APPLYING THE OODA LOOP

A practical guide to adopting a faster, clearer, and more adaptive decision-making approach

WHAT THIS IS

The **OODA Loop** is a decision-making framework created by U.S. Air Force strategist **Colonel John Boyd**. It stands for **Observe – Orient – Decide – Act** and was developed to help pilots think and act faster than their opponents in uncertain, fast-moving environments.

Today, it's used by leaders, teams, and innovators worldwide to make better decisions under pressure.

"Speed is not about haste. It's about learning faster than the situation changes."

WHY IT MATTERS

In complex, unpredictable worlds, the organisations that win are those that *learn and adapt* fastest.

The OODA Loop helps you:

- Cut through paralysis and over-analysis
- Make clear calls when information is incomplete
- Learn and adjust quickly from real-world feedback
- Build confidence and momentum even in uncertainty

It's not a one-off process — it's a *continuous learning cycle*.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

1 IN DAILY DISCUSSIONS

When faced with uncertainty, run a fast, mental OODA loop:

- **Observe:** What's actually happening?
- **Orient:** What's important?
- **Decide:** What will I do next?
- **Act:** Take one step, then re-observe.

This reduces over-thinking and builds confidence in adaptive decision-making.

2 IN TEAM MEETINGS

Use the OODA stages to structure your discussions:

1. **Observe:** Start by sharing facts, trends, or signals; no opinions yet.
2. **Orient:** Interpret together. What are we seeing differently?
3. **Decide:** Agree on one clear decision or experiment.
4. **Act:** Assign owners and next steps. Schedule a short follow-up to complete the next loop.

Tip: Visualise your current loops: which projects are moving fast and which are stuck in "observe–orient" with no action?

3 IN STRATEGY AND INNOVATION

Use the OODA Loop for testing ideas and learning faster than competitors.

- Pilot small experiments rather than long plans.
- Use each cycle to refine understanding and direction.
- Encourage reflection: *What did we see, what changed, and what did we learn*

This mindset turns uncertainty into an advantage because your team becomes skilled at *thinking and adapting in motion.*

MINI EXERCISE: APPLY YOUR FIRST LOOP

1. Identify a current challenge or project.

2. Spend five minutes per stage:
    o   **Observe:** List what's actually happening.
    o   **Orient:** Write two possible explanations.
    o   **Decide:** Choose one next step.
    o   **Act:** Try it.

3. After acting, revisit your observations and note what changed.

Repeat weekly — you'll find your clarity and speed improving quickly.

TAKING IT FURTHER

Many teams embed OODA as part of their decision culture, combining it with the RAPID framework to clarify who decides and how learning loops are reviewed.

If you'd like to explore how to introduce OODA Loops in your organisation or leadership team, contact Charlie for guidance or facilitation support.

REMEMBER:

In uncertain times, the winners aren't the fastest thinkers; they're the fastest learners.

The OODA Loop turns uncertainty into a cycle of discovery, confidence, and continuous improvement.