"Seeing the system" workshop

DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP:

This workshop is a space to step back and see the system more clearly. Drawing on years of experience working across complex life sciences and innovation ecosystems, we share patterns, dilemmas, and lessons learned to help participants better understand the forces shaping their decisions — scientific, institutional, financial, and human. Rather than offering formulas or advice, the workshop focuses on developing judgment: learning to locate oneself within a system, recognize incentives and power dynamics, and make choices with greater clarity, timing, and integrity. It is designed for professionals navigating complexity who want to think more clearly before acting. The result for the participant is to grow judgment in a world that is complex, politicized, high-stakes, and incomplete by design by "seeing the system".

Approach:

- Mapping a real-life decision across:
    o Science / incentives / power / time
- Group reflection on:
    o what is visible vs. invisible
    o who carries risk vs. reward
- Challenging questions like:
    o "What are you assuming here?"
    o "Whose problem is this really?"

Justification

Judgment cannot be taught directly. It can only be **cultivated indirectly**. In life sciences especially, data is partial, incentives are misaligned, power asymmetries are real and timing matters as much as truth. Most people see **their lane** (the science, the startup, the funding round, the role they were hired into). The workshop will help them see:

- the **forces acting on that lane**
- who holds **decision power vs. narrative power**
- where **incentives** distort truth
- where **timing matters** more than brilliance
- where **silence** is strategic and where it's dangerous

The core principle: from understanding to "locating oneself" in the system because good judgment in life sciences depends on one thing above all: k**nowing where you stand in the system before you act in it.**

Most bad decisions come from:

- overestimating authority
- underestimating consequences
- confusing technical expertise with systemic power
- acting before one's position is clear

The workshop should help people answer: *Where am I, really, in this system, at this moment?*

Soft skills explored
• **Judgment**: Seeing the whole system, including incentives, power dynamics, and timing.
• **Voice**: Using one's voice with precision—without shrinking or overpowering.
• **Confidence and Premature Certainty**: Calibrating confidence with curiosity and perspective.
• **Cost Awareness**: Recognizing the hidden costs of misaligned environments and chronic overextension.

STRUCTURE OF THE WORKSHOP:

1. **Begin with lived dilemmas.**

Reflection questions:

- What *looks* like the right move?
- What are the hidden pressures?
- Who benefits, who carries risk, who pays later?

2. Teach people to separate four layers (this is crucial)

In life sciences, confusion often comes from mixing layers. You help them distinguish:

a. **Scientific truth**
   What the data actually says (and doesn't).
b. **System incentives**
   Funding cycles, IP, regulation, politics, careers.
c. **Personal position**
   Their role, authority, reputation, dependencies.
d. **Timing**
   What is wise *now* vs. later.

Poor judgment usually comes from collapsing these into one.

3. Use "pattern stories," not success stories

Reflection themes:
- "Here's a pattern I've seen repeat."
- "Here's where very smart people misread the room."
- "Here's what I didn't see soon enough."

Develop discernment by noticing:
- moments where *you* were right scientifically but wrong systemically
- moments where waiting was wiser than acting
- moments where humility preserved optionality

4. Normalize calibrated confidence

People learn judgment by **watching how you hold uncertainty**. Acknowledge the trap you care about most:

Self-doubt → overcompensation → arrogance → loss of trust

Model how you manage uncertainty:
- saying "I don't know yet"
- naming uncertainty without collapsing authority
- asking better questions instead of asserting answers

5. Practice "decision rehearsal," not advice-giving

Reflection themes:
- walk through *consequences*
- explore second- and third-order effects
- ask: *what does this decision lock in? what does it keep open?*

What future does this choice create — and for whom?

Methodology

1. Make the invisible visible

Review the situation:
- unspoken assumptions
- structural constraints
- reputational risks
- political dynamics

Reflection question: "What else is at play here that no one is naming?"

2. Locate the person in the system

Review your part in the system:
- Where do I actually have agency?
- Where am I dependent?
- Where am I being tested without knowing it?
- What role am I being assigned informally?

Reflection question: "Who carries risk or reward?"

3. Distinguish signal from noise

In biotech especially:
- urgency is often manufactured
- confidence is often performative
- data is often over-interpreted

Reflection question: "What truly matters here — and what is just pressure?"

4. Teach timing, not speed

Normalize these:
- waiting
- sequencing
- preserving optionality

Reflection question: Can a good decision at the wrong time still be a bad decision?

5. Closing

Reflection question: what would coherence (with myself) look like if I didn't need to prove anything?