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**ADVISING ELITE PERFORMERS: THE ROLE OF INTUITION,  
TRUST & EXPERTISE**

Journal:	<i>Management Decision</i>
Manuscript ID	MD-11-2023-2076.R2
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Decision-making, Intuitive competence, Advice, Trust, Performance

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## ADVISING ELITE PERFORMERS: THE ROLE OF INTUITION, TRUST & EXPERTISE

### Abstract

**Purpose:** Decision-makers often struggle to combine advice with their own intuition. This study examines how advice-giver traits and decision-makers' intuition influence advice uptake. We present a novel typology based on decision-makers' trust in advice-givers and their perceived expertise.

**Design/ Methodology/ Approach:** This qualitative study uses a sample of publicly available interview data with 51 elite performers. Using inductive and content analysis we explore the mediation between decision-makers' intuitive competence (ability to effectively deploy intuition in interface with advice) and their autonomy (self-endorsement from past performance).

**Findings:** We identify four sources of advice: mentor advice, specialist advice, confidant advice and commentator advice. Drawing on instances of different sources of advice along varying degrees of trust and expertise, we propose a framework for interaction between intuitional competence and advice characteristics.

**Originality:** We offer a novel way of contextualising nuanced forms of advice and provide a structured typology of sources, characterized by trust and expertise. This typology and our findings help reconcile contradictions in decision-making research. Finally, we offer practical guidance for the uptake of advice.

### Keywords:

Decision-making, Trust, Performance, Advice, Intuitive competence

## 1. Introduction

The legendary ‘Bond’ actor, late Sir Sean Connery, had oft noted how his friend Robert Henderson persuaded him to decline an offer of a footballing career with Manchester United. Connery was far from having made credible inroads with Hollywood then. Henderson, a trusted senior in the movie profession, spoke to him about risks of being dropped from the club, and the relative longevity of a career as a movie actor. Henderson was a trusted fellow Scot, and advised Connery to stay on in movies, and improve his ‘Scot’s bur’ and his education (Bray, 2010: 27). Connery let the advice override his intuition, and the rest is history. However, does the confidence to follow one’s intuition increase with success? Would the more successful Connery have followed such advice, or would he have trusted his instincts? Successful individuals including famous entrepreneurs like Richard Branson and Elon Musk claim intuition is a leading factor in their decision-making (Gill, 2022). They allude to intuition being a competence that develops with superior performance. Yet, elite performers also seek council from confidants and experts. How then, do elite performers reconcile this advice with their instincts, particularly when it conflicts with their intuition? These questions motivated this study into how trust, expertise, and intuition inform elite performers’ uptake of advice.

Advice is a prominent theme in contemporary decision-making research (Palmeira, 2020; Haran et al., 2022). Moreover, there is growing interest in the interface between advice and decision-making in organisational theory and practice (e.g. Haddara and Rahnev, 2022; Bonnici, 2019). Moderating factors include personal characteristics, environmental contexts, and the activities being evaluated (e.g. Baskaran et al., 2019). Aspects like levels of self-endorsement based on past performance also influence decision-making (Pust, 2021; Van Gelderen and Jansen, 2006).

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3 Furthermore, a blend of decision-maker's unique tacit knowledge and experience is known to shape  
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5 'intuition' - a widely discussed concept in psychology and philosophy (Hodgkinson and Sadler-  
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7 Smith, 2018). This 'gut feeling' about situations and decisions can fly in the face of predictable  
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9 strategies and has the potential to shape path breaking strategic decision-making (Miller and  
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11 Ireland, 2005). Research suggests a relationship with past performance based self-endorsement,  
12  
13 termed 'internal decision confidence', and autonomy influences whether we follow our intuition  
14  
15 (Pescetelli and Yeung, 2021; Tzioti et al., 2014). Intuition is both affective and cognitive in nature  
16  
17 and does not follow any sequential reasoning. In fact, the term allows justifications to bypass logic  
18  
19 in favour of decision-makers' less decipherable tacit knowledge and experiential baggage (Pust,  
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21 2021; Okoli and Watt, 2018; Sinclair and Ashkanasy, 2005).  
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27 Recent management scholarship differentiates advice by its degree of formality (Achbah et  
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29 al., 2024), depth (Chollet and Revet, 2024), and co-production (Miller et al., 2024). However, such  
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31 advice is poorly conceptualised, relying more on discrete distinctions than theoretical concepts. For  
32  
33 example, Achbah, Vitanova and Fréchet (2024) distinguish between formal and informal advisors  
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35 by delineating those persons officially recognised within the focal organisation and unofficial  
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37 advisors sitting outside the organisation. Similarly, Boënnne, Leten and Van Dyck (2023)  
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39 differentiate between feedback from advisors of different ranks, with all directors and managers  
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41 categorised as high rank and all other parties as low rank. Whilst Chollet and Revet's (2024)  
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43 categorisation of surface and deep advice is more robust, it arguably fails to adequately align with  
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45 established and relevant constructs, thereby risking inconsistent conceptualisation and  
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47 measurement. A survey of the literature reveals that there is a need for a robust advice typology  
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49 developed using and with an understanding of relevant, established management concepts to  
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51 maintain conceptual rigour and measurement consistency. Recent advice scholarship usually draws  
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53 upon economic and organisation theories like jobs demands-resource (Kumar and Lavanya, 2024),  
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3 institutional logics theory (da Fonseca et al., 2023) conservation of resource (Kumar and Lavanya,  
4 2024), organisational learning, and upper-echelons theories (Wang, Jiao and Song, 2023). Even  
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6 studies that utilize communication models, e.g. signalling theory, tend to apply these at the firm  
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8 level (Quignon, 2023). The result of this organisational and economic focus is an overtly outcomes-  
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10 orientated literature emphasising the impact of advice on innovation, firm survival and strategy  
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12 development. However, this orientation has limited our understanding of the psychological  
13  
14 mechanisms informing individual decision-makers' advice uptake within occupational settings.  
15  
16 Specifically, whether individuals choose to act on advice and the mechanisms behind this have  
17  
18 been largely ignored. Whilst some identity-orientated studies exist examining the dynamics of  
19  
20 group decision-making, their scope is largely constrained. For example, Solomon and Hall (2023)  
21  
22 used common-in group identity theory to explore how diverse decision-making groups can generate  
23  
24 less biased decisions. Unfortunately, decision-making diversity in recent advice literature has been  
25  
26 restricted to demographic variables like ethnicity whereas the impact of group diversity along less-  
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28 obvious, conceptual lines has been ignored. Furthermore, whilst the influence of intuition is noted,  
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30 extant research has generally prioritised other influences on decision-making. For instance, studies  
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32 note that decision- makers often rely on their networks for help (Rogers et al., 2023; Doyle et al.,  
33  
34 2015), both when solving problems and making choices (Majchrzak et al., 2021; Robinson and  
35  
36 Stubberud, 2009). This is not surprising given the broader role networks play in learning and  
37  
38 developing peoples' careers (Wiewiora et al., 2019; Dobrow and Higgins, 2019). Advisors'  
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40 expertise and the decision-makers' trust in them is known to strongly inform advice uptake from  
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42 these networks (Ananth and Harvey, 2023; Van Zant and Moore, 2013; Spitze and Lee, 2012).  
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44 However, research on how trust and dis-trust in networks informs decision-making is contradictory  
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46 (e.g. Landis et al., 2022; de Groote and Bertschi-Michel 2021; Gudmundsson and Lechner, 2013).  
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3 To address these gaps, we ask *what informs elite performers' decisions to accept advice? And*  
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5 *how does trust in appraisers and their perceived expertise influence such acceptance?*  
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9 By addressing these gaps, we make a series of theoretical contributions. Firstly, we  
10 contribute to knowledge by presenting a micro-level analysis and mechanism whereby different  
11 types of advice interact with intuitive competence to inform decision-making. This process  
12 perspective contrasts the popular outcomes-orientated, economic and organisational approaches  
13 and better outlines how decision-makers handle advice. This is a crucial arena for elite performers  
14 when negotiating their own intuition and external advice in tumultuous times (Goyal and Goyal  
15 2022, Jha and Lampel, 2014). Second, we propose a novel and robust typology of advice grounded  
16 in established management concepts that helps resolve recurring contradictions in the literature and  
17 facilitates more rigorous conceptualisation and operationalisation. Finally, we offer a more  
18 sophisticated means of understanding and managing advisor network diversity that profiles  
19 advisors on deeper and more relevant conceptual grounds, rather than surface-level characteristics.  
20 Conceptualising advisory diversity using more relevant criteria supports the formation of  
21 committees and panels capable of supporting better decision-making.  
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38 In this study, we integrate trust and expertise into a framework mediated by decision-  
39 makers' intuition. Our dataset comprises 51 semi-structured interviews from *The Tim Ferriss Show*.  
40 This podcast offers insights into the habits and routines of top performers. We examine different  
41 sources of advice, identifying four: mentors, specialists, confidants and commentators, and discuss  
42 how such advice is likely to be received. The exceptional people interviewed on this show include  
43 Peter Diamandis (founder of the X Prize foundation) Derek Sivers (founder CD Baby) and Arnold  
44 Schwarzenegger (actor, producer, politician). Using content and inductive analysis, we analyse  
45 these secondary interviews of elite performers operating in a variety of industries. All participants  
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3 work in a freelance capacity or occupy top management positions within their respective  
4 enterprises. They reflect on their careers, emphasizing work habits, tactics and tools they use to  
5 excel in their fields. Our analysis contextualises the nature and sources of advice participants  
6 encountered throughout their careers.  
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## 14 **2. Conceptual Moorings.**

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17 A vast body of organisational psychology research examines feedback that manifests as  
18 advice for decision-makers (e.g. Haddara and Rahnev, 2022; Bonaccio and Dalal, 2006). Here,  
19 advice comprises the advisors' understanding of past outcomes and performance, and foresight  
20 rationalised therefrom. Behavioural and cognitive dispositions invariably inform biases in advice  
21 giving (Pescetelli and Yeung, 2021). Decision-makers can seek advice from a variety of sources,  
22 including from business advisory programmes, professional and social networks, mutual aid  
23 groups, mentors and family. This relational, attributional and performance contingent schema  
24 therefore benefits from trust and expertise to provide explanations for decision-makers advice  
25 uptake.  
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### 39 *2.1 Interfacing Trust and Expertise for Advice Uptake.*

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42 Trust can dictate behavioural trajectories that are not aligned with performance outcomes  
43 (de Groote and Bertschi-Michel, 2021; Feng and Magen, 2016). Trust formation can be either slow  
44 or rapid and is also a function of non-deliberated, intuitive judgement (Holtz, 2013). Trust is often  
45 considered as situated in the intersection of 'ability', 'benevolence' and 'integrity' (Mayer et al.,  
46 1995). Conversely, expertise, i.e. the degree to which an entity claims and demonstrates  
47 superlative performance in a domain (Klein et al., 2021; Krosnick, 1990), also influences advice  
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uptake. The expertise of a source can be positively correlated with trust in that source, and particularly so when the other dimensions (benevolence, integrity) are not easily underscored. This correlation can diminish and therefore strong scenarios of choice between ‘trust sourced’ vs. ‘expertise sourced’ may arise (Ecker and Antonio, 2021). Past performance induced self-endorsement is also a factor. In effect, the greater a decisions maker’s level of self-endorsement the more freedom they may have when considering advice from experts and trusted sources (Acciarini et al., 2021; Dane et al., 2012; Dane and Pratt, 2007). Therefore, whilst trust and expertise may compete for decision-maker’s attention, intuition can inform prioritising one over the other, or even orienting the decision-maker in a new direction.

## 2.2. *Intuitive Competence*

Extant research outlines two distinct systems in decision-making, the *intuitive system*, where decision processes and characteristics are less, if at all, accessible for introspection. In the alternative but complementary *rational system*, decision-making is a more transparent process, predominantly working to rationalize through trust and expertise quotients (Okoli and Watt, 2018; Novicevic, et al., 2002; Sadler-Smith and Shefy, 2004; Tzioti et al., 2014; Hodgkinson and Sadler-Smith, 2018). Here, intuition is considered a function of problem and opportunity identification and decision-making, manifesting as intuitive insight and intuitive judgement respectively (Walsh et al., 2023; Dorfler and Ackermann, 2012). When the intuitive system dominates, decision-makers may believe that they, not their environment, control their destinies, or surely aspire for such a scenario (Elbanna et al., 2020; Miller et al., 1982). While this may stimulate greater faith in their intuition, it often blinds them to risk and research argues both for and against an over-reliance on intuition (Pust, 2021; Okoli and Watt, 2018; Scopelliti et al., 2015; Bonabeau, 2003). There is a suggestion that decision-makers get superior returns to intuitive thinking based on how effectively they



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3 interface it with available advice, and trust and expertise are key qualifiers of such advice  
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5 (Pescetelli and Yeung, 2021). This ability to effectively deploy intuition in interface with advice,  
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7 we label as *intuitive competence*. Consequently, our conceptual framework (figure 1) posits that  
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9 decision-makers' intuition will interact with expertise and trust in the advisor.  
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12 <INSERT FIGURE 1>  
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### 15 **3. Research Design and Method**

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17 This qualitative study draws on observations from secondary data comprising archived in-  
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19 depth interviews with 51 decision-makers recognized as top-performers in their fields. The  
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21 interviews were conducted by Tim Ferriss for 'The Tim Ferriss Show' podcast that aims to  
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23 "*deconstruct world-class performers from eclectic areas (investing, sports, business, art, etc.) to*  
24  
25 *extract the tactics, tools, and routines*" (Ferriss, 2019:1) Elite performers are relatively  
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27 inaccessible, particularly in the numbers required for data saturation. We sampled interview  
28  
29 participants from this podcast because Tim had 1) access to and explicitly interviewed hard-to-  
30  
31 reach elite performers, 2) an explicit and consistent interview aim that is compatible with our  
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33 research question, and 3) a set of core interview questions, aligned to the show's aim. The archived  
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35 interview data is publicly available at <https://tim.blog/podcast/>. The large sample size (51) was  
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37 required to explore different types of advice and decision-makers' unique responses to them. For  
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39 example, the researchers felt the data was not saturated until they identified instances of all forms  
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41 of advice being accepted and rejected, which they did, but only after analysing several interviews.  
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43 The large sample size is consonant with other management studies (Zhou and Li, 2012; Grant,  
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45 2003).  
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53 The dataset is unique given that the participants are globally recognized in their domains  
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55 and provide detailed insights into decision-making across their careers. These individuals work in a  
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3 range of industries, including publishing, software development and television. Purposive sampling  
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5 was used to select interviewees, inclusion was based on 1) whether participants reflected on  
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7 receiving advice during their interview and, 2) the instances were sufficiently rich to enable  
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9 analysis. The unit of analysis was the decision-maker. Each respondent worked in either a freelance  
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11 capacity or occupied a leadership position within their firm(s). The interviewer was interested in  
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13 exploring participants' professional tactics, tools, and routines.  
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18         Secondary interview data has been used to inform leading management research (De  
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20 Vaujany and Vaast, 2014), and benefit from not constraining interviewee accounts by imposing a  
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22 pre-conceived theoretical framework. Public interviews could, admittedly, encourage skewed  
23  
24 accounts to manage public relations. For example, in the advice context, participants may take full  
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26 credit for ideas and successes and signal their resilience by inflating the criticism they received.  
27  
28 However, the evidence comprises instances of acceptance and rejection of all types of advice in a  
29  
30 range of contexts. These participant accounts of receiving and responding to advice informed our  
31  
32 proposed typology. Specifically, the advice spans advisors' guidance, commentary and reaction to  
33  
34 elite performers' practice, ability, career, decision-making, ideas, beliefs and behaviour. The  
35  
36 observations cited in the coming section facilitate a rich understanding of these different forms of  
37  
38 advice. Table 1 outlines the elite performers comprising the sample.  
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44 <INSERT TABLE 1>  
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47         Inductive and content analysis were used to analyse the interview data (Gioia, Corley and  
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49 Hamilton, 2013; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). An inductive qualitative analysis approach benefits  
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51 from not imposing a rigid preconceived theoretical perspective on participants during data  
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53 collection. In this analysis, codes or first-order concepts are only created during data analysis. This  
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3 is ideal as our interview data was not originally collected for academic research purposes. Gioia,  
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5 Corley and Hamilton's (2013) inductive analyses are a staple of leading qualitative management  
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7 studies (Ananth & Harvey, 2023; Jia et al., 2024; Su, Gao & Tan, 2024). Beyond offering a robust  
8  
9 framework for rigorous qualitative analysis, the method excels at explicitly showcasing how data  
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11 and participants' words inform coding and derived theoretical concepts. Content analysis was  
12  
13 chosen to help enumerate the interactions between the aggregate dimensions identified in the  
14  
15 inductive phase.  
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21 Initially, transcripts were read and re-read before deriving first-order concepts by  
22  
23 highlighting exact text that captured key concepts and thoughts. This generated a compendium of  
24  
25 1<sup>st</sup> order concepts. Next, the authors noted their thoughts, impressions, and preliminary analysis.  
26  
27 The 1<sup>st</sup> order categories, generated in stages 2 and 3 (see Figure 2), were then distilled into a  
28  
29 smaller collection of categories as similar groups were collapsed and merged. 2<sup>nd</sup> order themes  
30  
31 emerged from this more theoretical categorisation process and helped the researchers to better  
32  
33 explain the phenomena. Next, these 2<sup>nd</sup> order themes were used to formulate a set of overarching  
34  
35 theoretical dimensions that help clarify the narrative (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013). All  
36  
37 aggregate dimensions, 2<sup>nd</sup> order themes and first-order concepts were continuously defined and re-  
38  
39 defined to arrive at an authentic and theoretically robust analysis. Once complete, these  
40  
41 dimensions, themes and concepts were used to generate the data structure (Figure 3). Thereafter,  
42  
43 dynamic relationships between aggregate dimensions and between 2<sup>nd</sup> order themes were identified  
44  
45 (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013). Finally, content analysis was employed to enumerate the  
46  
47 occurrence of different types of advice within the dataset, outlining how these instances interacted  
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49 with decision-makers' intuitive competence and autonomy. The subsequent results are discussed in  
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51 the findings section.  
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6 <INSERT FIGURE 2>  
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9 <INSERT FIGURE 3>  
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12 We found a total of 72 observations. 22 and 20 classified as mentor and confidant advice  
13 respectively; 24 as specialist advice and 6 as commentator advice. The two authors independently  
14 extracted and labelled comments relevant to work habits, routines and tools. A total of 72  
15 comments were agreed upon by the authors presented in the findings (table 2) followed by  
16 elaboration on each source of advice from interview data. The trustworthiness of the analysis has  
17 been assured via independent audits of the coding and code incidence reporting, as outlined  
18 previously.  
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29 We first present evidence for the scenarios outlined in our conceptual framework (table 1).  
30 This framework argues the extent to which intuitive competence is tested under varying levels of  
31 trust in the advisor and their expertise. Decision-makers' past performance based self-endorsement  
32 is labelled as 'autonomy' (i.e. how confident they are in making decisions independent of advice),  
33 which was identified as a central moderating influence. Copyright-imposed limitations on the data  
34 restrict the use of direct quotations. Therefore, direct quotes are presented in tables and elsewhere  
35 observations are drawn as narratives of instances from the interviews.  
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#### 46 **4. Findings**

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49 <INSERT TABLE 2>  
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52 <INSERT TABLE 3>  
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3 Findings reveal that decision-makers accept advice more often than they reject it despite the  
4 dataset being composed of high performers. Additionally, there are more instances of advice  
5 conflicting with decision-makers' initial beliefs than 'confirmatory' advice. Four types of advice  
6  
7 are identified and elaborated in the following section: from mentors, specialists, confidants and  
8 finally commentators. Of these, advice from mentors and confidants have the highest acceptance  
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10 ratio and only commentator advice is rejected more than it is accepted (Table 2).  
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#### 18 *4.1. Commentators*

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21 Commentator advice typically comes from individuals whom the appraisee deems to have  
22 little expertise in the area they are advising on and occurs within relationships featuring limited  
23 trust. In other words, an argument for low trust and expertise can be supported. In the data these  
24  
25 often arise in the form of online comments, audience reactions and student comments. These tend  
26  
27 to be 'off-the cuff' commentaries representing initial gut reactions to the appraisees' work and  
28 ideas. Commentator advice tended to oppose decision-makers existing beliefs, and appraisees' were  
29 often critical of their value, as one interviewee, who is a renowned blogger, indicates by noting that  
30 the main 'source of anguish' for her is to not be appreciated and understood for who she is. She  
31 notes a rather negative environment where people tend to pass value judgements without properly  
32 understanding the viewpoint and the values of a person.  
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45 This observation highlights a key issue in the broader sample - opinions are often poorly  
46 conceived and delivered in an insensitive manner arguably due to a lack of trust. Generally, the  
47 data suggests elite-performers believe commentator advice can stifle creativity and innovation. In  
48 fact, only commentator advice was rejected more than it was accepted. However, this does not  
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3 mean all instances are rejected. In fact, such opinions can spark deep reflection on practice as one  
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5 interviewee, a successful martial arts instructor, observes.  
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9 When teaching a class with marines, the instructor complimented a student on a good move-  
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11 only to be ‘stunned’ by a scathing reply from the marine about not needing any ‘positive  
12  
13 reinforcement’. While quite charged up about the episode the interviewee noted that this remark  
14  
15 ‘stuck’ with him, prompting regular reflection on whether positive reinforcement is needed – does  
16  
17 it suggest that one is not as good as they need to be? The data indicates that commentator advice  
18  
19 rarely informs the appraisees’ core vision or central ideas and is primarily evaluative.  
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#### 23 *4.2. Specialist*

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26 Specialist advice is delivered by an appraiser who is perceived to have at least some  
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28 expertise in the area, though limited trust exists between them and the appraisee. In the data, this  
29  
30 type of advice is often delivered by a new boss, new teacher or an assessment panel. One of the  
31  
32 most interesting aspects of this study is that there are richer and more numerous accounts of the  
33  
34 rejection of specialist advice than any other – although there were also more instances of this form  
35  
36 of advice. A famous British pianist illustrates two instances of the rejection of such advice. In the  
37  
38 first instance, an assessor, early on in his piano playing journey, ridiculed him for playing the piano  
39  
40 with one hand to the point where he had to challenge the advice fearing it would otherwise ‘crush  
41  
42 his dreams’. The second episode wherein he passed on trajectory altering advice was when an agent  
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44 advised him to do a master’s degree and then go to Vienna. However, he already had a modest fan  
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46 following and disregarded this advice.  
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52 Commentator advice often tended to conflict with a decision-maker’s initial beliefs. This  
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54 may be partially due to recall – ‘negative’ advice from an unknown layman could simply be more  
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3 memorable. Similarly, specialist advice tends to be delivered in a rather forthright manner. One  
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5 could argue the expertise and appraiser/appraisee power dynamic makes specialists less concerned  
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7 with hurting the feelings of the appraisee and the inflated ego the situation induces, may perpetuate  
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9 less tactful responses.  
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### 12 13 *4.3. Confidants* 14 15

16 Confidant advice comes from trusted people who are commenting on a subject outside their  
17  
18 expertise. Friends, family and colleagues usually provided such advice within this dataset. Strong  
19  
20 elements of warmth, empathy and caring emerge from discussion of such advice, and whilst the  
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22 entrepreneurs didn't always heed confidant advice, consensus suggests close ties provide a safe  
23  
24 place to ask for and receive comments on their work. A recognised musician reflected on  
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26 interactions with her husband, a world-renowned author. She admitted she struggled being  
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28 completely honest with him when reviewing his work as her husband is very sensitive when  
29  
30 receiving advice on his writing. She then worries and second-guesses her advice, sometimes  
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32 wanting to take back what she has said.  
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38 Such trust and closeness can require extreme mindfulness of the appraisee's feelings. Much  
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40 like advice from sources of limited trust, comments can be blunt, but the confidant must live with  
41  
42 the ramifications of this on their future relationship. However, such a privileged trusting position  
43  
44 can mean that their advice is given greater consideration. Analysis reveals even confidants have a  
45  
46 limited impact on artistic work (see table 2, row 6). This also raises interesting questions regarding  
47  
48 the extent to which confidant advice might be self-serving, for example by suggesting hiring an  
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50 assistant with the goal of spending more time with one's spouse.  
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### 54 55 *4.4. Mentors* 56 57 58 59 60

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3 Mentor advice comes from trusted sources perceived as having significant expertise in the  
4 area on which they are advising. Mentor relationships are often longer term and typically comprise  
5 relationships with teachers, colleagues, and bosses. Instances of mentor advice in the data featured  
6 common characteristics. For example, advice was not always positive, often prompting a change in  
7 course or thinking, but appraisers were generally regarded as having their appraisees' best interests  
8 at heart. This is shown in the interview with an accomplished entrepreneur and musician who spent  
9 his early career working for the circus. He cites an instance where his boss and mentor provided  
10 him with tremendous confidence whilst giving a poor, sarcastic performance on stage. She pushed  
11 him to excel from backstage, provoking an improved performance and then complimented him to  
12 reinforce his newfound positive belief.  
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27 Numerous rich accounts of mentor advice emerged from the data, and whilst many  
28 instances served to raise the appraisee's confidence in an activity, comments were not always  
29 delivered tactfully. Much like confidant advice, comments from mentors benefit from being  
30 repeated and absorbed by the appraisee over a long period. The anecdote above alludes to the fact  
31 that mentor advice does not just develop technique, that is, report presentation, but builds tacit skill,  
32 for example showmanship. Mentors can also benefit from a collaborative work environment where  
33 the appraisee receives constant advice during the creation process. The interview data reveals a  
34 higher ratio of acceptance of mentor advice than any other kind identified in this study. This brand  
35 of trusted expertise appears to be particularly persuasive. Mentors often demonstrated an intense  
36 belief in their protégés, their advice seemingly propelling the latter towards achieving their  
37 potential.  
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## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

We have argued that recent advice literature in the management domain primarily draws on economic and organisational theories for an outcome-oriented view of advice (da Fonseca, Chimenti and Campos, 2023; Kumar and Lavanya, 2024; Wang, Jiao, and Song, 2023). Even when communication theories are applied, these are generally conducted in organisational settings (Quignon, 2023). The result is a contemporary knowledge base that overlooks how decision-makers absorb, accept and action advice. Therefore, our first contribution is a model that offsets these economic and organisational perspectives by providing a micro-level analysis of the mechanism whereby advice is considered alongside decision-makers' intuition. Second, advice has been poorly conceptualised and operationalised in contemporary management literature, primarily by failing to delineate forms of advice based on robust concepts or by overly simplistic operationalisation (e.g. Achbah et al. 2024; Boënne et al., 2023). By delineating advice based on levels of trust and expertise, our study contributes a robust typology of advice that builds upon relevant and established academic concepts.

Specifically, our framework enables scholars to overcome unresolved contradictions in research about how network trust and dis-trust inform decision-making (e.g. Landis et al., 2022; de Groote and Bertschi-Michel 2021; Gudmundsson and Lechner, 2013). Furthermore, prior research argues that superior past performance lead decision-makers to discount expert advice (e.g. Kämmer et al., 2023; Tost et al., 2012). However, this tendency can be mitigated if individuals are inclined to be more cooperative. Our findings serve to reconcile contradictions, enabling easier assessment of trust and expertise influences, and past performance-based biases, on decision-making. Finally, modern identity-orientated studies of group decision-making tend to conceptualise diversity too narrowly, by emphasising the importance of demographic variables like ethnicity without

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3 considering more nuanced forms of diversity based on theory (Solomon and Hall, 2023). Our  
4 advice typology resolves this gap by introducing a framework that offers a more sophisticated and  
5 conceptually sound means of delineating unique forms of advice and assessing decision group  
6 diversity.  
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13 We propose four different types of appraisers: commentators, specialists, confidants and  
14 mentors. These appraisers differ in perceived levels of trust and expertise. Trusted advisors' input  
15 was often accepted in the sample, that is, advice from confidants and mentors. Studies have found  
16 people are more likely to evaluate advice positively from those they trust (e.g. MacGeorge et al.,  
17 2019; Dalal and Bonaccio, 2010; Goldsmith and Fitch, 1997). However, trusted advice does not  
18 always benefit from generous attributions (Landis, 2022). Our analysis suggests that untrusted  
19 sources are perceived to deliver advice in a rather matter of fact or even hostile manner from the  
20 vantage point of elite performers. Advice from low-trust specialists and commentators can also be  
21 interpreted as ill considered. This is because relatively lower trust appears to prompt appraisers to  
22 be more stringent in their assessment. However, existing literature does not highlight the important  
23 role 'untrusted' advisors play in prompting valuable reflection on current practice. Goldsmith and  
24 Fitch (1997) argue closer advisors could be preferred as they are perceived as more knowledgeable  
25 and caring. Our data suggests after separating trust and expertise, advice from trusted ties is still  
26 positively embraced. There are suggestions this could be due to the reduced embarrassment  
27 attached to seeking advice from close partners, or dominant network members with behavioural  
28 humility (Knowlton et al., 2022; Nadler, 1991). The interview data provide marginal support for  
29 this assertion. Yet, our study does not confirm that trust is more important than expertise in the  
30 advice domain. The data suggests that trusted advisors benefit from being able to tailor their advice,  
31 making it more palatable for the appraisee. Furthermore, they can deliver this advice continuously  
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3 over an extended period. Overall, advice was rarely be attributed to shaping ideas directly. This  
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5 point is intriguing given that prior research highlights that decision-makers prefer advice that  
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7 proposes alternative directions (e.g. Kämmer et al., 2023; Bonaccio and Dalal, 2006).  
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11 Analysis of the data also reveals that elite performers do balance advice with intuitive  
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13 thinking. They may adopt this approach to combine and mitigate the respective strengths and  
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15 weaknesses of intuition when making decisions (Gill, 2022; Bonabeau, 2003; Scopelliti et al.,  
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17 2015). Such calibration can help these elite performers contextualise risk. However, the sample  
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19 often used a more intuitive decision-making system when fulfilling, or being challenged on, their  
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21 broader vision. ‘Creatives’ in particular, appeared to be ruled by unconscious, rapid, tacit and  
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23 associative feelings typifying more intuitive decision-making (Walsh et al, 2023; Tzioti et al.,  
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25 2014). A possible explanation is that decision-makers may appreciate that they will lose their drive  
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27 if they don’t follow their intuition.  
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32 Overall, evidence was found for acceptance and rejection of all forms of advice in the  
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34 typology, and we argue that decision-maker’s intuition plays a significant role here. Advice from  
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36 trusted sources, for example mentors and confidants, can be more thoughtful, considerate and  
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38 delivered over time. Additionally, experts, for example mentors and specialists, can be forthright  
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40 and identify areas for development. This complements existing research that finds that listeners that  
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42 ‘challenge’ are more helpful for problem solving (Behfar et al., 2020).  
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### 47 *5.1 Practical Implications*

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50 Popular depictions of ‘heroic’ leaders who cast the naysayers aside and remain true to their  
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52 vision are often contradicted by calls to embrace advice. Our study serves to reassure decision-  
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54 makers that even elite performer’s value and regularly seek advice. Whilst this feedback isn’t  
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3 always followed, rigid trailblazers are in the minority. Our findings help managers conceptualise  
4 different forms of advice, understand their inherent strengths and weaknesses, and develop  
5 strategies for prioritising advice in different situations. Moreover, our study offers several  
6 important contributions to practice.  
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13 Firstly, our findings support managers by helping them better understand and articulate their  
14 decision-making processes. Oftentimes managers are not fully aware of how and why they pursue  
15 certain courses of action, yet responsible decision-making entails being able to follow and  
16 articulate a sound process, regardless of the outcome. As such, by explicating how elite performers  
17 process advice from different sources and via their intuition, our findings help executives and  
18 managers make responsible decisions. Moreover, by clarifying this process practitioners can more  
19 effectively evaluate their decision-making and counsel seeking activities. Second, our findings can  
20 help managers develop richer and more sophisticated strategies for assembling diverse advisory  
21 boards to support superior decision making. The process of creating diverse groups of advisors can  
22 degenerate into surface-level box tick exercises prioritising more visible characteristics or  
23 demographics. However, our findings encourage executives to consider deeper criteria like  
24 expertise and social closeness when assembling diverse committees. Furthermore, our findings  
25 indicate that managers can benefit from drawing upon multiple sources of advice, particularly for  
26 big decisions. This goes beyond traditional notions of 360-degree feedback to include the  
27 perspectives of strangers, friends and family outside the organisation. Decision-makers don't  
28 necessarily need to follow the advice, but the diversity of perspectives can insulate managers from  
29 group think and a lack of forthright feedback. There is an impulse to dismiss contrarian  
30 commentator advice as ill-informed or even toxic. Additionally, confirmatory advice from such  
31 sources may easily be under-valued. Yet breaking out of one's own bubble can help acquire and  
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3 appreciate novel perspectives and approaches. Decision-makers need to be aware of potential bias  
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5 towards various sources, either because they induce feelings of confidence and competitiveness, or  
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7 warmth and safety. Managers would benefit from appreciating the strong influence close  
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9 relationships can exert on their business decisions, particularly given that such advice arrives  
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11 consistently over time. Therefore, decision-makers should consider discussing mentor and  
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13 confidant advice with specialists before acting. Digital forums such as those offered by  
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15 StackExchange.com and LinkedIn.com can act as an informed, but impartial sounding board to  
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17 evaluate such advice.  
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## 22 **6. Limitations and Future Research**

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25 Participants identified all instances of advice retrospectively; thus, only memorable  
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27 examples are accounted for in this study – which may account for the relative lack of commentator  
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29 advice. Elite performers may find commentator advice unmemorable or uninteresting because it  
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31 occurs so regularly and generally comes from strangers. The findings reveal that top performers  
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33 often accept non-affirmative advice, but whether such tolerance differs by industry and vocation is  
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35 under-explored. Additionally, this study delineates advice based on levels of trust and expertise.  
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37 Therefore, researchers could find data to explore further qualifiers for advice, for example  
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39 solicited/unsolicited, to develop the typology. There is also increasing interest in the role  
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41 personality plays in the entrepreneurial process, future studies could examine how different  
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43 personality types respond to the forms of advice identified.  
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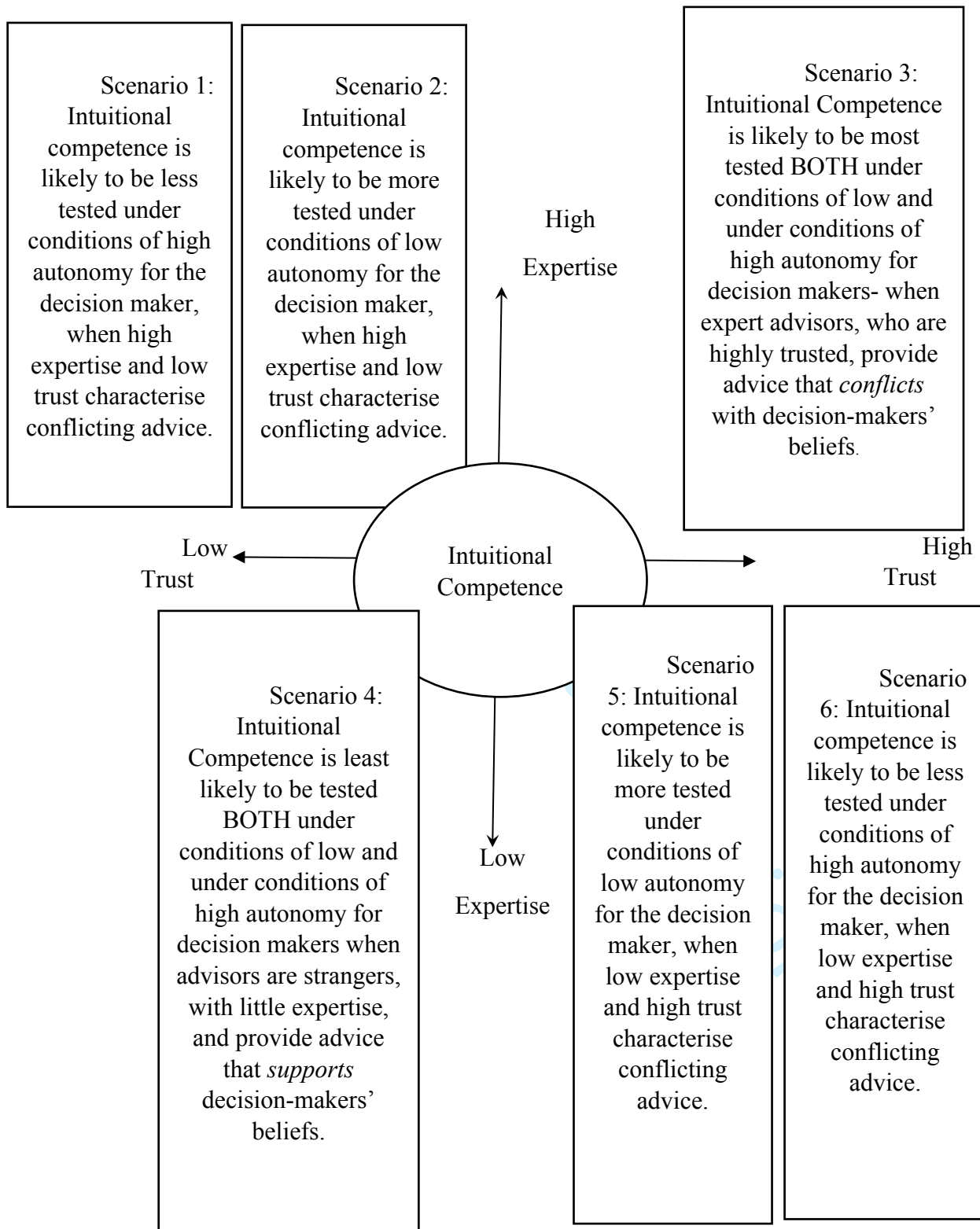
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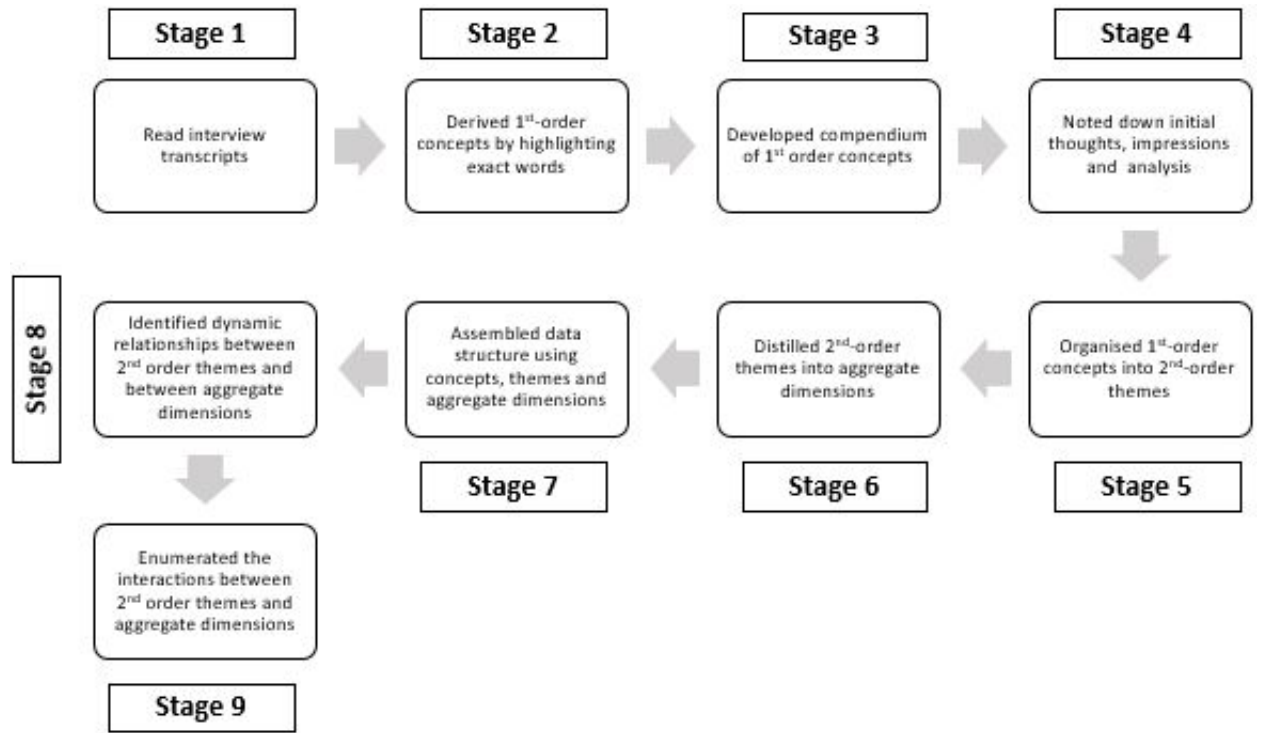
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**FIGURE 1: INTERACTION BETWEEN INTUITIONAL COMPETENCE AND ADVICE CHARACTERISTICS**



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Figure 2. Qualitative Data Analysis Method



Process adapted From Hsien & Shannon (2005) & Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013)

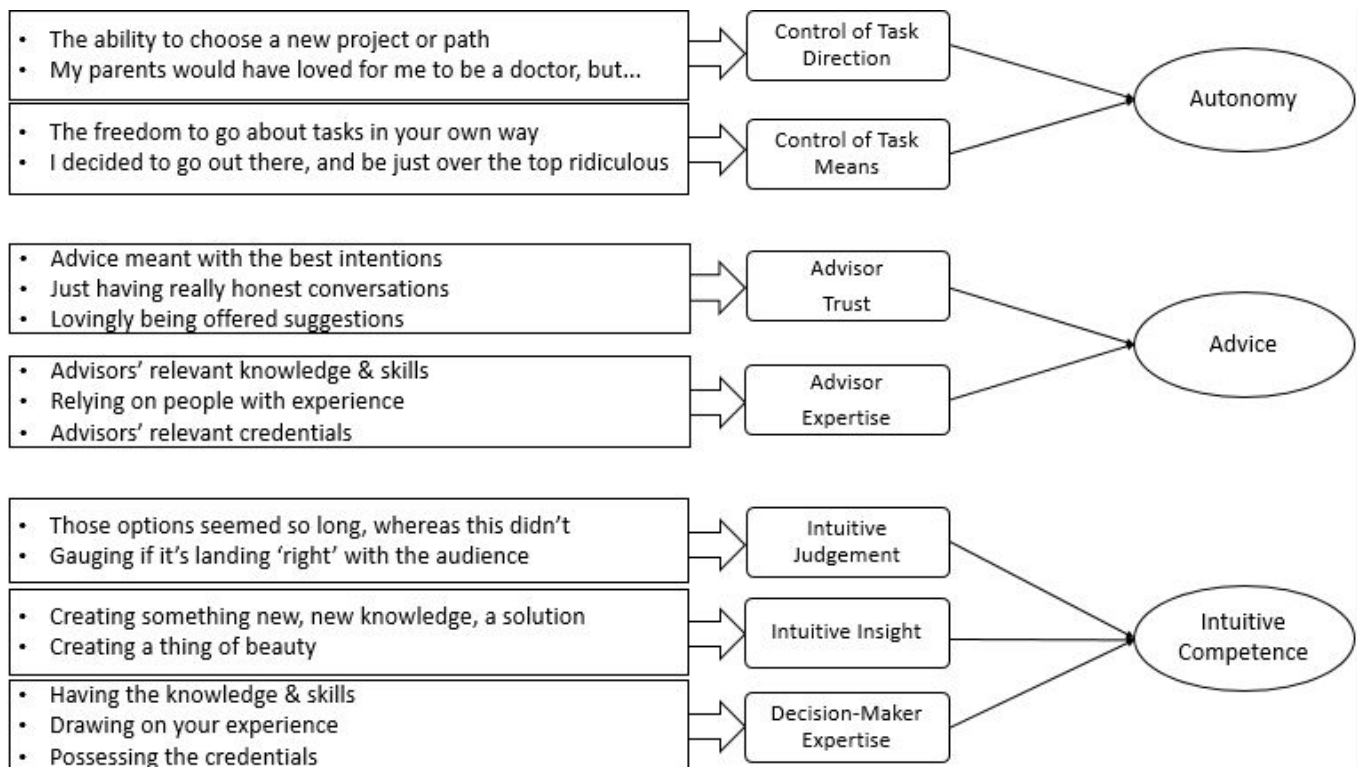
Management Decision

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**Figure 3. Data Structure**



*Note: For the sake of clarity, presented codes are often indicative of more positive responses. For example, the most trusting relationships. This is to clearly highlight the dimensions of second order themes and to show that these were identified from the codes and data. Of course, codes illustrating negative values (e.g. a lack of trust) could have also been presented. Such instances are discussed in more detail in the findings section.*

**TABLE 1: PARTICIPANTS**

<b>Respondent (Occupation)</b>	<b>Respondent (Occupation)</b>
1. Tony Robbins (Entrepreneur)	2. Peter Diamandis (Entrepreneur)
3. Phil Libin (Founder/Chairman)	4. Tim O'Reilly (Founder/CEO)
5. Kevin Costner (Actor)	6. Arnold Schwarzenegger (Actor)
7. Murray Carter (Craftsman)	8. Brian Grazer (Film Producer)
9. Derek Sivers (Entrepreneur)	10. Mary Karr (Author)
11. Blake MyCoskie (Entrepreneur/Author)	12. M. Sanjayan (Scientist)
13. Nicholas McCarthy (Pianist)	14. Mark Bittman (Author/Journalist)
15. Arriana Huffington (Founder/CEO)	16. Mike Maples (Investor)
17. Debbie Millman (Entrepreneur/Designer)	18. Dave Camarillo (Martial Arts Coach)
19. Whitney Wolfe Herd (Founder/CEO)	20. Terry Crews (Actor)
21. Maria Popova (Blogger)	22. Tim Ferriss (Writer/Entrepreneur)
23. John Paul DeJoria (Entrepreneur)	24. Bonzoma Saint John (Chief Brand Officer)
25. Justin Boreta (Musician)	26. Seth Godin (Writer/Entrepreneur)
27. Maria Sharapova (Tennis Player)	28. Frank Blake (Executive/Chairman)
29. Amanda Palmer (Musician)	30. Mike Birbiglia (Comedian)
31. Bill Burr (Comedian)	32. Daniel Pink (Author)
33. Glenn Beck (Television/Radio Host and entrepreneur)	34. Jamie Foxx (Actor/Musician)

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| 35. Richard Branson (Entrepreneur)              | 36. Cindy Whitehead (Entrepreneur)                  |
|   | 38. Evan Goldberg<br>(Screenwriter/Comedian/Actor)  |
| 37. Matt Mullenweg (Entrepreneur)               | 40. Seth Rogen<br>(Writer/Comedian/Actor)           |
| 39. Sharon Salzberg (Teacher/Author)            | 42. Jim Collins (Author/Consultant)                 |
| 41. Dan Harriss (Author/News Anchor)            | 44. Harley Finkelstein (Entrepreneur)               |
| 43. Daniel Ek (CEO)                             | 46. Dr Stefi Cohen (Business Owner/<br>Powerlifter) |
| 45. Dr. Jim Loehr (Performance<br>Psychologist) | 48. Marc Randolp (Entrepreneur)                     |
| 47. Grant Hackett (Former Olympic<br>Swimmer)   | 50. Steven Pressfield (Writer)                      |
| 49. Katie Haun (General Partner)                |   |
| 51. Elizabeth Lesser (Author/Entrepreneur)      |   |

**TABLE 2: INTUITIVE COMPETENCE BEING TESTED UNDER VARYING LEVELS OF TRUST AND EXPERTISE**

Scenario	Observations : Evidence from Interview Data
<p>1. Intuitive competence is likely to be less tested under conditions of high autonomy for the decision maker, when high expertise and low trust characterise conflicting advice.</p>	<p><i>“I actually went out to three really important directors, and I'm not going to use their names. I know that would be interesting, but they were top of the heap guys. And all of them had things that they wouldn't do to the movie. Some would get rid of the opening Civil War sequence. Some thought it was just too long. Somebody thought it probably shouldn't be a white girl, that that seemed like a cliché. And I said well, it really wasn't on the frontier. People were traded; there was a lot of that going on. So once I got past them, I thought to myself, you know, I think I should direct this.”</i></p>
<p>2. Intuitive competence is likely to be more tested under conditions of low autonomy for the decision maker, when high expertise and low trust characterise conflicting advice.</p>	<p><i>“I met the CEO for the first time, I was just out of Princeton and drafted the really verbose report. I was 2 minutes into narrating this report when the CEO goes ‘Tim, I don't need the story, I just need the next step’”. And another thing he would say is “don't need the good news, tell me what's going wrong”.</i></p>
<p>3. Intuitive Competence is likely to be</p>	<p><i>“Carlton [the boss' wife) is the one that – she kept pushing me from backstage, like, come on, you're</i></p>

<p>most tested BOTH under conditions of low and under conditions of high autonomy for decision makers- when expert advisors, who are highly trusted, provide advice that <i>conflicts</i> with decision-makers' beliefs.</p>	<p><i>up there acting like David Letterman, don't do this kind of, uh-huh, I'm so cool, alright everybody, here's the next act. Like, I think I was trying to be cool, because I thought that people were judging me, right? And, she said, these people came here for a show. Go give them what they came here for! And so, one time, I decided to go out there, and be just over the top ridiculous. I went out there, and I said, ladies and gentlemen, what you're about to see is one of the most amazing – we have an elephant that is going to be coming from backstage – I did this whole thing, and the fast-talking voice, and a real pizzazz to it, and the audience loved it, and I came backstage, and she said, there you go!"</i></p>
<p>4. Intuitive Competence is least likely to be tested BOTH under conditions of low and under conditions of high autonomy for decision makers when advisors are strangers, with little expertise, and provide advice that <i>supports</i> decision-makers' beliefs.</p>	<p><i>No directly quotable instances can be drawn from interview narratives but interpretative synthesis from responses provide useful cues . Participants often tell their stories as heroic narratives, they give credit to mentors where it's due but also like to emphasise struggle, that is, facing critical advice. The support of strangers with no relevant expertise may be unmemorable or undervalued by the decision-maker.</i></p>
<p>5. Intuitive competence is likely to be</p>	<p><i>No directly quotable instances can be drawn from interview narratives but interpretative synthesis</i></p>

<p>more tested under conditions of low autonomy for the decision maker, when low expertise and high trust characterise conflicting advice.</p>	<p><i>from responses provide useful cues. If a participant is speaking to a highly trusted person and received conflicting advice, and simultaneously he/she has low autonomy, it is similar to speaking to a guardian in formative years. The lack of instances could be because it occurred in the distant past and/or is less relevant to their story because the context is much different from when the advice was received.</i></p>
<p>6. Intuitive competence is likely to be less tested under conditions of high autonomy for the decision maker, when low expertise and high trust characterise conflicting advice.</p>	<p><i>“I think there’s something about music that is about intuition, right? It’s like, it’s about getting your brain out of the way. And so a funny thing happens where I’ll play it, let’s say, for my mom, or for a friend who doesn’t happen to be a musician, and a lot of times I’ll value that sort of advice tremendously in a sense because people will both say something like, “You know, I’m not a producer, but this song to me feels like X, Y, or Z,” and for me it’s a more pure response. And I just want to hear how it makes people feel, or what the very first thought that comes to them, versus someone who’s a producer or a friend of ours who might be there who is going to zoom in on the details. So I’m really looking for just a general feeling of, “What does this song elicit in you? What sort of images does this bring up?”</i></p>

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**TABLE 3: INSTANCES OF DIFFERENT SOURCES OF ADVICE IN DATA ALONG TRUST AND EXPERTISE LEVELS**

	Trusted			Non-Trusted		
<b>Expert</b>	Mentor (Accepted 17; Rejected 5) Total: 22			Specialist (Accepted 15; Rejected 9) Total: 24		
	Supporting Belief	Neutral	Against Belief	Supporting Belief	Neutral	Against Belief
	Accepted: 2	Accepted: 8	Accepted: 9	Accepted: 2	Accepted: 3	Accepted: 10
	Reject: 5	Reject: 5	Reject: 5	Reject: 9	Reject: 9	Reject: 9
<b>Non-Expert</b>	Confidant (Accepted 16; Rejected 4) Total: 20			Commentator (Accepted 2; Rejected 4) Total: 6		
	Supporting Belief	Neutral	Against Belief	Supporting Belief	Neutral	Against Belief
	Accepted: 2	Accepted: 7	Accepted: 7	Accepted: 2	Accepted: 2	Accepted: 2
	Reject: 1	Reject: 3	Reject: 3	Reject: 4	Reject: 4	Reject: 4

Table outlines instances of advice acceptance and rejection occurring in the data. We have noted where advice supports or contradicts a decision maker's existing belief. The arrows represent the continuum of trust and expertise.