

3.4 Organizational leaders and the context for their use of evidence



Organizational leaders include both business and non-governmental organizational leaders. They make decisions in their own right, and can shape the scope and supports for decision-making by the professionals who work for them and the citizens they serve. Here we provide context for how organizational leaders make decisions using questions likely to elicit factors that could support (or discourage) their use of evidence.

Questions	Prompts
What types of decisions do they make?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic, tactical and operational • If operational: programmed (routine) versus non-programmed
Where and how are decisions made?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head office, country office or local office • Chief executive, other C-suite leader, manager, employee or volunteer • Personal decision (command), consult, consensus or vote • Time constraint
What factors may influence decision-making?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need a business case to offer goods and services • Make decisions within regulatory and organizational constraints and market opportunities, contending with shareholder or stakeholder pressure, considering both ‘what is’ (e.g., data analytics) and ‘what should be’ (e.g., corporate values and sales targets), and in light of external events (e.g., economic crisis)
What ‘structures’ may provide a way in for evidence (and for institutionalizing evidence support)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal evidence-support units, including data-analytics and evaluation (e.g., A/B testing where commercial pressures encourage the use of randomized-controlled trials) • Internal units for knowledge management, research and development (R&D), budgeting and planning, marketing, monitoring, auditing, and risk management • External support from advisory groups, management-consulting firms, and the financial-services sector (e.g., financing) and authorities (e.g., externality pricing) • External support from global technical-standard setters
What ‘processes’ may provide a way in for evidence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgeting, planning and monitoring • Workplace policies, procedures, handbooks and other tools to support workflows • Hiring criteria, performance-review criteria, promotion criteria, turn-over rate, and professional development for staff • Organizational accreditation • Quality assurance • Government, stakeholder relations, public and media relations • Philanthropic giving • Environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) principles • UN Global Compact principles and UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

Evidence syntheses that address the factors that influence the use of evidence in organizations and the strategies that increase the appropriate use of evidence in organizations are harder to come by (than those focused on governments), usually focused on the health sector, and typically of low- and medium-quality.(20-22) Many evidence syntheses will likely be needed in future given the heterogeneity of this category, which comprises both the full array of businesses and the full array of non-governmental organizations. Ideally these evidence syntheses will be undertaken using a common framework, such as one proposed in the Effective Altruism Forum, to permit comparisons across types of organizations.(23) One of the commissioners regularly reminds us that many successful businesses – from the credit card company Capital One and the supermarket chain Coles, to Amazon, Google and Netflix – do randomized-controlled trials all the time.(24)