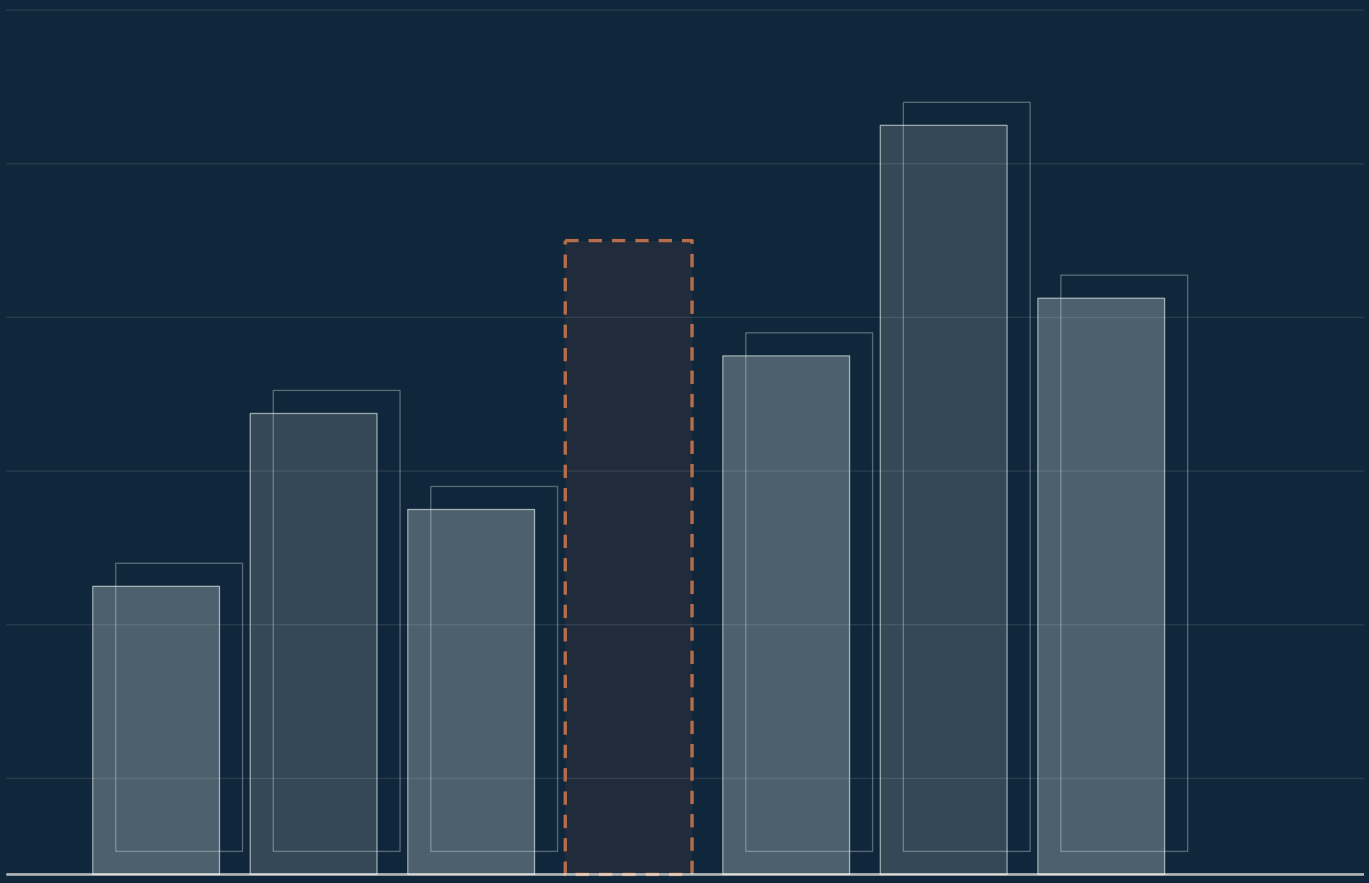
COMPANION EXECUTIVE FIELD GUIDE



EXECUTIVE PLAYBOOK

THE INVISIBLE VALUE OF EXECUTION

A Practical Guide to Fairer Performance Decisions

Karim Gaber Saleh
Independent Research | November 2026

The official companion implementation guide to the independent research publication *"The Invisible Value of Execution"*.

THE EXECUTIVE PROPOSITION

Stop measuring visibility.

Start evaluating contribution.

“Performance management should assess what people contribute, not simply how busy, visible or popular they appear.”

01

RECOGNISE REAL CONTRIBUTION

Assess execution quality, professional judgment, risk prevention and meaningful improvements, including work that rarely appears in traditional KPIs.

02

COMPARE FAIRLY

Account for different workloads, complexity, decision authority and external dependencies before comparing employees.

03

MAKE APPRAISALS DEFENSIBLE

Require evidence-based managerial judgments, relevant stakeholder feedback and meaningful opportunities to challenge unsupported conclusions.

EXECUTIVE OUTCOME

BETTER PERFORMANCE DECISIONS.
CLEARER ACCOUNTABILITY.
LESS RELIANCE ON SUBJECTIVE IMPRESSIONS.

The companion Excel toolkit turns these principles into practical assessment and review workflows.

THE OPERATING MODEL

Four lenses. Two decisions.

Separate employee contribution from the integrity of the appraisal.

DECISION 01 | ASSESS CONTRIBUTION

A

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION

What did the employee actually deliver, influence or improve?

Execution quality · Professional judgment · Verified improvements

B

TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

How effectively did the wider operation perform?

Dependencies · Decision readiness · Rework · Operational outcomes

C

PORTFOLIO CONTEXT

Under what conditions did the employee work?

Complexity · Volume · Decision authority · External dependencies

DECISION 02 | TEST THE APPRAISAL

D

APPRAISAL INTEGRITY

Can the manager substantiate the performance judgment?

Agreed criteria · Relevant evidence · Contradictions · Fair review

"Measure the contribution. Understand the context. Challenge the judgment."

Research-informed framework. Not yet independently validated.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

From evidence to a defensible decision.

Three actions. One structured performance conversation.

01

INPUT

Establish the facts.

- Record individual work, accepted outcomes and quality exceptions.
- Capture portfolio complexity and external dependencies.
- Document meaningful interventions and stakeholder observations.

WORKBOOK AREAS

Individual Performance
Portfolio Comparability
Contribution Records
Stakeholder Feedback

02

REVIEW

Examine the evidence.

- Check calculations and accepted-quality measures.
- Separate individual contribution from team outcomes.
- Review conflicting feedback, missing evidence and comparability.

WORKBOOK AREAS

Team Effectiveness
Appraisal Integrity
KPI Dictionary

03

DECIDE

Make and explain the judgment.

- Assess performance against agreed expectations.
- Record the reasoning, uncertainty and relevant context.
- Identify development actions or refer contested conclusions for review.

WORKBOOK AREAS

Appraisal Integrity
Pilot QA

EXECUTIVE RULE

"No consequential performance conclusion should rely on a KPI or stakeholder opinion without examining its evidence and context."

OPERATING NOTE The workbook supports professional judgment. It does not automatically generate employee ratings or rankings.

EXECUTIVE APPLICATION | FICTIONAL CASE

When doing the right thing attracts negative feedback.

A Business Program Manager identifies a material financial-control issue and refuses to approve an unsupported exception. The BPM documents the risk, proposes compliant alternatives and escalates appropriately. The requesting stakeholder subsequently describes the BPM as “unhelpful”.

INITIAL JUDGMENT

“Needs improvement in stakeholder management.”

Initial manager interpretation

→ EVIDENCE REVIEW

01

CONTRIBUTION

Was the decision justified?

Evidence: documented control requirements, risk assessment and proposed alternatives.

02

CONDUCT

Was the interaction professional?

Evidence: relevant communications and specific firsthand observations.

03

APPRAISAL INTEGRITY

Does the negative judgment follow from the evidence?

Check: stakeholder context, contradictory information and the employee’s response.

→ DEFENSIBLE CONCLUSION | REVISED EXECUTIVE CONCLUSION

The stakeholder’s dissatisfaction does not, by itself, substantiate a performance deficiency.

If the control decision was justified and the employee communicated professionally, the negative appraisal conclusion lacks sufficient support.

Any separately evidenced conduct issue must still be considered.

“An unpopular decision is not necessarily poor performance.”

WORKBOOK APPLICATION

Contribution Records
Stakeholder Feedback
Appraisal Integrity

Fictional case. It illustrates the framework’s reasoning, not an actual investigation or validated outcome.

IMPLEMENTATION & GOVERNANCE

Start small. Validate. Scale responsibly.

A 90-day pilot for evidence-led performance management.

DAYS

01–30

PREPARE

- Select one team and a limited set of relevant measures.
- Agree assessment criteria, evidence requirements and privacy safeguards.
- Establish baseline practices and review responsibilities.

DAYS

31–60

PILOT

- Use the workbook alongside existing appraisal processes.
- Test portfolio comparability and stakeholder evidence.
- Record administrative effort, disagreements and missing evidence.

DAYS

61–90

EVALUATE

- Compare decisions and consistency across reviewers.
- Identify unsupported conclusions and unintended consequences.
- Refine the toolkit before considering wider adoption.

FIVE NON-NEGOTIABLE SAFEGUARDS

01 Evidence before opinion.

02 Context before comparison.

03 Individual contribution ≠ team outcomes.

04 Human judgment must be explainable and challengeable.

05 AI-assisted evaluation requires appropriate governance and oversight.

EXECUTIVE DECISION

"Scale only when the approach improves decision quality without creating disproportionate administrative burden."

FINAL ACTION

Open the companion Excel toolkit.

Start with the Read Me worksheet and run a controlled pilot before using the framework in consequential employee decisions.

Research-informed conceptual framework. Synthetic scenarios do not establish empirical validity. The toolkit does not replace organisational HR policies, legal requirements or existing employee protections.