outdated models, and a deep preference for continuity over disruption. At the middle-management level, it appears as process rigidity and an inability to adapt workflows because "this is how we've always done it." At the frontline, it emerges as learned helplessness: people trained to execute rather than think, and left without the frameworks to do otherwise even when circumstances demand it.

The combined effect is what Boldarc Advisors calls organizational noise and inertia. It is the friction that slows decision-making, the distortion that corrupts

analysis, and the force that keeps organizations moving toward yesterday when tomorrow requires a different course.

The Real Cost of Cognitive Sediment

The costs of this kind of organizational inertia rarely appear on a balance sheet. They do not show up as line items. But they are staggering. Missed market opportunities that seemed too risky to pursue. Product lines kept alive because no one wanted to challenge the status quo. Acquisitions made by pattern-matching to past success instead of rigorously testing future fit. Organizational structures preserved long after they stopped being effective because redesign would be disruptive.

Beyond these strategic failures lies the daily cost of slow, low-confidence decision-making. When leaders are unsure of their direction, when the foundation beneath their decisions is sand rather than bedrock, they compensate with process. More meetings. More analysis. More consensus-building. All of it consumes time and energy that should be directed toward what matters most.

These costs are not theoretical. A broad review of professional decision-making found that managers across industries are consistently and systematically prone to biases such as overconfidence, confirmation bias, and framing effects, even in high-stakes, data-rich environments. In strategy research, Kathleen Eisenhardt's work on fast and effective strategic decisions shows that organizations weighed down by politics, over-analysis, and consensus-seeking make slower, less adaptive choices and routinely miss time-sensitive opportunities that more cognitively disciplined competitors capture.

In the era of generative AI and accelerating technological change, this cost has become existential. The competitive landscape no longer forgives slow pivots and cautious incrementalism. When a nimble competitor can prototype and validate a new business model in weeks, organizations burdened by cognitive sediment face a structural disadvantage that no amount of technology investment alone can fix.

The most dangerous thing in business is not a bad decision. It is the comfortable certainty that a bad decision is a good one.

Chapter 2

Building on Bedrock: The Case for Outcomes-Based Thinking



The Skyscraper Principle

When architects begin their work, the most important decision they make has nothing to do with the height of the building, the elegance of the facade, or the sophistication of its systems. The most important decision is what the foundation will rest on. For a structure that must bear enormous weight and endure for generations, only one answer is acceptable: bedrock, the solid, ancient substrate beneath the layers of soil, sediment, and accumulated material above it.

To reach bedrock, engineers do not simply dig. They drill. They go through clay and sand, and through sedimentary rock that may have formed over millennia. The process is methodical, sometimes slow, and never optional. You do not build a skyscraper on anything less.

That is the central logic of OBT. It is more than a metaphor. It describes what must happen inside any organization before intelligent, durable decisions can be

made. The accumulated layers of habit, assumption, institutional bias, and organizational politics must be drilled through, not managed around, if leaders are going to reach the bedrock of what the business truly exists to accomplish.

What Are Outcomes and Why They Are Not Goals

The first thing most leaders discover when they are introduced to OBT is that outcomes are not what they assumed. Outcomes are not goals. They are not KPIs. They are not objectives. That distinction matters because the confusion between these terms is itself part of the sediment OBT is designed to clear away.

A goal is a target, such as “Increase revenue by 15% this year.” A KPI is a measurement mechanism, such as revenue per customer per quarter. Both are useful management tools. But neither answers the deeper question: Why? To what end? What does hitting that number actually make possible? What changes about the customer relationship, the market position, or the organizational capability if the number is achieved?

An outcome, in the OBT framework, is the expression of a specific, ambitious aspiration for what the business will achieve, deliver, or become. A well-articulated outcome expands the boundaries of how leaders think about the business and what it is actually trying to create. It often creates discomfort, not because it is unrealistic, but because it demands a different level of clarity and ambition.

Consider the difference between these two statements. A goal says, “Reduce customer churn by 20%.” An outcome says, “Customers choose only to do business with us.” The first is a number to hit. The second is a transformation to achieve. One can be checked off a list. The other reshapes strategy, culture, product development, and service delivery all at once.

In OBT practice, a mature organization typically surfaces 200 or more distinct outcomes across the enterprise. These outcomes do not exist in isolation. They interrelate, reinforce one another, and at times create productive tension.

Together, they form a three-dimensional picture of what the organization is truly trying to accomplish. That interconnected architecture becomes the bedrock upon which everything else is built.

OBT PRINCIPLE

Outcomes are expressions of ambition and aspiration. They are the catalyst for transformation. Goals and KPIs support outcomes, but they are not the same thing.

Strengthening Cognitive Muscles

One of the most important things OBT does is strengthen what might be called the cognitive muscles of an organization. Just as physical muscles weaken when they are not used, the capacity for original, creative, outcomes-focused thinking weakens in organizations that operate on habit, where the answer to every strategic question is some variation of what was done last time.

Alan Gregerman makes a compelling observation in *Surrounded by Geniuses*: organizations routinely fail to recognize two critical resources: the potential brilliance within their own people and the valuable insights available everywhere around them. This failure represents its own form of cognitive sediment, the habitual assumption that expertise resides only at certain levels or in certain roles, while frontline employees simply execute. The sediment obscures what Gregerman calls the "genius hidden in all of us" and prevents organizations from tapping the world of knowledge that surrounds them.

OBT creates structured, repeatable practices for looking at what everyone sees (the same data, the same market conditions, the same competitive landscape) and thinking what nobody else has thought. It does this by democratizing strategic context across every level of the organization, making it possible for

people at all levels to contribute the innovation and insight that sediment has been suppressing.

OBT is a thinking discipline, a cognitive fitness practice that, when exercised consistently, permanently reshapes how individuals, teams, and organizations address a challenge, uncover unseen opportunities and perceive their work. Like any muscle, it grows stronger with use. In practice, that means training the mind to shed expert assumptions, escape habitual routines, and look past surface-level activity to see what is truly at stake in a decision or initiative. Rooted in the spirit of Zen teacher Shunryu Suzuki's idea of beginner's mind (where "in the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few") OBT cultivates a mental lens that cuts through the noise of processes, tools, and technologies to reveal the real outcomes beneath. Over time, this practice becomes instinct: a clarity instinct that makes it second nature to distinguish between what is being done and what is actually being achieved at every level of the organization.

This is not a mystical gift reserved for exceptional visionaries. It is a learnable skill, a trainable capability. Organizations that develop it at scale, from the executive suite to the frontline, operate with a level of strategic clarity and creative agility their competitors struggle to match. When outcomes are clearly articulated and accessible through the business GPS, every team member gains the strategic line of sight needed to unlock their latent genius. Gregerman's insight that organizations "cannot win if they fail to see everyone as a potential source of innovation" becomes operationally possible when cognitive sediment is removed and replaced with outcome-grounded clarity.

Research supports this claim. Large-scale cognitive science research, including the NIH-funded ACTIVE study of more than 2,800 participants, has shown that targeted cognitive training can measurably improve reasoning and processing speed, and that those gains can persist for years. In a business context, Wharton has profiled how a neuroscience-based "brain training" protocol used with

executive teams at SEB, a leading Nordic corporate bank, led participants to report faster, higher-quality decisions and quicker progress on strategic challenges after practicing a simple exercise every two weeks. Together, these findings reinforce a critical point: the cognitive muscles of an organization can be deliberately strengthened, and when they are, decision speed and quality both improve.

This capacity is exactly what generative AI is best positioned to amplify, but only when it has something solid to work with. AI can process information at speeds and scales no human team can match, but it can only be as directionally sound as the outcomes and frameworks that guide it. That is why OBT is not just a useful companion to AI. It is a prerequisite.

Chapter 3

Drilling Through: How OBT Works in Practice



Introducing OBT into an organization is not a training event. It is not a workshop, a set of templates, or a consulting deliverable that gets filed away after the engagement ends. It is a sustained, iterative process of organizational reorientation, one that begins with leaders and radiates outward through every level of the business.

Phase One: Jump to the Future

The first and most important move in any transformation is deliberate: get as far away from today as possible. Most change efforts fail before they begin because they anchor themselves in the present. Mapping the as-is, diagnosing the current state, and engineering a path forward from inside the very constraints the organization is trying to escape leads, at best, to incremental improvement. OBT rejects that approach entirely.

When leaders embrace OBT, they give themselves permission to imagine the most desired and remarkable future the organization can achieve, unclouded by today's pressures, conventions, and ingrained habits. Only by standing in that future and building back to the present can the most important outcomes be clearly seen and articulated.

This process is often revelatory. In one manufacturing client engagement, senior leaders discovered that three separate divisions had been operating from mutually incompatible assumptions about the company's primary customer. Each division had built its processes, metrics, and strategies around a different implicit definition of who it was serving, and none of those definitions had ever been made explicit, much less reconciled. The company was not failing to execute. It was executing against three different destinations at once.

In insurance sector engagements, a similar pattern often emerges around risk appetite. What leadership believes the organization's tolerance for risk to be, and what the risk behaviors of middle management actually reflect, are frequently in profound disagreement. Both sides are operating from their own layer of sediment, their own inherited understanding of what the organization values and rewards. Until those layers are surfaced, no amount of strategic planning will close the gap.

Phase Two: Articulating Outcomes

Once the future is visible, the real work of OBT begins: the articulation of outcomes. This is a creative and deliberate process in which leaders move beyond the language of goals and targets and begin expressing what the business truly aspires to become, deliver, and achieve.

The articulation of outcomes is more demanding than it sounds. Most leaders have spent their careers in the language of metrics and objectives. Shifting to outcome language requires deliberate cognitive effort. It also requires a

willingness to sit with ambition rather than retreat immediately to the comfort of measurable targets.

In practice, well-articulated outcomes share several characteristics. They are written in the present tense, as if the aspiration is already real, a linguistic choice that activates a different kind of thinking than future-tense goal-setting. They are ambitious enough to create real discomfort. They name a specific value to be created, not merely an activity to be performed. And they resist easy reduction to a single number or metric because real transformation is multidimensional.

A hospitality client working through this process articulated an outcome that transformed its approach to guest experience: “Every guest leaves with a story worth telling.” This was not a service standard. It was not a Net Promoter Score target. It was a declaration of aspiration that immediately reoriented every function in the business, from reservations to housekeeping to food service, around a common and compelling direction. KPIs and goals were then built from this outcome rather than generating the outcome from the metrics. The order of construction matters enormously.

CLIENT EXAMPLE

A financial services firm that implemented OBT across its regional operations reported that the process of outcome articulation alone, before any new strategy was implemented, surfaced 47 previously unrecognized misalignments between divisional priorities. Resolving those misalignments freed an estimated 22% of leadership time that had been consumed by conflict, duplication, and rework.

Phase Three: Building the Interconnected Map

With outcomes articulated, the third phase of OBT is to build the architecture of relationships between them. This is where OBT moves beyond simple goal-setting and becomes a genuine strategic intelligence platform.

In a mature OBT deployment, a business will typically have 200 or more distinct outcomes spanning every functional domain, from customer experience and product development to supply chain and talent management. These outcomes are not a list. They are a network. Each outcome connects to others, either as a driver or as a dependent. This network of causal relationships creates a three-dimensional roadmap of the business, one that shows not just what needs to be accomplished, but how and why.

This interconnected map becomes the business GPS, the subject of the next chapter. But its value as a decision-support tool is already visible at this stage. When a leader faces a decision, the outcome network makes visible what is at stake in ways that no dashboard or report can replicate. It shows which other outcomes a given decision will affect, and in which direction. It surfaces trade-offs that would otherwise remain invisible. And it provides the context that turns a local decision into an architecturally sound one.

Chapter 4

Your Business GPS: Turning Outcomes into a Strategic Map



Consider what happens every time you use a GPS navigation system. You do not simply enter a destination and receive a route. The system knows where you are right now, in real time. It knows the current conditions of every road between you and your destination. It models multiple possible routes and evaluates them dynamically. When something changes, like an accident, road construction, an unexpected closure, it recalculates instantly and offers you the best available alternative. You are never simply following a map. You are navigating a living, responsive model of the journey.

This is exactly what the OBT-based business GPS provides for an organization. It is not a strategic plan, which is nothing more than a static document that describes where the organization intends to go and is reviewed quarterly before being filed until the next planning cycle. The GPS is a dynamic, interconnected device. Knowing what the business must accomplish and built from the bedrock of well-articulated outcomes, it can be queried, navigated, and used to evaluate decisions in real time.

A strategic plan tells you where you intend to go. A business GPS tells you where you are, what is ahead, and the best route to your destination right now.

How the GPS Works

The business GPS is built from the full array of outcomes developed through the OBT process. Each outcome sits within a logical framework that maps its relationships to other outcomes, which outcomes it enables, which outcomes depend on it, and where it sits in the overall strategic journey of the business.

This architecture of outcomes creates a multi-layered view of the business that answers three fundamental questions simultaneously: What needs to be done? How does it get done? And why does it need to be done? The interplay of these three dimensions is what makes the GPS genuinely navigable rather than merely descriptive.

In operational terms, the GPS becomes the reference point for every significant decision made in the organization. Before committing to a new initiative, a leader can query the GPS: which outcomes does this initiative serve? Which outcomes does it put at risk? Are the outcomes it serves high-priority drivers of our strategic journey, or peripheral aspirations that can wait? What would we need to be true in the business for this to succeed and do those conditions currently exist?

These questions are not rhetorical exercises. They are the difference between decisions made on bedrock and decisions made on sand. And in the accelerating environment of contemporary business, they are the difference between organizations that lead and organizations that react.

Avoiding the Road Construction and Traffic

One of the most powerful features of a GPS navigation system is its capacity to route around obstacles. Construction zones, traffic congestion, closed roads —

the system identifies these in advance and reroutes before they become costly delays. The business GPS works the same way.

When the interconnected outcome network is live and active, it makes visible the places where strategic traffic is building up. This could be competing priorities creating organizational congestion, where resource constraints are creating bottlenecks that will slow progress across multiple outcomes, or where external market changes are putting specific outcome pathways at risk.

This early visibility is enormously valuable. Most organizations discover these obstacles only after they have materialized and when the strategic initiative has stalled, the resources have been consumed, and the window of opportunity has closed. The GPS moves that visibility upstream, to the point where something can still be done about it.

For a manufacturing client dealing with significant supply chain disruption, having an active outcome network meant that a disruption in one supplier relationship could be immediately mapped against its ripple effects across multiple outcome streams. Rather than reacting to each downstream consequence as it appeared, leadership could see the full picture in advance and make a single, architecturally sound response rather than a series of reactive patches.

Chapter 5

Human-Proofing™ Decisions: Meet Betty



Even with a sophisticated understanding of outcomes and a dynamic business GPS, organizations face one more layer of challenge: decisions are still made by humans. And humans, as established earlier, come equipped with cognitive biases, emotional responses, political considerations, and habitual thinking patterns that can distort even well-structured decision-making. This is where Betty enters the picture.

Betty is an AI decision-support agent developed by Boldarc Advisors, not a generative AI assistant in the conventional sense. It is not a chatbot, a search engine, or a report generator. Betty is an agent trained in OBT and deeply integrated with a company's business GPS. In the most precise sense, this agentB is an advisor to leadership and a decision intelligence partner.

What Makes Betty Different

The difference between Betty and a general-purpose AI tool is the difference between a GPS and a map. A map contains information. A GPS contains information, knows where you are, understands current conditions, and guides you dynamically. Betty is a GPS for decision-making.

Where a general AI assistant might help a leader brainstorm options or summarize a report, Betty operates within the structured context of the organization's OBT framework and GPS. Every question Betty engages with is evaluated against the bedrock of the company's outcomes, not a generic model of business best practice, but the company's specific, articulated aspirations and the logical relationships connecting them.

This contextual grounding gives Betty her distinctive capability. It can surface the ways a proposed decision aligns or conflicts with the organization's critical outcomes and can identify the cognitive and organizational biases that may be shaping how a decision is framed. This agent can ask the questions that cut through institutional politics and challenge the assumptions everyone in the room has been too polite or habituated to question.

In short, Betty human-proofs decisions. Not by replacing human judgment, but by ensuring that human judgment is exercised on clear, factual, outcomes-grounded intelligence rather than on cognitive sediment.

ABOUT BETTY

Betty is trained as an expert in OBT and a company's GPS, the bedrock of the business. It enables leaders to make objective, fact-based decisions with a level of speed and efficiency that was not possible just a few years ago. This agent becomes an indispensable member of the leadership team.

The Rise of Decision Intelligence

Betty is not a singular innovation but part of a broader and rapidly growing field known as Decision Intelligence. This emerging discipline integrates technology, behavioral science, and structured decision frameworks to enhance how organizations make choices at every level.

The market for Decision Intelligence solutions is expanding at a significant pace. According to Grand View Research, the global Decision Intelligence market was valued at approximately \$15.22 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach \$36.34 billion by 2030, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 15.4%. A separate analysis by Fortune Business Insights projects even more aggressive growth, with the market reaching \$57.75 billion by 2062. Other analysts, including Technavio, project a CAGR as high as 26.8% through 2029.

These figures reflect a fundamental market recognition: in the age of generative AI and accelerating change, decision quality is a source of competitive advantage, and organizations are willing to invest substantially in platforms and tools that improve it. The question is not whether to invest in decision intelligence capabilities. The question is what foundation those capabilities are built on.

An AI system built without a clear outcomes framework is like a GPS without a destination. It can process enormous amounts of information. It can generate outputs with impressive fluency. But it has no reliable way to evaluate whether those outputs are pointing the organization in the right direction, because no one has clearly articulated what the right direction is. Betty, built on OBT and grounded in the business GPS, solves this problem at the root.

Human-Proofing vs. Human-Amplifying

A growing strand of leadership thinking argues that the real promise of AI is not to replace humans, but to make them more deeply and distinctively human. In his recent work on AI and leadership, Dr. David Ragland advances a clear point of view: when AI is consciously paired with emotionally intelligent, values-anchored leadership, it acts as a force multiplier for human judgment, organizational health, and long-term flourishing, not a substitute for them. Across his books on AI and emotional intelligence, organizational dynamics, and what he calls a “human renaissance,” Ragland’s through-line is consistent: AI belongs in the

hands of leaders who are self-aware, ethically grounded, and skilled at building trust and connection.

The Bedrock Imperative shares Ragland's conviction that human leadership matters, but it starts from a different side of the problem. Where Ragland emphasizes how AI can amplify the best of human leadership, Bedrock begins with a blunt reality: even very capable leaders are trapped in cognitive sediment, the habits, assumptions, politics, and institutionalized "wisdom" that feel rational but quietly distort decisions every day.

The purpose of the OBT-GPS-Betty platform is to human-proof decisions against that sediment. OBT drills through the layers of bias and legacy thinking. The business GPS turns those outcomes into a living model of what truly matters. Then Betty sits at the decision point as an AI agent whose job is to continuously surface misalignment, hidden trade-offs, and the ways bias, habit, or politics are shaping how choices are framed.

This dual lens—amplifying the best of human leadership while constraining its worst distortions—is reinforced by other research. Daniel Pink's work on motivation shows that people do their best work when they have autonomy, mastery, and purpose, not when they are micromanaged or driven solely by extrinsic rewards. AI systems that are not anchored in clear purpose and do not respect human autonomy tend to demotivate the very people they are meant to help. At the same time, John Kotter's change leadership research underscores how deeply organizational inertia and complacency resist necessary change, and how strong leadership and clear structure are required to blast through corporate inertia and overcome resistance. Bedrock stands at exactly that intersection: it uses AI and decision intelligence to blast through sediment and inertia, while giving leaders and teams a GPS and an agent that keep autonomy, mastery, and shared purpose visible in every decision.

Taken together, these perspectives define the dual mandate for AI in leadership. AI must make leaders more human, more emotionally intelligent, more purposeful, and more capable of building trust. At the same time, those same leaders need systems like OBT, the business GPS, and Betty to ensure their decisions are grounded in bedrock outcomes rather than cognitive sediment, institutional politics, or yesterday's playbook. The organizations that win the next decade will do both at once.

Betty in Action: Real Decision Scenarios

To make Betty's role concrete, consider a few of the decision scenarios in which it provides the most distinctive value.

Strategic Prioritization. A leadership team is evaluating four potential market expansion opportunities. Each has merit on a standalone basis. Betty analyzes each opportunity against the company's outcome network, not just asking, "Is this a good opportunity?" but, "Does this opportunity serve the outcomes that matter most to where this business needs to go, and does it require capabilities or conditions that currently exist?" The result is not merely a ranked list of options, but a reasoned, outcome-grounded recommendation the team can interrogate and build upon.

Resource Allocation. A manufacturing organization must decide how to allocate capital among three competing investment proposals. Conventional financial modeling produces returns projections for each. Betty layers on the outcome analysis, identifying which investment best enables the highest-priority outcomes in the GPS, which creates dependencies that will constrain future flexibility, and which political dynamics within the leadership team may be shaping how the proposals were framed. The final decision is better, not because the numbers changed, but because the context around the numbers expanded.

Crisis Response. An insurance company faces a sudden regulatory change that threatens an existing product line. The habitual response, shaped by years of

operating under a particular regulatory regime, would be to lobby, adapt incrementally, and minimize disruption. Betty, operating from the outcome network, surfaces a different possibility: that this regulatory disruption, read through the lens of the company's outcomes, creates an opening for a product innovation the company had discussed for years but never felt was urgent enough to pursue. The crisis becomes a catalyst. What appeared to be a forced reactive response becomes a deliberate strategic choice.

Chapter 6

Winning the EBITDA and ROI Battles



Business ultimately lives and dies on financial performance. Strategy, culture, and decision-making frameworks are valuable only insofar as they produce results that show up where it matters: in EBITDA, in return on invested capital, in shareholder value, in the long-term health and sustainability of the organization. The Boldarc OBT + GPS + Betty platform is not a philosophy. It is an operational system designed to produce measurable financial outcomes and the evidence for its impact is increasingly robust.

The ROI Case for Decision Intelligence

The ROI case for AI-powered decision support is substantial and growing. Research from multiple sources documents that enterprises deploying AI agents in decision-relevant workflows generate returns ranging from 3x to 6x their investment within the first year of deployment, while long-term ROI can reach 8x to 12x as the systems mature and the organization learns to deploy them more effectively.⁴ Gartner projects that by 2029, agentic AI will autonomously resolve 80% of common operational issues without human intervention, leading to a 30%

⁴ OneReach, "Enterprise AI Agents ROI," 2025.

reduction in operational costs across affected domains. For manufacturing organizations alone, AI agents with predictive and prescriptive decision support capabilities have documented outcomes including 18% reductions in delivery times and avoidance of millions of dollars in annual SLA penalties.⁵

But the ROI case for the OBT + GPS + Betty platform extends beyond these general AI investment figures, because the platform addresses the specific, costly failures that generic AI tools cannot. The misalignment between strategic intent and operational execution. The decision latency caused by insufficient context and clarity of direction. The resource waste generated by competing priorities that have never been explicitly reconciled. These are not abstract inefficiencies. They represent real dollars that often account for a significant percentage of total operating cost in organizations of any size.

ROI EXAMPLE

Real-world deployments of AI as a decision copilot show what becomes possible when the technology is anchored to strategic bedrock instead of ad-hoc dashboards. In innovation and investment portfolios over \$50 million, global enterprises have reported that AI systems explicitly trained to optimize against a predefined set of strategic and financial criteria deliver 10–15% improvements in portfolio ROI—equivalent to roughly \$5–\$7.5 million in additional value every year—by continuously recommending which projects to accelerate, delay, or cancel to keep the portfolio aligned with leadership’s true priorities.

The Speed Imperative

The generative AI revolution has fundamentally altered the tempo of business. Processes that once took months now take weeks. Competitive advantages that once endured for years now erode in quarters. Organizations that cannot make

⁵ Agility at Scale, "Enterprise AI Agent ROI: How to Measure, Calculate, and Maximize," 2026.

high-quality decisions at speed are not merely at a disadvantage, they are at structural risk.

Speed without accuracy is not a competitive advantage. It is an accelerated failure. What the OBT + GPS + Betty platform delivers is the combination that actually wins: speed and accuracy. Speed because the outcome network provides instant context for decisions that would otherwise require extensive analysis and alignment. Accuracy because that context is grounded in the bedrock of the organization's own articulated aspirations rather than in real-time cognitive processing that is subject to all the biases and distortions we have described.

This combination of fast and accurate is what produces the EBITDA and ROI outcomes that matter. When leaders can make better decisions faster, they capture more opportunities and avoid more pitfalls. They commit resources earlier and more confidently. They respond to disruption with agility rather than caution. And they build organizations that are not dependent on the exceptional judgment of a few individuals, but that operate with decision intelligence embedded at every level.

From the Top to the Frontline

One of the most powerful and most often overlooked dimensions of the OBT + GPS + Betty platform is its capacity to operate across every level of an organization, not just at the executive level where strategy is typically formulated.

In most organizations, strategic clarity exists primarily at the top. The further down the organizational hierarchy you go, the more diluted and distorted the strategic direction becomes, filtered through layers of interpretation, translation, and operational constraint until frontline teams are making decisions in a near-complete absence of strategic context. They do what they have always done, because they have no reliable way of knowing what the organization actually needs them to do differently.

The OBT outcome network, made accessible through the business GPS and Betty, changes this. When outcomes are clearly articulated and logically connected, they create a line of sight from the frontline to the strategy that is both visible and navigable. A frontline manager in a manufacturing facility can understand how their decision about maintenance scheduling connects to a production efficiency outcome that connects to a customer commitment outcome that connects to a revenue and margin outcome. The decision they are making is no longer isolated. It is situated within a strategic context that gives it meaning and that makes them better at making it.

This democratization of decision intelligence is perhaps the most transformative aspect of the platform. Because when every level of an organization operates with strategic clarity and cognitive discipline, the compound effect on performance is extraordinary. It is not additive. It is multiplicative.

Conclusion

The Bedrock Imperative

We began with a metaphor, and we will end with one. Every great structure, from the tallest skyscrapers to the oldest bridges, begins with the same non-negotiable act: the search for bedrock. Not the desire to build. Not the vision of what the finished structure will look like. Not the selection of materials or the hiring of craftspeople. The search for bedrock. The insistence that whatever is built will be built on something solid.

The organizations that will lead their industries through the next decade of AI-driven transformation are the ones that make this search their first priority. Not the ones that acquire the most technology, or move the fastest, or generate the most activity. The ones that stop long enough to drill through the layers of accumulated habit, assumption, bias, and political sediment that have been masquerading as strategy to find the bedrock of genuine, ambitious, outcomes-grounded direction beneath.

Outcomes-Based Thinking is the drill. The business GPS is the foundation plan. Betty is the intelligent guide who keeps leaders oriented and honest as the building goes up. Together, these three elements constitute a platform, not just for better decision-making, but for a fundamentally different and more powerful way of operating a business in the modern era.

The business case is compelling. The market evidence is clear. The Decision Intelligence market is growing at 15-27% annually precisely because organizations across every industry are recognizing that the quality of their decisions is their most important competitive variable and that competing on decision quality requires more than good intentions and smart people. It requires infrastructure. It requires bedrock.

If you are reading this as a leader who has recognized something of your own organization in these pages, the invisible sediment, the decisions made on sand, the gap between strategic aspiration and operational reality, then you already understand what is at stake. The question is not whether to act. The question is how quickly you can begin the process of drilling through to bedrock, and what you will build once you get there.

The most important decisions your organization will make in the next five years have not yet been made. Build the foundation that will make them good ones.

About the Authors and Boldarc Advisors

Steven Wilt is an accomplished business leader with over 40 years of experience. He began his career working hands-on in industry, building a deep understanding of how complex organizations operate and create value, before transitioning to advising senior leaders at many of the world's most recognized brands on their most critical strategic and operational challenges. He is the creator of Outcomes-Based Thinking, a thinking discipline, enabled through Generative AI, that reshapes the future of work and connects long-term vision with executable roadmaps that achieve market leadership.

Tony Begum is a certified Application Architect with over 25 years of experience in digital transformation, cloud solutions, and AI-driven enterprise strategy. His career spans principal-level roles leading healthcare AI applications using intelligent process automation and NLP, as well as strategic planning, process optimization, and technology integration for large-scale organizations. Holding senior level positions at IBM Global Business Services, Salesforce, Microsoft and Cisco Systems, Tony is an admired thought and knowledge leader in Generative AI.

Boldarc Advisors is a business consultancy founded on more than forty years of cross-industry experience. We help organizations build the decision intelligence capabilities they need to compete at speed in an AI-driven world. Our proprietary Outcomes-Based Thinking (OBT), combined with our business GPS framework and Betty AI decision-support agent, represents a comprehensive platform for intelligent, outcomes-grounded leadership at every level of the business. To learn more or begin a conversation about your organization's decision intelligence readiness, visit bold-arc.com.

