

PROJECT PERFORMANCE
INTERNATIONAL



WHITE PAPER

Project Decision Jumpstart Applied to a Startup

*Applying decision patterns to strengthen startup
strategy and design*

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Executive Summary

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 most of these projects focused on the design of new products and systems either under contract or as part of a commercial product portfolio, the techniques have been successfully applied to the design of a startup or scale-up enterprise or such

an organization's Minimum Viable Products (MVPs), Minimum Viable Services (MVSs) or critical process capabilities.

Over the years, PDJS engagements have yielded significant improvements in stakeholder value (for startup owners and customers), in the form of cost and schedule reductions and technical performance enhancements, regardless of problem domain and project type.



The PDJS Engine

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 startup or scale-up enterprises:

- **Accelerate decision-making** to reduce time to design the enterprise, its initial offerings or process capabilities (reduce time to market or time to capability)
- **Improve the market fit** and differentiation of initial products and services to gain competitive advantage (offer increased customer value by improved decision quality)
- **Decrease the incidence of rework** caused by failed and conflicting decisions concerning the enterprise or its initial solution offerings or processes (with resulting delays, lost value and cost/profitability implications)
- **Lay the foundation** for rapidly and efficiently pivoting as new market or technology information becomes available or extending initial offerings as platforms for future solutions
- **Provide a credible data-driven rationale** behind startup plans to potential investors and employees (improve likelihood of funding and acquiring critical talent).

Although the steps in the PDJS process, as shown below, don’t change significantly regardless of industry or types of solution, the effort required to complete the jumpstart engagement is sensitive to variables such as:

- **The novelty of the problem space** and applicable solution technologies
- **The overall complexity** and competitive criticality of the decisions to be addressed
- **The number of stakeholders** who will be affected by the solution design and their level of engagement
- **The completeness and clarity** of the documentation available that bounds the problem space, e.g., the quality of decision rationale and solution descriptions associated with prior decisions.



PDJS Variants

As shown in Figure 1, PPI offers two variants of the PDJS service that share common front-end tasks.

The Requirements Validation engagement focuses on reverse engineering prior stakeholder decisions to bound the problem space. We know that all stakeholder needs can be traced from upstream decisions. Creating that explicit trace for the most

demanding stakeholder needs will help the enterprise and solution design teams ask very pointed and efficient questions to clarify the use cases and “givens” that must be satisfied in the solution. This effort will often uncover gaps in the stakeholders’ thinking that create significant risks during solution development. It is far better to surface such issues early in the initiative and to gain clarifications where possible.

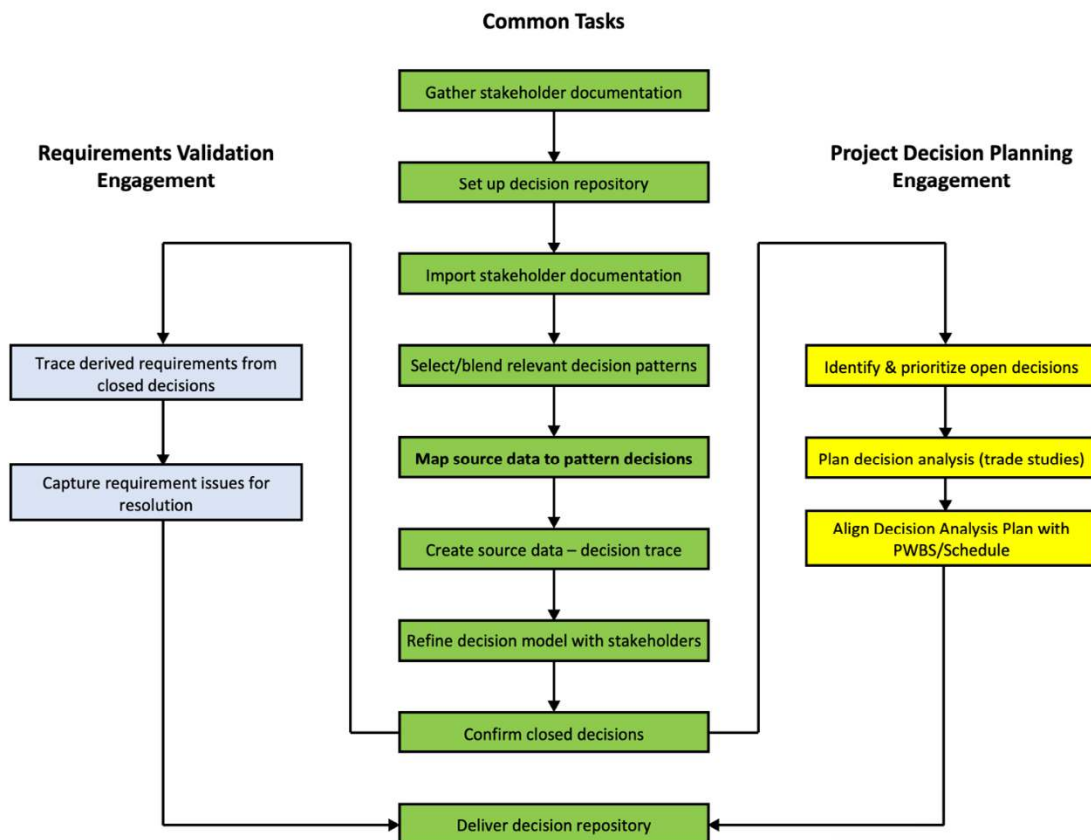


Figure 1. Project Decision JumpStart Service Flow

The Project Decision Planning engagement focuses on identifying the vital few decisions that will drive the success of the enterprise and its solutions, prioritizing the open decisions such that precious team resources are assigned to the critical questions that demand an answer and that will offer the greatest market differentiation.

The typical enterprise startup or scale-up is a blend of these two models, with the balance between them driven by the quality of the originating requirements and the scale, complexity and novelty of the problem and potential solutions.

Reducing time to market while improving product-market alignment and increasing agility (ability to pivot as needed) makes a compelling case for investing in this unique service.



PDJS Decision Pattern and Results

Building from the Enterprise Strategy/Design decision pattern shown in Figure 2, a typical Enterprise Startup jumpstart engagement will identify at least 20 decisions to be analyzed and create a Top-10 decisions list that will form the foundation for enterprise strategy and design.

The entire decision jumpstart process may be performed remotely; it's primarily a mapping exercise between the stakeholders' prior thinking (often captured in diverse and less structured form) and the relevant decision

patterns. Multiple virtual meetings with core members of the startup team are held to refine the resulting decision model and to work through the high priority decisions and their implications on the enterprise strategy and design.

Typically, a subset of the Product/System Design decision pattern shown in Figure 3 or the Service Design decision pattern shown in Figure 4 will also be used to accelerate the development and delivery of an initial product or service offering.

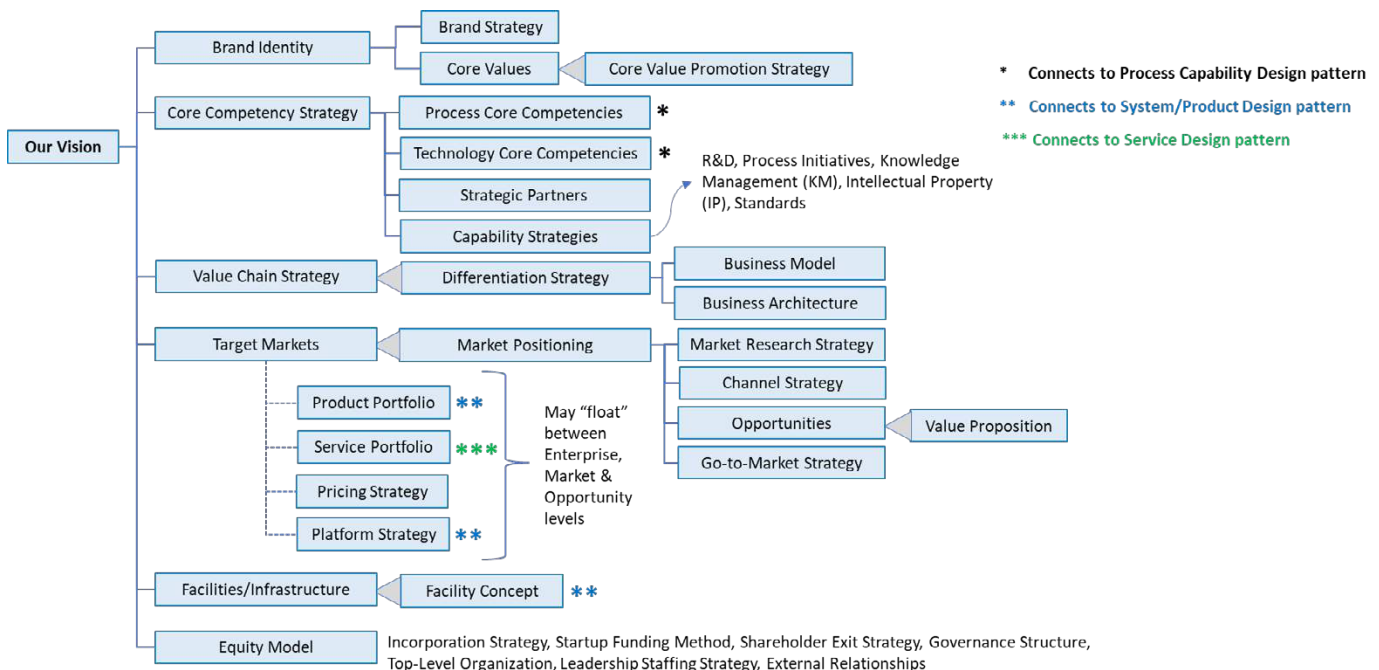


Figure 2. Enterprise Strategy/Design Decision Pattern

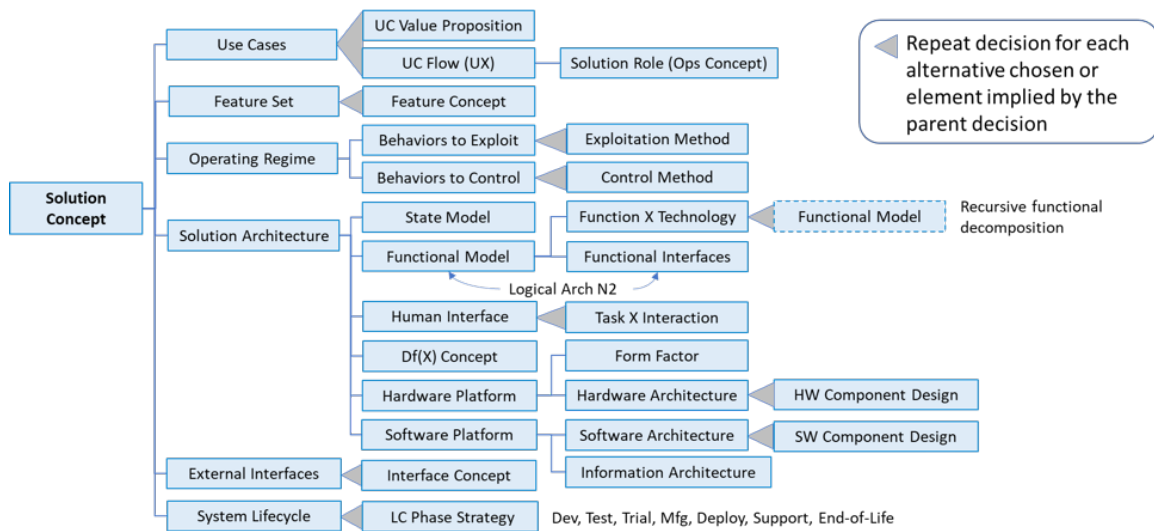


Figure 3. Product/System Design Decision Pattern

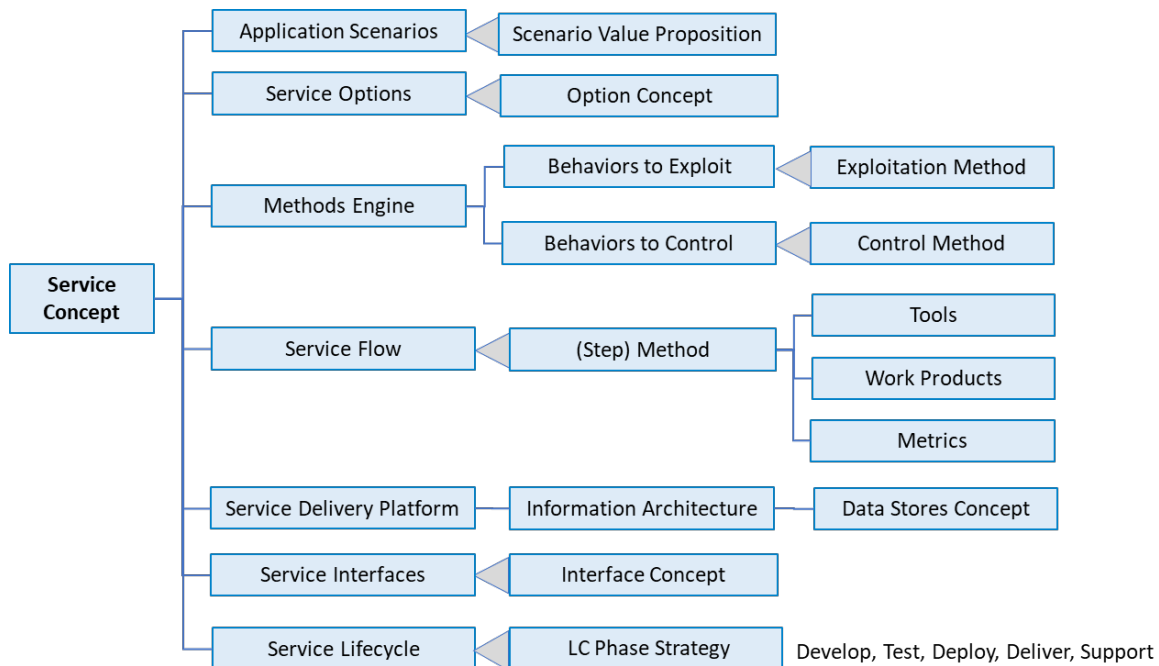


Figure 4. Service Design Decision Pattern

A typical PDJS engagement for a startup 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 as inevitable pivots are needed, and as new markets and solutions are pursued.

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 maintain differentiation in the marketplace.

Contact Us

Reducing time to market while **improving product-market alignment** and **increasing agility (ability to pivot as needed)** 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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