

**From Founder-Led to Future-Ready:
Reimagining Decision-Making at Ping Chong & Co.**

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ACM-671 Decision-Making

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March 29th, 2025

1. Introduction

Ping Chong and Co. (PCC) is at a critical stage in its institutional evolution, and this paper examines PCC's decision-making process during its three-year strategic transition, analyzing how the organization balanced artistic integrity, financial sustainability, and inclusive governance. Drawing on the organization's internal frameworks, external partnerships, and expert consultation-including a firsthand interview with Executive Director Jane Jung-it examines the strengths and challenges of PCC's approach to decision-making. Through the lens of decision theory and applied organizational strategy, it assesses the barriers to its leadership transition process and provides the organization with actionable recommendations for ensuring long-term coherence, clarity, and mission alignment.

2. Current Decision-Making Process at PCC

PCC's decision-making strategy is structured, data-driven, and equity-centered, balancing artistic excellence, financial sustainability, and stakeholder engagement. The 5-3-1 model, peer review process, consulting expertise, and data-driven evaluation ensure that decisions are collaborative, strategic, and mission-aligned.

1. Identify Problems

In PCC's three-year strategic transition plan, leadership transitioned from a founder-led model to a collaborative team structure. To ensure artistic continuity while incorporating new voices and reconciling social impact, artistic vision, and financial sustainability, PCC needed a non-hierarchical approach to management, developing sustainable management centered on equity.

PCC engaged P.S. 314, a social change consulting agency, to assess transition challenges and guide organizational restructuring. Through visioning sessions, focus groups, and strategic

discussions, PCC gathered insights from staff, board members, and external experts, ensuring a well-informed and inclusive transition strategy.

2. Define the Objective

Strategic Goals for Decision-Making

- Establish sustainable leadership.
- Strengthen financial sustainability.
- Maintain artistic innovation and social impact.
- Ensure equity and inclusive decision-making.

Guiding Framework

- Five Core Values: Artistic Creativity, Equity, Humanity, Community-Building, Education.
- Five Strategic Pillars: Artistry, Organizational Development, Equity, Resource Development & Communication, Board Development.

3. Criteria to Evaluate Decisions

PCC's decision-making involves multiple levels of evaluation, with the primary rationale centered around five factors. First, artistic mission consistency, does the decision uphold artistic excellence and community engagement? Second, Financial Viability: Is the decision financially viable and consistent with long-term sustainability? Third, Stakeholder Input: Feedback from the ALT, board, community, and consultants. Fourth, Equity and Ethical Considerations to ensure fairness, transparency, and a trauma-informed approach. Fifth, Operational Feasibility: Is the decision practical and feasible based on PCC's administrative capacity?

External and Internal Evaluation Methods

- Consulting Experts: Engaged Leading ChangeMakers (Organizational Development), Mission Driven Consulting (Fundraising), Boo Froebel (Strategic Plan Implementation).
- Peer Review Process: Used Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process to review leadership decisions.
- Equity-Centered Practices: Integrated equity into budgeting, HR policies, and leadership structuring.
- 3-Day Off-Site ALT Retreat to clarify roles, responsibilities, and governance models.
- QuickBooks: Financial evaluation and budget tracking.
- Neon CRM: Funder/donor tracking and engagement analysis.
- Archival Assessment: Partnered with Winthrop Group to inventory and digitize archives.

4. Generate Alternatives

PCC considered that a single arts chair's leadership model may not support long-term collaborative arts development, and implemented a five-person Arts Leadership Team (ALT) to ensure multigenerational, interdisciplinary decision-making.

PCC secured key funding, including a \$900,000 Mellon Foundation grant (with a \$300,000 matching commitment), \$100,000 from the Howard Gilman Foundation, and \$150,000 from the New York Community Trust for rebranding. To ensure financial sustainability, PCC is developing earned revenue models (archive-based programming, contracted services) and expanding its individual donor base. The Board of Directors was restructured for fiscal oversight, fundraising, and equity integration, with support from Leading ChangeMakers (LCM). PCC also issued an RFP, selecting Flannel & Blade for rebranding. To enhance operations, new hires include an Education & Community Programs Coordinator, Communications Coordinator, and Operations Manager (Stacy Waring).

5. Choose the Decision and Implementation

PCC officially adopted the Five-Person Artistic Leadership Team (ALT) model, implementing the 5-3-1 decision framework to balance collective leadership with structured oversight. However, the Board has ultimate authority for approving and voting on long-term goals. The leadership team will provide direction, strategy, and day-to-day implementation. A peer review process was integrated to refine artistic and leadership decisions, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement. The organization also finalized its new Board structure and governance model, strengthening strategic oversight. To enhance operational efficiency, PCC hired key staff in operations and communications. Additionally, a strategic branding and messaging plan was implemented to align PCC's identity with its evolving leadership and mission.

3. Barriers, Obstacles, and Facilitators

PCC's transition period presents a range of real challenges, including time management, role ambiguity, and resource pressures. The recent interview and previous paper had mentioned that, from the Year Two Transition – Phase 3: Operational Strengthening & Board Development (January – March 2024) reveal that prioritization and time management require dedicated support. In response, PCC hired Stacy Waring as the new Operations Manager in April 2024, a move that has provided critical administrative and operational support to the Artistic Leadership Team (ALT) and streamlined day-to-day operations. Despite this strategic hire, the process of integrating a five-person ALT has still led to confusion over responsibilities. Staff members are adjusting to new role definitions and grappling with the intricacies of the RACI framework, which adds to the challenge of coordinating busy schedules and aligning multiple decision-making streams.

In addition to these scheduling challenges, resource pressures remain a critical concern. Although the organization has secured substantial funding from key sources such as the Mellon and Gilman Foundations, the intensive labor required to implement new systems and support a broader leadership team stretches existing capacities. This financial and human resource strain is compounded by the need to continuously adapt to shifting priorities and emerging challenges in both artistic production and operational management.

Despite these obstacles, several supporting factors are fostering a more favorable environment for the transition. Core organizational values—centered on equity, community, and artistic integrity—act as a steady foundation, ensuring that all changes remain aligned with PCC’s mission. The organization also benefits from the expertise of external consultants, such as those from Leading Change Makers, who provide critical feedback and practical tools for clarifying job roles and streamlining decision-making processes. Trust, both within the new leadership team and between the board and key stakeholders, further underpins these efforts, creating a culture where open communication and collaborative problem-solving can thrive.

Together, these challenges and facilitators shape a complex yet dynamic landscape for PCC’s transition. While time management, role ambiguity, and resource constraints pose real hurdles, the organization’s deep-seated values, expert guidance from consultants, and the strong interpersonal trust among its leaders provide the necessary support to navigate these obstacles. This balance of pressures and enablers is key to ensuring that PCC can sustain its growth and continue its 50-year legacy of innovative, community-centered artistic practice.

4. Strategic Recommendation

As Ping Chong and Company approaches the final phase of its three-year leadership transition, the organization faces a dynamic yet complex decision-making landscape. The

adoption of a five-person Artistic Leadership Team and the development of the 5-3-1 decision-making structure have enabled a more collective and interdisciplinary model, yet several persistent and emerging challenges remain. Drawing from our interview with Jane Jung, as well as insights from previous analysis and transition reports, we recommend a series of targeted strategies to strengthen their decision-making effectiveness and organizational coherence during this important period.

1. Managing Time, Capacity, and Distributed Leadership

As we mentioned before, pressing issues conducted from our interview is the challenge of time management, scheduling coordination, and overall leadership capacity. With five artistic leaders balancing diverse responsibilities and often working across part-time arrangements, aligning schedules and prioritizing decisions has become increasingly difficult. Although the 5-3-1 model attempts to streamline roles by distinguishing between decision makers (5), strategic leads (3), and a final fiscal steward (1), in practice, the structure still requires ongoing coordination and negotiation. PCC has also relied on an API chart (Accountable, Participant, Informed) to clarify responsibilities, but this system demands regular updates and clear communication to remain effective.

To improve this process, we recommend the introduction of a lightweight, rotating facilitator role within the ALT to oversee agenda-setting and timekeeping across major projects. This would reduce coordination burden while respecting the collective nature of the team. Additionally, PCC may benefit from using collaborative platforms such as Asana, a service platform designed especially for team collaboration and work management, allowing users to organize projects, assign tasks, set deadlines, and communicate directly within the platform to centralize decision-tracking and maintain a shared timeline for upcoming commitments. These

tools can help prevent overlap, support transparency for team members operating in overlapping domains.

2. Storytelling Approach: Clarifying and Communicating the Organizational Transition

A second strategic challenge lies in **external storytelling**. As Jane Jung emphasized in our interview, PCC's leadership is eager to share its transition process openly—especially with other arts organizations navigating founder succession—but has struggled to clearly communicate this narrative to public audiences and stakeholders. Despite ongoing efforts such as the social media series “*#FromTheDeskOfTheALT*” and the rebranding work with Flannel & Blade, translating complex internal processes and experimental leadership models into accessible public-facing language remains a consistent obstacle.

We suggest PCC build upon these efforts by creating a “Transition Story Hub” on its website—an interactive section that combines video messages, legacy timelines, leadership bios, and behind-the-scenes process documentation. Additionally, a concept map could also visually show how the transition connects to PCC's broader values, programs, and future vision. These tools would not only clarify the messaging for outside audiences, but also serve as a resource for funders, potential collaborators, and peer organizations seeking models for strategic governance.

3. Stewarding the Legacy and Activating the Archive

Lastly, PCC must continue to work on how to stewards and activate the legacy of its founder, Ping Chong, especially in light of the full transfer of his archives to the company. While Ping Chong and his longtime producing partner Bruce Allardice have fully stepped back from decision-making, they remain close to the organization, offering informal support and occasionally participating in educational programs or legacy-related events as Jane shared through the interview. PCC's responsibility now includes managing Ping Chong's archive,

partnering with institutions like the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, and determining how his legacy is preserved, accessed, and integrated into future programming.

In this case, we recommend that PCC establish a Legacy & Archive Working Group, composed of internal team members, external scholars, and community advisors. This group could guide decisions around curation, digitization, and public engagement with the archive. PCC might explore archive-based programming models—such as workshops, artist residencies, or education kits—that translate Ping Chong’s work into living resources for future generations. By integrating the archive into PCC’s broader artistic and educational strategies, the company can both honor its roots and build new revenue streams aligned with its mission.

5. Short-Term and Long-Term Strategies

Short-Term Strategies (3–12 months)

To stabilize the organization and enhance collaborative functionality during the final phase of the transition, PCC should focus on refining internal processes and clarifying communication, both internally and externally:

- **Clarify Decision Ownership**
 - Clearly define which ALT members are Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed (RACI) across key organizational functions—artistic, fundraising, HR, and governance.
 - Ensures role clarity and reduces overlap or ambiguity in decision-making.
- **Launch An Internal Tracking System**
 - Documents decisions, feedback, and next steps
 - Ensures continuity, supports accountability, and reduces communication gaps which is especially important in a part-time, multi-role team structure

- **Reassign Responsibilities According to Team Realities**
 - Allocate tasks based on team members' availability and role capacities (part-time and full-time).
 - Prevents burnout, supports fairness, and aligns assignments with each member's realistic capacity to lead or support initiatives.
- **Rotate a Facilitator Within ALT**
 - Designate a rotating facilitator from within the ALT to coordinate meetings and lead key projects. Create a facilitation schedule that rotates quarterly or by project cycle, with defined roles like agenda setting, timekeeping, and progress tracking.
 - Reduces the coordination burden on any one individual while maintaining the collective leadership bear.
- **Strengthen External Storytelling**
 - Expand ongoing communication efforts by publicly documenting PCC's leadership transition and organizational evolution. Build a "Transition Story Hub" on the PCC website featuring leadership bios, legacy timelines, interviews, and process narratives.
 - Increases transparency, builds public trust, supports peer learning in the field, and reinforces PCC's evolving identity with funders and stakeholders.

Long-Term Strategies (1–3 years)

As PCC moves beyond its interim transition model, the organization must solidify long-term governance structures, leadership development, and sustainable revenue strategies tied to its evolving identity and legacy:

- **Build a Post-Transition Leadership Model**

- Transition from the interim 5-3-1 model to a long-term, collaborative decision-making structure that balances artistic innovation, equity, and sustainability. Finalize and vote on this model with Board approval, as outlined in the leadership roadmap.
- Ensures long-term organizational stability and coherence beyond the transition period, rooted in PCC's values and real-world experience.
- **Formalize ALT Onboarding and Training**
 - Develop a standardized onboarding and training curriculum for future Artistic Leadership Team members to institutionalize the collaborative culture, equity-centered values, and decision frameworks.
 - Strengthens continuity, preserves institutional knowledge, and prepares new leaders to sustain collective leadership effectively.
- **Monetize and Activate Ping Chong's Legacy**
 - Transform the founder's archive into a source of both public engagement and sustainable revenue. Establish a Legacy & Archive Working Group to design and implement archive-based programs, such as educational kits, artist residencies, public workshops, and partnerships with cultural institutions.
 - Honors Ping Chong's legacy while creating mission-aligned revenue streams and deepening community connection to his body of work.
- **Codify and Align Communication Strategy**
 - Finalize a comprehensive messaging and communications strategy (in coordination with Flannel & Blade) that reflects PCC's new mission, leadership model, and long-term vision.

- Ensures consistency across platforms, supports fundraising, and communicates PCC's identity clearly to all stakeholders.

6. Conclusion

Ping Chong & Co. stands at a pivotal point in its organizational journey, navigating a bold transition from founder-led leadership to a collaborative, equity-centered model. This paper has examined the complexities of PCC's decision-making processes, highlighting the organization's strengths in structured evaluation, stakeholder engagement, and commitment to artistic integrity. While the transition has surfaced challenges, particularly around time management, role clarity, and resource allocation's values-driven approach and openness to adaptation position it well for the future. By refining internal systems, improving external storytelling, and activating Ping Chong's legacy through archive-based initiatives, PCC can strengthen its foundation and extend its impact. As it enters the final phase of transition, PCC is poised not only to sustain its legacy but to serve as a field-wide model for artist-led, community-rooted institutional transformation.