CS LIFE SCIENCE INVEST

EXECUTIVE ADVISORY AND COACHING

Your Next Move

How the three-step process works: what goes into each step, and the evidence behind it



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The process handbook / November 2026

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Three steps. One clear next move.

A process built around the question that matters most to you.

01 Your preparation

Put your thinking into words before we meet.

02 Our session

Confirm your goal, weigh the options and choose your next step.

03 Your de-brief

Keep the decision clear, in writing, with a date.

60 minutes	24 hours	7 days
Our session on Zoom	De-brief within 24 hours	The horizon for your next step

€500 plus VAT, where applicable

Book Your Next Move

PayPal or Stripe

Includes: preparation sheet, mirror check, 60-minute session, written de-brief, recording and transcript.

English or German · Zoom

YOUR DECISION

When leaders book it

Bring the question that matters most to you right now.

01

The next board meeting

Where you want to walk in with your case clear and the hard questions answered.

02

A financing round or an investor update

Where you want to test your story with someone who has worked on both sides of the table.

03

A partnership with a large company

Where it pays to know what the other side looks for before the first term sheet.

04

Sales that stall

Where first meetings should turn into a repeatable process that wins clients.

05

A new market

Where you want to enter Europe or the US with a written plan.

06

A decision only you can take

Which you want to think through with someone outside your cap table and your team.

WHY A PROCESS

One hour is rarely enough for a decision that matters

Leaders who book a session with me usually bring one question that has been on their mind for weeks, and a calendar that leaves little room to think it through. A single hour of conversation, however good, competes with everything that follows it. Research on memory shows how fast spoken advice fades: according to a review of research in medicine, between 40 and 80 percent of what a doctor tells a patient is forgotten almost immediately (Kessels, 2003).

That is why I work in three steps instead of one hour. Your preparation, our session and your written de-brief each do a specific job, and each one draws on what research and well-run organisations have learned about how people think, decide and follow through.

This document explains what happens in each step, why it is built the way it is, and where the idea comes from. The findings are averages across many studies and settings. They describe what tends to work, never a guarantee for one person or one decision. The studies support the individual elements of the process; none of them tests this particular three-step package, the 60-minute length or the 24-hour de-brief window.

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THE THREE STEPS

The process at a glance

01 Your preparation

WHAT YOU DO	WHAT I DO	WHAT YOU GAIN
You answer a few tailored questions in writing, in your own words, and list the questions you want answered.	I work through your answers, prepare for your case and send your goal back to you in my words.	Your thinking is in order before we meet, and the session starts where it matters.

02 Our session

WHAT YOU DO	WHAT I DO	WHAT YOU GAIN
You confirm your goal, set the order of your questions and choose your next step. 60 minutes on Zoom, in English or German.	I guide the conversation and add an outside expert view where it helps.	Your goal confirmed, your options weighed, one concrete step for the next seven days.

03 Your de-brief

WHAT YOU DO	WHAT I DO	WHAT YOU GAIN
You read it and take the step you chose.	Within 24 hours I write my core observations, the recommendation with the most impact and your next step, with the recording and transcript.	What you decided stays clear and in writing after the week takes over.

BEFORE THE SESSION

01

Your preparation

Writing it down is where the clarity starts



YOUR NEXT MOVE / YOUR PREPARATION

A few written lines per question do the work, because the act of writing them is where the thinking happens.

STEP 01 / BEFORE THE SESSION

01

Your preparation

Writing it down is where the clarity starts

WHAT HAPPENS

01 Within 24 hours of your booking you receive an onboarding letter. It opens the process and explains how we work together.

02 Your preparation sheet follows, with questions built around your situation and your request. They ask for your goal, why it matters to you, what should not happen, where you stand today and the questions you want answered.

03 You write short answers in your own words and send them back two days before our session. Key points are enough.

04 I work through your answers before we meet, and I reply with one paragraph that states your goal in my words. We confirm it together at the start of the session.

05 Your questions become named points on the agenda of our session. You set the direction.

BEST PRACTICE

The Amazon six-page memo

On 9 June 2004 Jeff Bezos told Amazon's senior team that slide presentations were out and well-structured narrative text was in. Since then, important meetings at Amazon have run on memos of up to six pages, read in silence at the start of the meeting before anyone speaks.

Bezos explained that narrative memos "force better thought and better understanding of what's more important than what" (internal email, 2004, as reproduced in Charan and Yang, The Amazon Management System). He later added that nobody can write a six-page, narratively structured memo without clear thinking.

Your preparation sheet applies the same principle on a smaller scale. You do not need six pages. A few written lines per question do the work, because the act of writing them is where the thinking happens.

STEP 01 / THE EVIDENCE

Why writing it down works

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE	IN YOUR PROCESS
We understand less than we think, until we write it out In a series of studies at Yale, people rated how well they understood how familiar things work. Once they had to write a step-by-step explanation, their ratings dropped markedly. The gap between feeling and knowing was largest for explanations of cause and effect. Rozenblit and Keil (2002), Cognitive Science	A decision that feels clear in your head often shows its open points once it is on paper. It is better to find them in your preparation than in the middle of our hour.
Writing helps people learn, especially when it asks them to reflect A meta-analysis of 48 writing-to-learn programmes found a small positive effect, which was stronger when the writing asked people to reflect on their own thinking. A later meta-analysis of 56 experiments found an effect size of 0.30. Bangert-Drowns, Hurley and Wilkinson (2004); Graham, Kiuhara and MacKay (2020)	My questions ask you to reflect: why the question matters now, what changes once it is solved, and how you would notice.
What you produce yourself, you remember Across 86 studies and 445 effect sizes, people remembered information they generated themselves better than information they only read, by about half a standard deviation (0.40). The effect grew with longer retention intervals. Bertsch, Pesta, Wiscott and McDaniel (2007), Memory and Cognition	Writing your goal in your own words applies the same principle to your decision.
Change often begins before the first meeting Researchers at the Brief Family Therapy Center in Milwaukee noticed that many clients reported change between booking and the first session, and could describe it when asked. Later counselling studies found the same pattern. Whether noticing it improves the end result is less clear. Weiner-Davis, de Shazer and Gingerich (1987); Johnson, Nelson and Allgood (1998)	Booking and writing are already the first steps of the change. My questions also ask what already works, because it is often part of the answer.

STEP 01 / AGREEMENT

Making sure I answer the right question

Why your questions set the agenda

Andy Grove, who led Intel, described the one-on-one as the meeting of the person who reports, with the agenda and tone set by that person. He asked them to prepare an outline in advance, because preparing it forces them to think the issues through before the meeting starts (High Output Management).

Bill Campbell, who coached leaders at Google and Apple, started his one-on-ones with a short list. He and the person he coached each wrote down the five most important topics, then compared the lists. Topics on both lists came first. When the lists had little in common, he knew there was a bigger issue to talk about (Schmidt, Rosenberg and Eagle, Trillion Dollar Coach).

Your preparation sheet works the same way. Your questions are the agenda, and comparing your list with what I read in your answers tells us both where the hour should go.

The mirror check

After your answers arrive, I send you one paragraph that states your goal in my words, built from every key point you wrote. At the start of our session you confirm or correct it. If I misread you, or if you were still unsure when you wrote it, you see it before the hour starts, and we settle it in the first five minutes.

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

IN YOUR PROCESS

Restating in one's own words confirms understanding

In medicine, the teach-back method asks patients to restate information in their own words to confirm they understood it. A systematic review found improvements in knowledge, adherence and self-efficacy, although not every study reached statistical significance.

Ha Dinh, Bonner, Clark, Ramsbotham and Hines (2016), JBI Database of Systematic Reviews

In our process I do the restating, and you check it. A good answer to the wrong question is the most expensive mistake in advice.

A strong working alliance goes with better coaching results

The working alliance consists of agreement on goals, agreement on tasks and the bond between the two people. A meta-analysis of 27 samples and 3,563 coaching processes found a consistent relationship between a strong working alliance and coaching outcomes (r = .41). The analysis detected no differences by client type or number of sessions.

Bordin (1979); Graßmann, Schölmerich and Schermuly (2020), Human Relations

Agreement on the goal is one of the three parts of the alliance. We agree on your goal in writing and again at the start of the session, before we work on anything else.

Book Your Next Move

Your next move, clear and in writing.

THE SESSION

02

Our session

Built on your preparation, all of it about you



YOUR NEXT MOVE / OUR SESSION

The step you leave the session with is written in your words, with your date.

STEP 02 / THE SESSION

02

Our session

Built on your preparation, all of it about you

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE 60 MINUTES

0 to 5 MINUTES

Your goal

We confirm your goal from the mirror check, why it is better for you and what should not happen. We agree what this hour is for. You confirm the recording, or tell me if you prefer none.

5 to 15 MINUTES

Your situation

You describe the situation in your words: the people involved, the forces at work, what you have tried. We set the order of your questions and name the real issue behind them.

15 to 40 MINUTES

Working it through

Questions that test the assumptions behind the decision and open options you did not have at minute zero. We look at what already works. Where it helps, I add my view as an advisor, after your own options are on the table.

40 to 52 MINUTES

Your next move

The smallest step with the most leverage, with a date, written as “if this happens, then I will do that”.

52 to 60 MINUTES

Your close

What you take from today in one sentence, your first step, and how committed you are on a scale from 1 to 10. The close belongs to you.

STEP 02 / THE METHOD

Solution building

The session follows the solution-building approach described by Peter De Jong and Insoo Kim Berg in Interviewing for Solutions. Three ideas guide it:

- Your outcome first. What do you want to be different, and why is that better for you? We build toward that before we analyse the problem.
- What already works. When was it different? Your past successes contain a strategy. We take them apart and hand them back to you as your own guide.
- The gap, from outside. I add what 26 years of building companies show about the gap that remains, from four perspectives: leadership, advice, systemic coaching and mentoring. When I switch from asking to advising, I tell you, and I hand the view back to you with a question.

Your next step is yours to own. In Extreme Ownership, the former Navy SEAL officers Jocko Willink and Leif Babin describe the leader who takes responsibility for the outcome and for the next move, without waiting for anyone else. The step you leave the session with is written in your words, with your date.

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE	IN YOUR PROCESS
A specific goal beats good intentions Summarising 35 years of research, Locke and Latham reported that specific, challenging goals led to higher performance than “do your best” goals, with effect sizes of about 0.42 to 0.80 in the meta-analyses they cite. The effect depends on commitment to the goal and on feedback. Locke and Latham (2002), American Psychologist	The first five minutes confirm a specific goal for the hour, in your words, before any question is answered.
Solution-focused questions build motivation toward the goal In a pilot study with 74 participants, both problem-focused and solution-focused questions helped, but solution-focused questions increased self-reported goal approach significantly more. Problem-focused questions did not improve understanding of the problem. A 2022 experiment at the University of Amsterdam with medical residents and PhD students found more positive affect and stronger approach motivation after solution-focused questions, but no advantage in goal attainment or action taking. Grant and O’Connor (2010), Industrial and Commercial Training; Solms et al. (2022), Frontiers in Psychology	We spend most of the hour on where you want to go and what already works, and only as much time on the problem as the solution requires. The samples are small, and the advantage shows in mood and motivation more than in later results.

STEP 02 / THE EVIDENCE

Why the session is built this way

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE	IN YOUR PROCESS
One question at a time, then silence Mary Budd Rowe found that teachers waited on average only about one second after a question before speaking again. When the pause grew to three to five seconds, answers became longer and more complex, and fewer people answered “I don’t know”. Rowe (1974), Journal of Research in Science Teaching	I ask one question and wait. The pause is part of the method: your best answer often comes after the first one.
An if-then plan gets the first step done A meta-analysis of 94 independent tests with more than 8,000 participants found that plans of the form “if situation X, then I do Y” had a medium-to-large effect on reaching goals (d = 0.65). Gollwitzer and Sheeran (2006), Advances in Experimental Social Psychology	Your next move leaves the session as an if-then plan with a date, written in your words.
Small, visible progress keeps people going Nearly 12,000 daily diary entries from 238 professionals in seven companies showed that progress in meaningful work, even a small win, was the strongest lift for motivation on a given day. Amabile and Kramer (2011), The Progress Principle	We look for the single most valuable step for the next seven days, small enough to start this week.
The close in your own words The same research on self-generated information applies at the end of the hour: what you put into words yourself, you remember better than a summary you are given. Bertsch et al. (2007)	You close the session with your own takeaway and your first step. Your words become the anchor of your de-brief.

Book Your Next Move

Your next move, clear and in writing.

INSIDE THE SESSION

Six exercises from my toolbox

In the deep-work part of the session I use exercises from coaching and advisory work. The toolbox is larger than the six below, and I choose at most one exercise per hour, after we have confirmed your goal. These are the six I use most often, because they fit the decisions leaders bring to me.

01 Your priorities, ranked by you

WHEN I USE IT

You bring several issues and it is unclear which one deserves the hour.

HOW IT WORKS

Your points appear on screen in no particular order. You decide what matters most and what less, and I enter your ranking live. For the top issues we look at two questions: how much impact would solving it have, and how much effort would it take? We keep the top three, choose one for today and park the rest.

WHERE IT COMES FROM

Bill Campbell's habit of comparing two written top-five lists, and the impact and effort grid, a classic tool in strategy work. It is your priority, never mine, which is why you rank and I only write. It also applies the principle Jocko Willink and Leif Babin call prioritize and execute in Extreme Ownership: when everything seems urgent, choose the highest priority, act on it, then move to the next.

A QUESTION FROM IT

"If you could solve only one of these this quarter, which would change the most?"

INSIDE THE SESSION / EXERCISE 02 OF 06

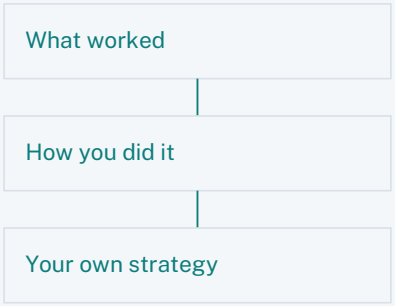
The exception: when was it different?

WHEN I USE IT

You say something never works, or that you are stuck.

HOW IT WORKS

I ask whether it was always this way. Most people find a time when it worked, at least in part, sometimes later in the hour. We take that moment apart: how you did it, what you said or wrote, what made you act that time, how it felt. Then I hand it back to you as your own strategy, step by step, to use the next time you feel stuck.



WHERE IT COMES FROM

The solution-focused approach of Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg, as described by De Jong and Berg. A pilot study comparing solution-focused with problem-focused questions found a stronger increase in goal approach with the solution-focused form (Grant and O'Connor, 2010).

A QUESTION FROM IT

"Was it always this way, or was it different at some point? What did you do then?"

INSIDE THE SESSION / EXERCISE 03 OF 06

The scale from 1 to 10

WHEN I USE IT

Progress feels vague, or “it is getting better” needs a measure.

HOW IT WORKS

You place the situation on a scale from 1 to 10, with anchors you define for 1 and 10. Then we look at what already puts it where it is, and what one point higher would look like in practice. The same scale returns in the next session and makes progress visible.



One point higher

WHERE IT COMES FROM

Scaling questions from solution-focused practice (Berg and de Shazer, 1993). Their value is practical: they turn a feeling into a step you can observe. Research supports monitoring progress, particularly when people record or report it (Harkin et al., 2016).

A QUESTION FROM IT

“What makes it a 4 and not a 3? What would move it one point up in the next four weeks?”

INSIDE THE SESSION / EXERCISE 04 OF 06

The Tetralemma for a decision that keeps circling

WHEN I USE IT

You have weighed option A against option B many times and still cannot decide.

HOW IT WORKS

We walk through five positions: what speaks for A; what speaks for B; how both could be true, combined or in sequence; what becomes possible if neither is the point; and finally, stepping out of the whole question, what you notice now. Then we return to the first position and see what has changed.

01 A

02 B

03 Both

04 Neither

05 Step outside

WHERE IT COMES FROM

A figure from classical Indian logic, adapted for decision work by Matthias Varga von Kibéd and Insa Sparrer and taught in systemic coaching at ESBA in Vienna. Its support comes from practice; I am not aware of controlled studies on it.

A QUESTION FROM IT

“What is the question behind this choice?”

INSIDE THE SESSION / EXERCISE 05 OF 06

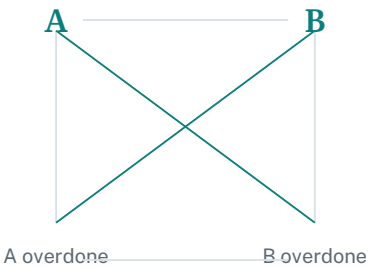
The values square for two goods in tension

WHEN I USE IT

Two things you value pull in different directions, for example speed and diligence, or closeness to the team and clear decisions, and every step toward one feels like a loss of the other.

HOW IT WORKS

We name A and B, then the opposite of each, what it turns into when it is overdone. We look at the difference between A and its opposite, and between B and its opposite. Then we ask what the two opposites have in common and why they differ, and how A relates to the opposite of B, and B to the opposite of A. The diagonals show the direction in which you can develop without losing what you value in A or B.



WHERE IT COMES FROM

The values and development square (Wertequadrat) from Friedemann Schulz von Thun's Miteinander reden 2, building on Paul Helwig. I work with it in several variations. Its support comes from practice; I am not aware of controlled studies on it.

A QUESTION FROM IT

"What does A turn into when you overdo it, and what does B offer against exactly that?"

INSIDE THE SESSION / EXERCISE 06 OF 06

The pre-mortem before a plan goes live

WHEN I USE IT

Your plan looks ready, and a lot depends on it working.

HOW IT WORKS

We set a date in the future and assume the plan has failed. You list every reason why it could have happened. Then we strengthen the plan against the two or three reasons that matter most, before any money or reputation is at stake.



WHERE IT COMES FROM

Gary Klein introduced the pre-mortem in Harvard Business Review (2007). It draws on a study in which people generated more explanations for an outcome when they treated it as certain rather than uncertain (Mitchell, Russo and Pennington, 1989). The research base is still small, and the effect concerns finding risks, not predicting them.

A QUESTION FROM IT

> “It is six months from now and the plan did not work. What happened?”

WITHIN 24 HOURS

03

Your de-brief

Your next move, in writing



YOUR NEXT MOVE / YOUR DE-BRIEF

It puts what we found into writing while it is fresh, and it points to the next step.

STEP 03 / WITHIN 24 HOURS

03

Your de-brief

Your next move, in writing

WHAT YOU RECEIVE

- Your priorities as you set them in the session, and the points we agreed for each.
- My core observations: what works, where I see a gap, and the questions worth taking into the next step.
- The one recommendation with the most impact.
- Your next step, with its date.
- The recording and the transcript of our session.
- How we can continue, if you want to take the next step together.

BEST PRACTICE

The after-action review

The U.S. Army has used after-action reviews for decades to learn from every exercise and operation, and medicine and aviation have adopted the same discipline. The questions are simple: what was planned, what happened, why, and what to keep and what to change next time.

Navy SEAL teams, a byword for excellence under pressure, apply the same discipline after their operations, as the former SEAL officers Jocko Willink and Leif Babin describe in Extreme Ownership.

Your de-brief applies the same discipline to your decision. It puts what we found into writing while it is fresh, and it points to the next step.

STEP 03 / THE EVIDENCE

Why the de-brief matters

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE	IN YOUR PROCESS
Spoken words fade; written words stay A review of research on patient memory reported that 40 to 80 percent of medical information is forgotten almost immediately. Written information is remembered better and leads to better adherence to what was agreed. Kessels (2003), Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine	You leave the hour with a recording, a transcript and a de-brief, instead of relying on memory while the week moves on.
Structured debriefs improve performance A meta-analysis of 46 samples with 2,136 participants found that debriefs improved effectiveness by about 25 percent on average (d = 0.67). The effect was similar for individuals and teams, in medical and non-medical settings, and was stronger with alignment, with a potential further influence of facilitation and structure. Tannenbaum and Cerasoli (2013), Human Factors	The de-brief follows a fixed structure and is built from your own priorities, which keeps it aligned with your goal.
Learn from what worked, too Soldiers in successive navigation exercises improved more when they were debriefed on both their successes and their failures than when they reviewed only their failures. Ellis and Davidi (2005), Journal of Applied Psychology	My observations name what works in your approach, as clearly as the gap. Both are part of your strategy.
Feedback on the work, never on the person Across 607 effect sizes, feedback improved performance on average (d = 0.41), but more than one third of feedback interventions made performance worse. Feedback lost its effect as it moved attention away from the task and toward the self. Kluger and DeNisi (1996), Psychological Bulletin	My observations are about your situation, your decision and your plan. They are never a judgement of you.
Recorded and reported progress supports goal attainment Across 138 randomised studies with 19,951 participants, asking people to monitor their progress improved goal attainment (d = 0.40). The effect was larger when progress was written down and reported to someone else. Harkin et al. (2016), Psychological Bulletin	Your next step has a date. When we meet again, the session opens with one question: what is better since we last spoke?

THE THREE STEPS TOGETHER

Checkpoints in a noisy week

Each step does its own job. Together they create three checkpoints: one before the session, when you put your thinking into words; one in the session, when you decide; and one after it, when the decision is in writing with a date. That rhythm is the difference between a good conversation and a change that happens.

The week of a senior leader works against that rhythm. Microsoft's 2025 Work Trend Index estimated one incoming meeting invite, email or chat about every two minutes during core hours among the 20 percent of users who receive the most. The three steps reserve some of your attention for the change that matters most, while the daily work continues.

WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT COACHING ITSELF

Coaching works across outcomes. A meta-analysis by Theeboom, Beersma and van Vianen (2014) found positive effects on all five outcomes measured, the largest on goal-directed self-regulation (g = 0.74).

The effect is confirmed in randomised trials. De Haan and Nilsson (2023) analysed 37 randomised controlled studies comprising 39 independent samples and found an overall effect of g = 0.59 across leadership and personal outcomes, with indications of significant publication bias.

Executives benefit. In a randomised study with executives, four coaching sessions over about ten weeks, Grant, Curtayne and Burton (2009) found that coaching raised goal attainment and resilience compared with a control group.

The relationship matters. Across 27 samples, the quality of the working alliance between client and coach was consistently related to coaching outcomes (Graßmann, Schölmerich and Schermuly, 2020).

01

Before: put it into words

02

During: decide

03

After: a step and a date

Book Your Next Move

Your next move, clear and in writing.

THE EVIDENCE AT A GLANCE

Preparation and the session

DESIGN ELEMENT	KEY FINDING	SOURCE
PREPARATION		
Write your answers in your own words	Explaining in writing exposes gaps in understanding	Rozenblit and Keil, 2002
Questions that ask you to reflect	Writing to learn works (0.30); reflection prompts strengthen it	Bangert-Drowns et al., 2004; Graham et al., 2020
Your goal in your words	Self-generated information is remembered better (0.40)	Bertsch et al., 2007
Your questions set the agenda	The prepared outline belongs to the person who brings the issues	Grove; Campbell
Mirror check	Restating confirms understanding; a strong working alliance goes with better outcomes (r = .41)	Ha Dinh et al., 2016; Graßmann et al., 2020
SESSION		
Specific goal first	Specific, challenging goals beat “do your best” (0.42 to 0.80)	Locke and Latham, 2002
Solution-focused questions	Stronger goal approach and mood than problem-focused questions	Grant and O’Connor, 2010; Solms et al., 2022

THE EVIDENCE AT A GLANCE

The next step and the de-brief

DESIGN ELEMENT	KEY FINDING	SOURCE
SESSION		
One question, then silence	Three to five seconds of waiting produce longer, richer answers	Rowe, 1974
If-then next step	Medium-to-large effect on goal attainment (0.65)	Gollwitzer and Sheeran, 2006
DE-BRIEF		
Written, within 24 hours	40 to 80 percent of medical information is forgotten almost immediately (review)	Kessels, 2003
Structured review	Debriefs improve effectiveness by about 25 percent (0.67)	Tannenbaum and Cerasoli, 2013
Successes and gaps	Reviewing successes and failures beats failures alone	Ellis and Davidi, 2005
Observations on the work	Feedback aimed at the self can lower performance	Kluger and DeNisi, 1996
Next step with a date	Recorded and reported progress supports attainment (0.40)	Harkin et al., 2016

Effect sizes are averages across studies and settings. They show what tends to work for many people, never a promise for one person or one decision.

YOUR ADVISOR

Christian Soschner

For 26 years I have worked on building deep tech companies from Series A to IPO as a C-level executive and board member, through financing rounds, partnerships and M&A processes, together with the management teams. I trained in systemic executive coaching at the European Systemic Business Academy (ESBA) in Vienna.

My method is built on the solution-building approach of Peter De Jong and Insoo Kim Berg, on decades of leadership, and on what forty years of Chinese and Japanese martial arts and seventeen marathons and ultramarathons taught me about timing and pacing a long effort.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Bring the question that matters most to you right now.

You receive your onboarding letter within 24 hours of booking, and it opens the process. Sessions run on Zoom, in English or German, and include your preparation sheet, the session, your de-brief, the recording and the transcript.

Do you want your next move clear and in writing? Then book your session here.

Book Your Next Move

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