

PROJECT PERFORMANCE
INTERNATIONAL



WHITE PAPER

Project Decision Jumpstart Applied to a Proposal

*Strengthening proposal quality and competitiveness
through better decisions*

Project Decision Jumpstart (PDJS)

The Project Decision Jumpstart (PDJS) service as delivered by Project Performance International (PPI) is the refinement of an engagement model that has been applied ~150 times over the past three decades. Although the majority of these projects focused on the design of new products and systems either under contract or as part of a commercial product portfolio, at least half a dozen were performed to inform the “decision-making fire drill” of a proposal that has a huge impact on a company’s success or failure.

Leveraging the PDJS “engine” (proven decision patterns and decision-to-everything traceability, in the hands of a skilled consultant) supports the following goals that are common to almost all solution development proposals:

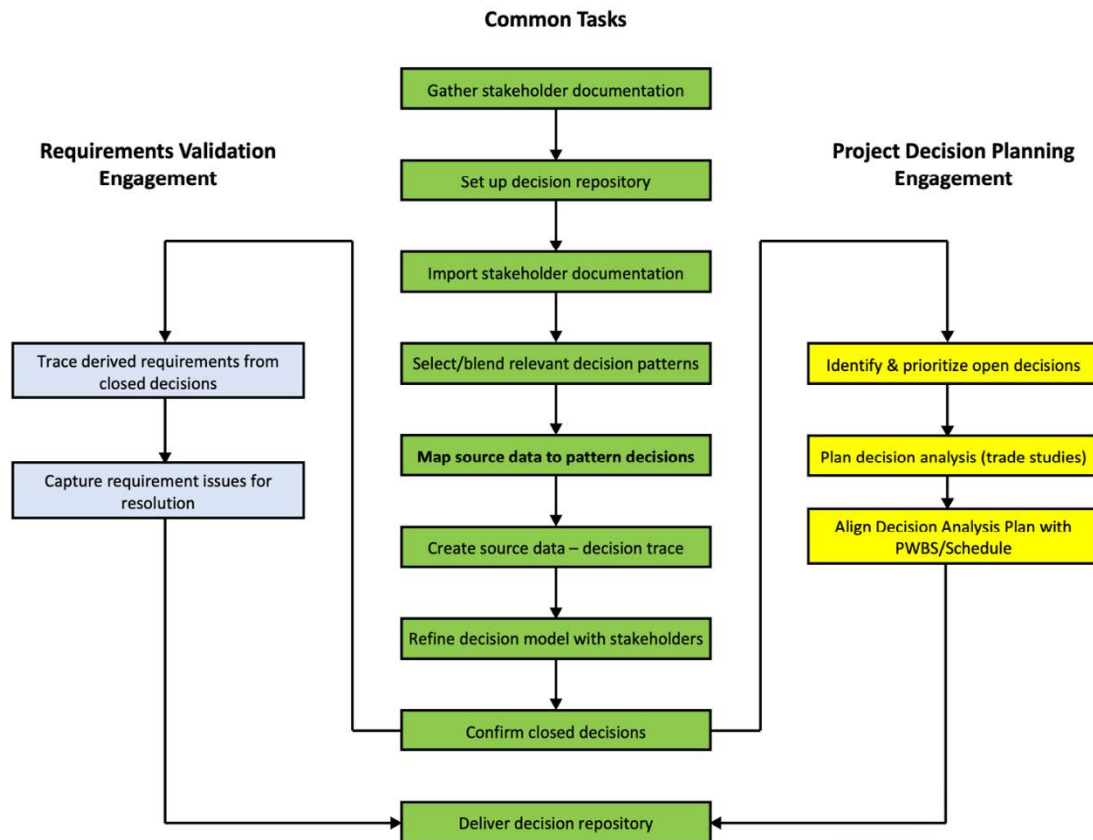
- **Accelerate proposal development** (get more done faster and with fewer resources)
- **Improve the differentiation** of the proposed solution vs competitors (offer a better solution by improved decision quality)
- **Increase the probability** of winning the business (communicate the differentiation message more clearly)
- **Improve the transition** of responsibility to the execution team (hit the ground running with an executable development plan)

Lowering proposal cost while increasing the probability of win and reducing execution risk makes a compelling case for investing in this unique service.

Although the steps in the PDJS process, as shown below, don’t change significantly when applied to 1-week or 8-week proposal effort, numerous shortcuts may be taken and a few steps become even more critical to proposal success.

PPI offers two variants of the PDJS service. The Requirements Validation engagement focuses on reverse engineering the customer’s decisions from the Request for Proposal (RFP) that defines (often poorly) the problem to be solved. We know that all customer and stakeholder requirements can be traced from upstream decisions.

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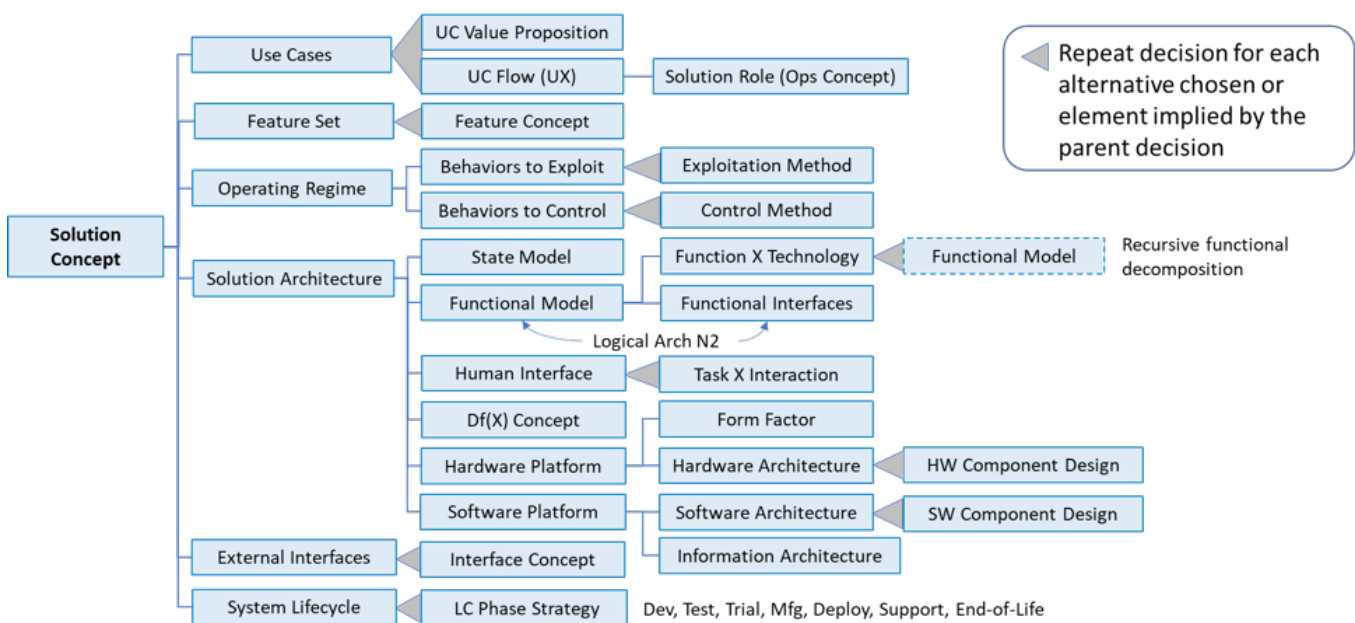
Project Decision JumpStart Service Flow

Creating that explicit trace for the most demanding RFP requirements will help the proposal team ask very pointed and efficient questions of the customer to clarify the customer use cases and “givens” that must be satisfied in the solution. This effort will often uncover gaps in the customer’s thinking that create significant risks during solution development. It is far better to surface such issues early in the proposal process and to gain clarifications where possible.

The Project Decision Planning engagement focuses on identifying the vital few decisions that will drive project/system success, prioritizing the open decisions such that precious proposal resources are assigned to the critical questions that demand an answer and that will offer the greatest differentiation for “our team”.

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The typical proposal is a blend of these two models, with the balance between them driven by the quality of the RFP requirements and the scale, complexity and novelty of the problem and potential solutions.



Product/System Design Decision Pattern

A typical proposal jumpstart will identify at least 20 decisions to be analyzed and create a Top-5 decisions list that will form the foundation for proposing a differentiated solution. The analysis captured for these decisions will provide the foundation and outline for communicating how “our solution” is differentiated from and superior to potential competitors. As such, the outline of the technical part of the proposal may follow the decision model, narrating the logic behind each decision and highlighting the advantages of the proposed solution. If a proposal shows your customer that your solution provides the best answer across the top 10-20 decisions, with believable supporting rationale, it makes a very convincing and easy-to-follow story.

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The entire decision jumpstart process for a proposal may be performed remotely; it's primarily a mapping exercise between the RFP requirements and a decision pattern. Multiple virtual meetings with core members of the proposal team are held to refine the resulting decision model and work through the high priority decisions and their implications on the proposal.

A typical PDJS proposal engagement ranges from 20 to 80 hours of consulting support. Beyond the benefits noted above, the engagement leaves the organization with a tailored decision model that can be reused and refined across future proposals and projects. The “compound interest” effect of this reuse can be enormous as improvements to the decision pattern with each iteration increase its completeness and quality and reduce the effort needed to apply it to new projects.

Lowering proposal cost while ***increasing the probability of win*** and ***reducing execution risk*** makes a compelling case for investing in this unique service. And the service is scalable; feel free to start small and then increase the scope (number of decisions covered and depth of support provided) based on the results achieved.

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