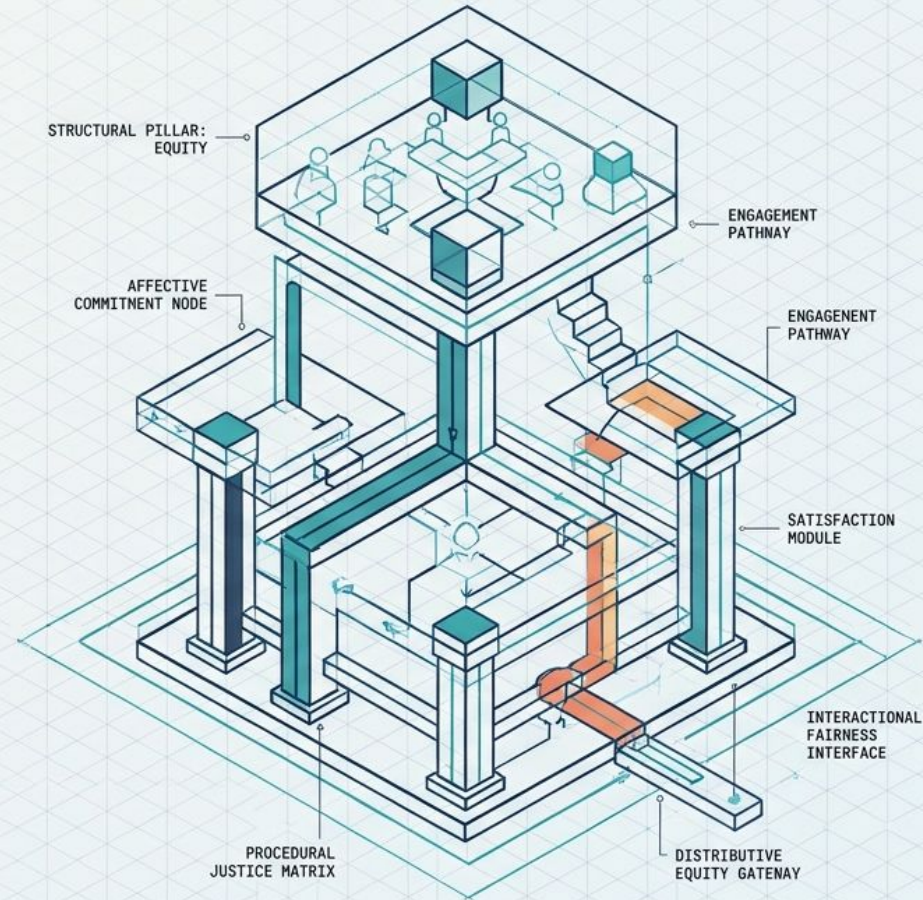
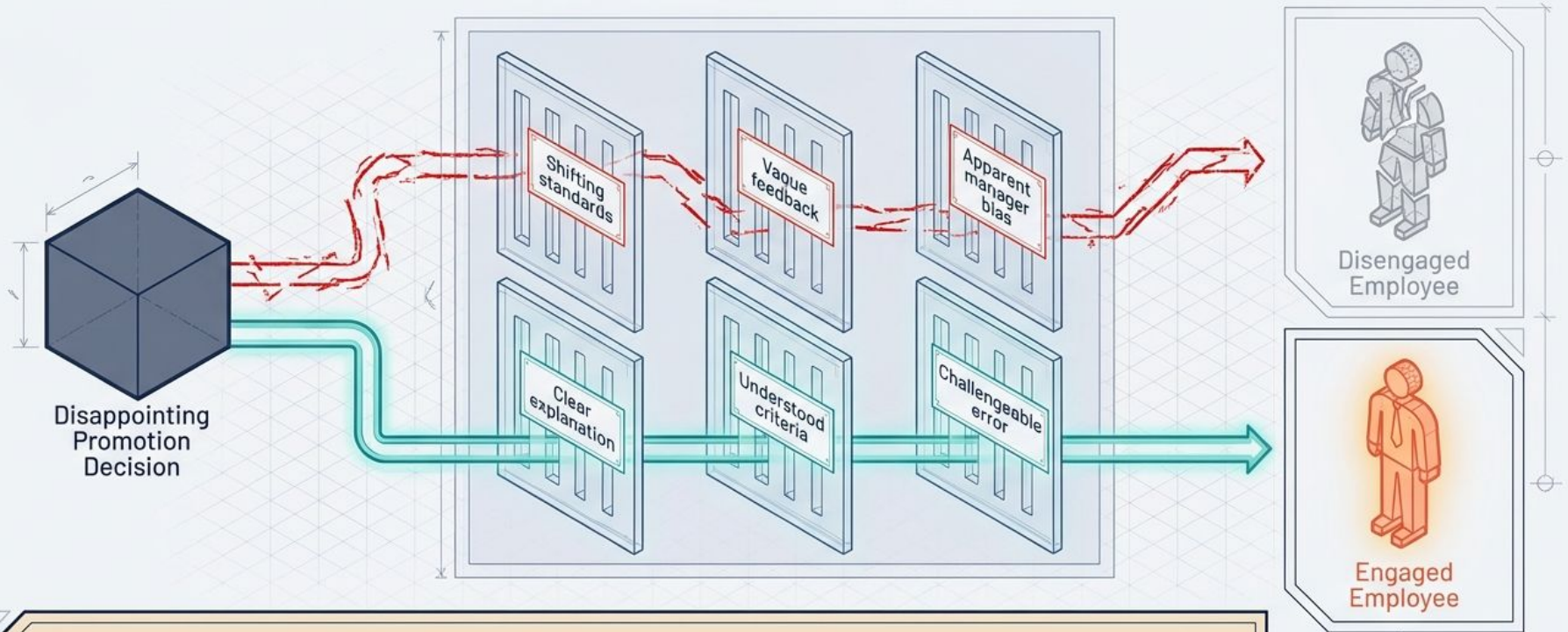


Designing Fairness into the Employment Relationship

An operational blueprint for building affective commitment, engagement, and satisfaction. Based on the research of Jonathan H. Westover, PhD and the foundational study by Kaur & Gupta (2026).



Identical material outcomes can produce entirely different organizational relationships.



Why do employees invest themselves when they don't get what they want? The answer lies in the procedures used, the explanations offered, and the dignity afforded.

// ARCHITECTURAL INSIGHT //

Fairness is an everyday operating discipline, not an internal communication campaign.

The Flawed Mindset

View of Disengagement: An “attitude problem” to be fixed with encouragement.

Approach: Added later through recognition campaigns or motivational communication.

Goal: Persuade employees that the organization is fair.

The Operational Discipline

View of Disengagement: An architectural byproduct of unexplained decisions and unfair allocation.

Approach: Designed into ordinary management activities (hiring, appraisals, conflict management).

Goal: Establish practices employees can examine, experience, and challenge.

If unfair workload allocation or inaccessible advancement opportunities contribute to the problem, encouragement alone is poorly targeted.

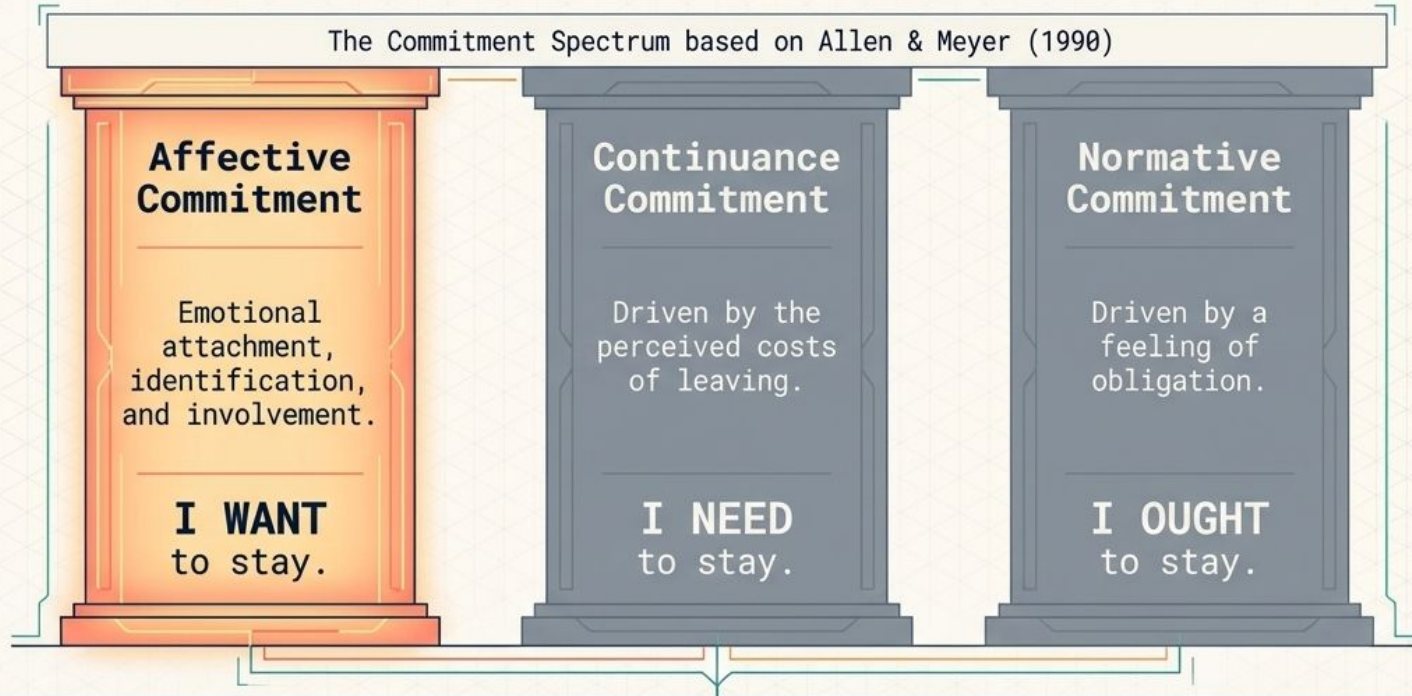
Diagnosing fairness requires examining four distinct structural dimensions.

Outcomes & Process	Distributive Justice	Interpersonal Justice	Human Interaction
	Are outcomes (rewards, workload) allocated fairly?	Are people treated with dignity and respect?	
	Procedural Justice	Informational Justice	
	Are decision processes consistent, unbiased, and open to input?	Are explanations adequate, candid, and appropriate?	

DIAGNOSTIC NOTE

A compensation decision may follow consistent procedures (Procedural) but rely on an inequitable job structure (Distributive), or be communicated disrespectfully (Interpersonal).

True engagement relies on emotional attachment, not trapped dependence.



A low resignation rate does not demonstrate an emotionally committed workforce.
Leaders must assess attachment directly rather than inferring it from continued employment.

Fairness drives engagement by first creating affective commitment.

Survey of 275 service-sector employees in Punjab, India.



EVIDENTIARY BOUNDARY: Cross-sectional mediation evidence (data collected at one point in time) establishes a plausible mechanism, not guaranteed longitudinal causation.

Defensible conclusion: directional, not a generic ROI calculator.

Five theoretical lenses serve as practical diagnostic tools for management.

Theory	Core Concept	The Managerial Question
Equity Theory (Adams, 1963)	Inequity in exchanges	Is the relationship between contributions and outcomes equitable relative to peers?
Org. Support Theory (Eisenberger, 1986)	Broader organizational message	Do our routine decisions communicate that we value their wellbeing?
Job Demands–Resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007)	Work context	Are we providing sufficient fairness and support to offset sustained work demands?
Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996)	Emotional experience	How are proximal workplace events shaping immediate affective reactions?
Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964)	Reciprocity	Are we honoring reciprocal obligations that extend beyond explicitly priced transactions?

Evidence translates into four actionable pillars of operational design.

1 Explainable
Allocation
(Distributive/Procedural)

2 Visible Routes
to Resolution
(Procedural/Informational)

3 Respectful Management
as a Skill
(Interpersonal/Informational)

4 Predictable
Work Design
(Temporal/Spatial/Demands)



The following operational blueprints illustrate implementation approaches across technology, healthcare, and retail

Resource allocation requires explainable logic and clear routes for correction.

Approach Checklist

- ☐ 1. Define the allocation rule (contribution, need, equal access).
- ☐ 2. Audit comparable decisions.
- ☐ 3. Explain relevant differences without breaking confidentiality.
- ☐ 4. Provide a correction route.
- ☐ 5. Assign a remediation owner.

Implementation Snapshot: Salesforce

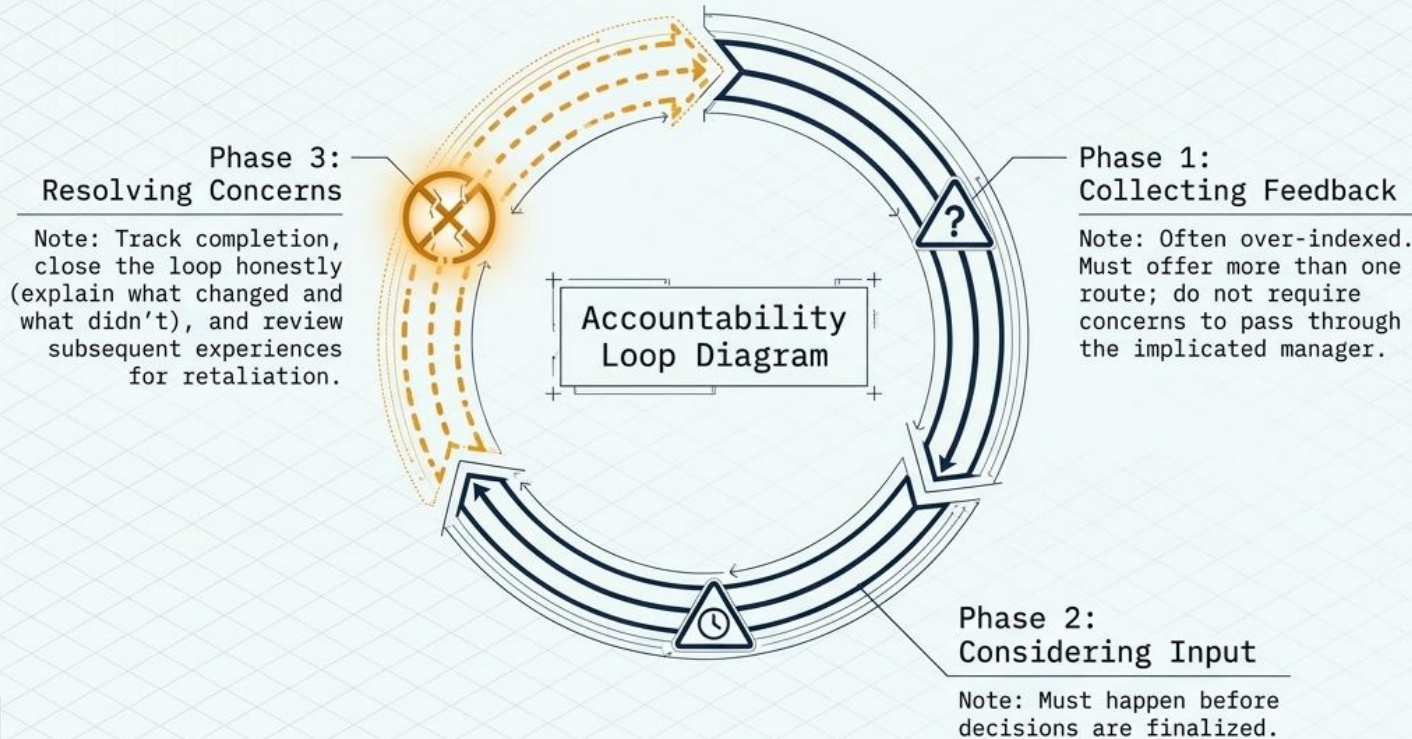
2024 equal-pay assessment resulted in adjustments for **3% of employees**.

Demonstrates recurring assessment/correction, not a one-time declaration.

THE FINAL PRACTICAL TEST

Can an employee explain the rule, **identify who is accountable for it**, and **obtain a meaningful review** when the rule appears to have been misapplied?

Employee voice only builds trust when it features a visible route to resolution.



Implementation
Snapshot: NHS
England

Implementation
Snapshot: NHS
England

2022 National
Speak-Up policy.

Architectural
lesson: Specify a
common process
while requiring
local information
that makes the
process actually
usable.

Respectful management is an observable, practiced skill rather than a static policy.

Policy

- Be respectful.
- Exempt high-performers from standards.
- Count training attendance.
- Treat pushback as insubordination.
- Deliver kindly but misleading explanations.



Practice

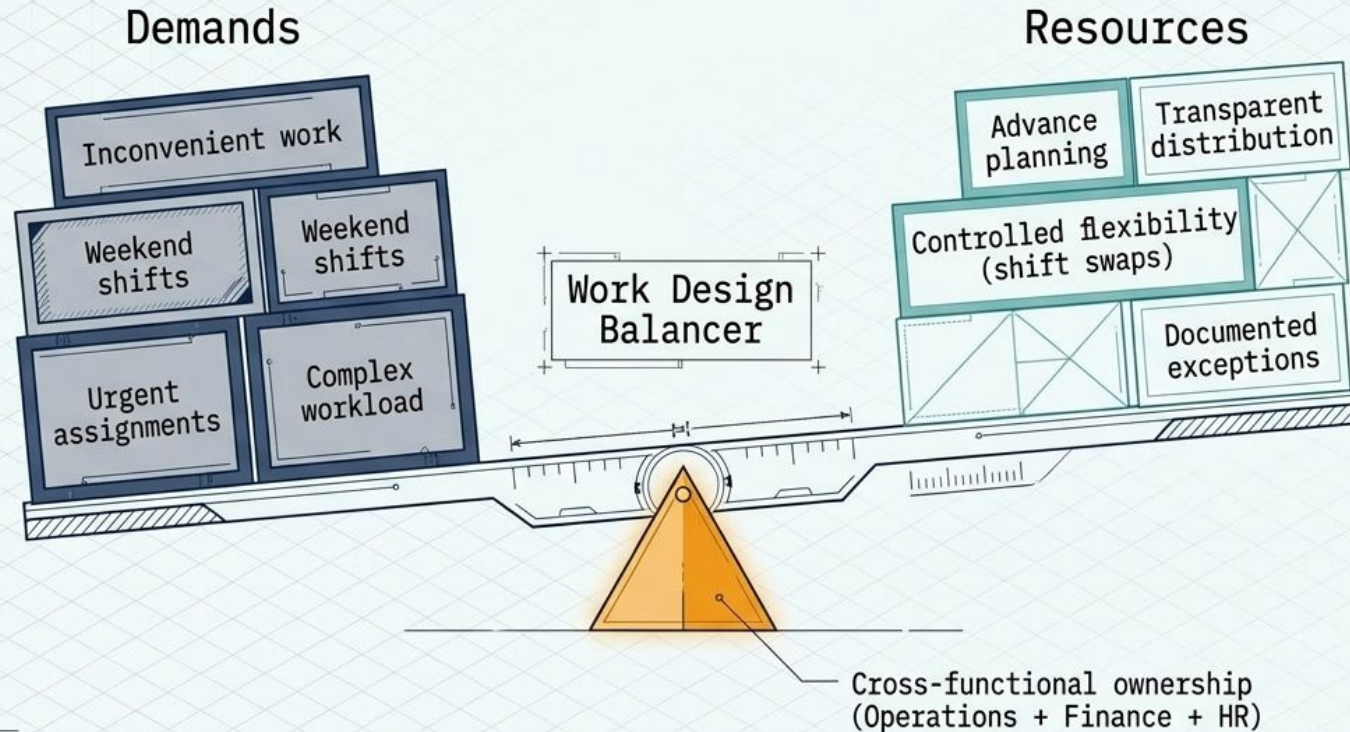
- **Rehearse** difficult conversations (rejections, workload changes).
- Apply standards **rigorously** across all status levels.
- Assess behavioral change post-training.
- Separate **factual challenge** from disrespect.
- Provide **informational honesty** even when uncertain.



Implementation Snapshot: Veterans Health Administration (CREW)

Civility, Respect, and Engagement in the Workforce. Deployed across 23 sites via local coordinators + national support. Produced significant improvements in civility vs comparison sites.

Predictable work design balances organizational demands with employee resources.

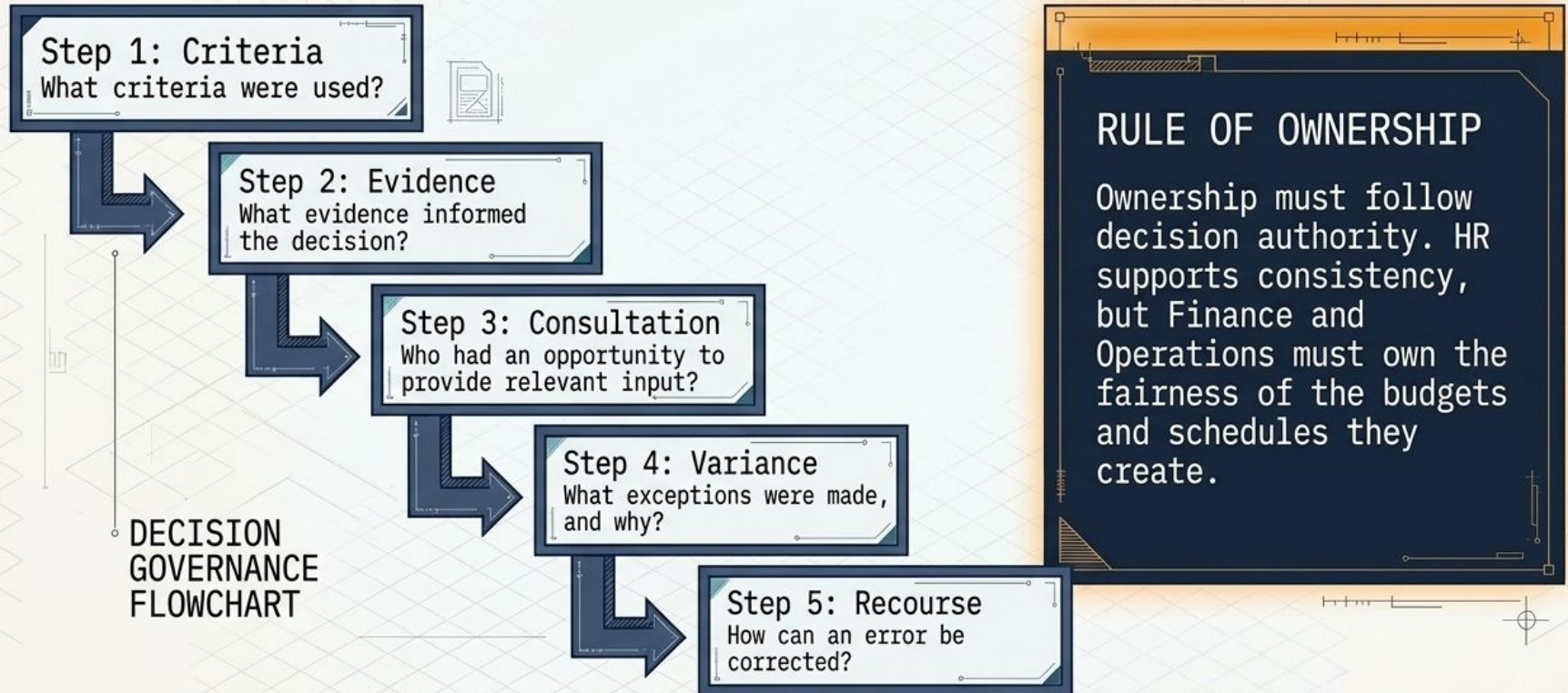


Implementation
Snapshot: Gap
Stable
Scheduling Study

Tested a multicomponent approach (consistency, input, swapping). Resulted in a 7% median sales increase and a 5% labor productivity increase.

Lesson: Treat scheduling as a design problem with measurable business alternatives.

Sustainable fairness requires integrating governance into everyday decisions.

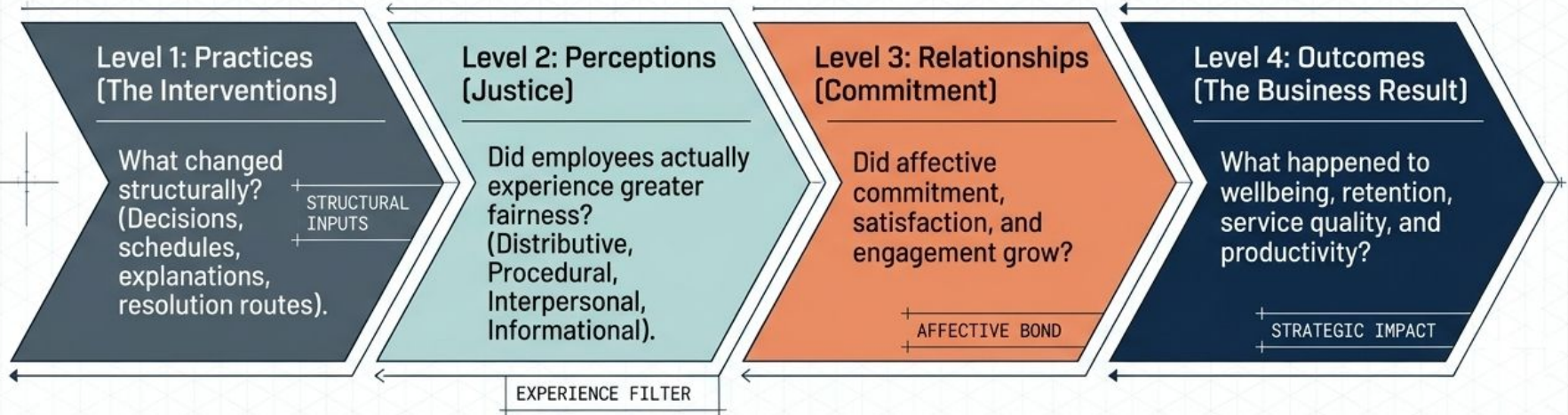


Ethical organizations respect the boundary between emotional attachment and toxic extraction.

Bounded Commitment Venn Diagram



Effective evaluation measures a sequential chain of evidence rather than a generic ROI.



Do not treat commitment as a debt owed for basic fairness. Build an employment relationship employees can reasonably choose to value. Engagement initiatives are complements to credible management—not substitutes for it.