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TAKING THE FIRST STEP IN THE AI JOURNEY

Workshops, Consultants and Grants

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The advent of artificial intelligence ("AI") has turbo-charged some law practices, while others are only at the experimental stage, or have not yet started on this journey. Individuals can access and use AI easily, but it is more challenging to integrate AI use into workplace operations and workflows. Reasons range from resourcing to expertise to mindset. This last challenge is probably the most important one to overcome, as "where there is a will, there is a way". This article explores possible solutions to overcome various barriers and obstacles to AI adoption by law firms, drawing on resources provided by the Ministry of Law to law firms, and using the Legal Aid Bureau as a case study.

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I. Barriers to entry – trust, expertise and resources

1 A survey conducted by the Ministry of Manpower published on 30 April 2026, showed that around 70% of firms (in different industries) in Singapore have not adopted artificial intelligence ("AI") in their operations. Larger companies show higher adoption rates, with 76.4% of firms that have more than

1 The views expressed in this article are the authors' own, and not representative of the views of the Ministry of Law or the Legal Aid Bureau ("LAB").

500 employees having adopted AI, and just 23.9% of firms with fewer than 25 employees using artificial intelligence ("AI"). Overall, 28.5% of firms in Singapore have begun using AI, but most remain at the planning or piloting stages, with only 3.8% having started integrating AI into their core processes. The firms' most commonly cited barriers to AI adoption are high implementation costs and a lack of in-house expertise. Smaller firms also face other challenges such as lack of strategy and low trust in AI.[2]

2 Law firms in Singapore would mostly fall into the category of smaller firms. Around 80% of law firms would have fewer than 200 employees, and about 65% would have 25 employees or fewer.[3] They would thus likely face the same challenges as the smaller firms surveyed by the Ministry of Manpower. This article is targeted at law firms who have barely started, or not even yet started, on the AI journey, to address the challenges of resourcing and expertise, and the strategy and trust issues.

II. Getting 100% on board the artificial intelligence train

3 On the latter, the experience of the Legal Aid Bureau of Singapore ("LAB") may be of interest. LAB was established on 1 July 1958, 67 years ago. Over the decades, it has navigated every major wave of technological change in the legal workplace – from handwritten documents and typing pools, to desktop computers, to going fully paperless in 2015 with the launch of its electronic case management system, Genie,[4] which handles between

2 Sarah Koh, "Nearly 3 Out of 4 Firms in Singapore Yet to Adopt AI, MOM Survey Finds", *The Straits Times* (2 May 2026).

3 These are estimates based on data extracted from the Law Society of Singapore in the first quarter of 2024 by "The Advocate", a product of The Advocate Metrics Insights Pte Ltd. See their website at: <https://theadvocate.sg/Home> (accessed 24 June 2026).

4 Short for Green ENd-to-end paperless process supported by Intelligent E-system. This replaced LAB's earlier (and first) electronic case management system. However, this first system was not comprehensive, and most of the documented activities on the file (such as letters, court documents, and attendance notes) were still done in hardcopy, or were in e-mail form – meaning that one would have to search across multiple platforms to get all the information on the file.

6,000 and 7,000 registered cases a year. Now, in 2026, LAB is attempting its next move on the technology curve – AI.

4 Each technological change in LAB brought its own challenges. Not everyone was equally welcoming of change. LAB has always been, and still is, a diverse organization – currently it has about 50 staff, ranging in age from mid-20s to late 60s, with staff of different educational backgrounds, including 20 lawyers.

5 The challenge is how to get such a diverse group of people to recognise the importance of embracing AI. The recent Employee Engagement Survey[5] has provided some encouraging data. 100% of the survey respondents in LAB agreed with the following statements:

> My organisation encourages innovation and recognises new and better ways of working.
>
> My organisation uses systems and technology to improve how we work and innovate, *eg*, clear SOPs,[6] digital tools, AI (Pair, AIBots),[7] data analytics.

6 98% of the survey respondents agreed with the statement: "My organisation helps officers prepare for the future by sharing emerging skills needs and helping them grow."

7 This suggests that LAB officers, regardless of their age, educational level, job role or years in LAB or the civil service understand the importance of learning and applying new technologies, including AI, in order to work more effectively, and for career longevity. They also feel supported in doing so.

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5 This is the survey for the annual league table "Singapore's Best Employers" compiled by The Straits Times and global research company Statista. For the most recent ranking exercise for 2026, thousands of employees from about 2000 organisations in 27 sectors took part, including all the Civil Service departments. For the latest survey, there were 44 respondents from LAB out of 46 respondents who were eligible to take part (based on the date that they joined LAB, whether they were on long leave, *etc*) – a 96% response rate.

6 Short for Standard Operating Procedures.

7 These are government tools similar to ChatGPT, Claude and other commercial artificial intelligence ("AI").

III. Building trust – one workshop at a time

8 What is the nature of this help?

9 There are awards given for innovative projects and awards at the Ministry level, access to government AI tools, and training in the use of AI tools. However, one can drag the horse to the water but not make it drink, as the saying goes. What has been most effective for LAB in changing mindsets and sparking an interest in experimenting with and using AI, is small-group hands-on workshops. In these workshops, participants are taught how to use AI tools on the spot to solve problems they face in their daily work. The following information has been based on LAB's experience in conducting these workshops.

10 The workshop size needs to be no more than eight people, to be effective.[8] It is all right if the participants have a different range of abilities and roles – those who are more advanced can help those who are less so, and there might be useful cross-pollination when people with different roles interact and share ideas. Creating a safe space is important, however, so that no one feels intimidated or too shy to speak up and ask questions, or embarrassed if they do not catch on as quickly as the others. The facilitator needs to be familiar with AI tools as well as the operations of the department. The person need not be an expert – even a young tech-minded associate or paralegal who has attended some AI courses could facilitate the session.[9] Alternatively, law firms can engage a legal technology consultant for the first couple of workshops, to "train the trainer", using the government resources available.[10] For firms of ten or fewer people, a single workshop covering the whole team would be feasible, and would likely be even more effective, because everyone would share the same workflows and can immediately

8 This is about the size of an effective focus group (about six or seven people): Joanna Jones, "How Many People Should Be in a Focus Group?", *InterQ Research* <https://interq-research.com/how-many-people-should-be-in-a-focus-group/> (accessed 24 June 2026).

9 Uploading this article into an AI tool and asking it to generate a workshop program based on the ideas in this article would be a good first exercise in using AI practically.

10 See paras 15–18 below.

see how the exercises apply to their daily work. For any law firm, leading by example is important – senior lawyers and law firm partners should attend the workshops, as well as the most junior staff in terms of years and position. (The LAB workshops were personally conducted by one of the co-authors of this article, the Director of Legal Aid ("DLA")[11] and every single LAB officer attended at least one workshop).

11 It is important for participants to prepare some materials for the session, such as a writing sample (of their own), a writing sample of someone else's which they think is good, a problem in their daily work that they would like to fix (together with sample documents, *eg,* if they would like to cut the time they spend on drafting a statement of claim, then they should bring a sample statement of claim and the source documents they would base the statement of claim on, *eg*, client attendance notes). These documents should be redacted for confidentiality, if necessary. (There are further documents to be prepared, depending on which exercises are to be conducted for the workshop – for details of these, refer to Exercises 1–5 below.)

12 Depending on the interest of the participants, these are some sample exercises the facilitator could conduct at the workshop.[12] The idea is not to overwhelm the participants with information, but let them get into using the AI tools quickly. All participants should be given access to the relevant AI tools in their laptops. There should be at least three hours of protected time for the participants to go through the various exercises (about 25 minutes for each of the five Exercises, and some time left over for optional exercises and a short debrief). It would be helpful to have a large screen in the room which participants can use to share their respective answers and creations with the rest.

11 The Director of Legal Aid is not an expert in information technology or AI but has attended one AI course where she learned how to use the government AI tools, namely Pair Chat and AIBots, and through this, was inspired to experiment with more government AI tools as well as commercial AI tools.

12 All the materials and prompts for these exercises and the exercises themselves were created by LAB, with the help of commercial AI as well as government AI tools.

Exercise 1: Using prompts to create prompts

1 First, prompting. Participants could be told to type in this prompt: "Take on the role of a master prompt engineer. Give me a prompt to [for example, assess my writing standard and improve my writing]. Ask me as many questions as you need to, in order to understand my use case and do an effective prompt."

2 Let them answer the questions and polish the prompt. The participants can be given some simple prompting tips to increase the effectiveness of the prompt and improve the answers:

3 To get better first responses

(a) Give good examples of what you want.

(b) Include instructions such as: "Think hard about this."; "Tell me what more you need to know to give a good answer."

(c) To minimise hallucinations, state: "Say when you don't know."

(d) If you have multiple tasks in the same prompt, use a numbered list rather than running them together in a single sentence. For example, rather than stating: "Read this case and summarise it in layman language and then present the successful arguments in the case as well as the arguments which did not succeed.", say: "Read this case and do the following:

(i) Summarise it in layman's language.

(ii) Present the arguments that succeeded.

(iii) Present the arguments that did not succeed."

4 Refining the response

(a) Do not accept the first answer as the definitive one. Be prepared to probe further, if necessary, and engage in multiple iterations with the AI until you are satisfied.

(b) Ask what assumptions the AI has made to get the answer that you should verify, and what process you can follow to do this verification.

(c) Get one AI to review another.

Exercise 2: Assessing and improving writing standards

1 For this exercise, participants will need a piece of writing they have done themselves, which no one has amended, of 300–500 words.

2 They can then be asked to create a prompt to assess and improve their writing (as *per* the exercise in the previous paragraph), and then apply it to their writing sample.

3 After receiving the AI's critique on their writing, they can then put in the following prompt: "Can you create a prompt that I can use to analyse and improve my writing in future, based on your analysis of my writing?" They can then apply the prompt on the spot to their writing sample, to see if it gets better.

4 If they have a writing sample from someone whom they think writes well (*eg*, Person X), they could ask the AI for an analysis of Person X's style and strong points. They could then create a prompt based on this analysis, which they can then apply to their own writing.

5 They could even turn this prompt into a bot, so that they do not have to keep typing out the prompt, but can just upload the writing they want to enhance in the style of Person X into the bot, to get the desired results. This can be done in ChatGPT, *eg*, by creating a Custom GPT (go to Explore GPTs and then Create), which lets one save standing instructions, tone, examples and reference files, typing in a prompt such as "You are my writing assistant. Rewrite, polish and draft text in a style based on the attached style guide. When editing, show the improved version first, then briefly explain the main changes."

Exercise 3: Vetting work and understanding vetted work

1 Participants will need a sample of work done by someone else (*eg*, Person Y) which they have vetted and amended. They should upload this and the unamended sample into the AI, giving it the prompt: "Compare these two pieces of writing and explain the reasons for the differences." This will save time in explaining the amendments to Person Y.

2 They could then type in the prompt: "Based on your analysis of these reasons, create a prompt that the writer can use in order to analyse and improve their writing in future."

3 They could request Person Y not to send up any work to them in future without first applying the prompt. They could also use the prompt for themselves to use when vetting others' work.

4 Conversely, participants could bring a sample of work which someone else has amended, but did not explain in detail the reasons for the amendments.

5 If Person Y receives an amended piece of work but without reasons for the amendments, and is not able to ask, or does not want to trouble, the person who amended the work (*eg*, Person X), he or she could ask AI to analyse and identify the reasons for the amendments. Person Y could actually do this for multiple pieces of work amended by Person X, to ask the AI to spot patterns for the amendments and glean insights into Person X's style (and even turn it into a prompt or a bot to polish the writing before sending it to Person X) – or even to spot if there are no patterns!

Exercise 4: Dealing with routine and repetitive work

1 Participants should think of two or three types of work that they find time-consuming and tedious, or both, and which do not particularly add value to their intellectual development – usually something repetitive, routine, with established parameters, and not requiring much judgment.

2 One example would be drafting substituted service affidavits. They can create a prompt to draft substituted service affidavits, by going through Exercise 1, and asking the AI how to create such a prompt, in order to enable it to draft a good substituted service affidavit. The participant should upload a couple of good samples of such affidavits, the relevant rules of court, and the source documents relied on to draft the affidavit, such as client attendance notes.

3 Once the prompt is created, they should turn it into a bot, uploading all the relevant documents. Then they should test it by uploading the source documents to draft the affidavit. If they are not satisfied with the result, they could explain to the AI what the areas of improvement are, and ask the AI how to amend the prompt to get better results, and keep iterating from there.

Exercise 5: Critical thinking and problem-solving

> AI can generate 10 answers in seconds. It cannot tell you if you are solving the wrong problem … AI can compute. It cannot decide what is worth computing … AI can synthesise information. It cannot truly understand meaning … In healthcare and law, it is about making decisions where consequences matter and trade-offs are real. AI can assist with analysis. It cannot own the outcome … Across all disciplines, one capability rises above the rest, the ability to think through something, and not just about it.[13]

13 Krishnan Menon, "Is AI Making Us Artificially Intelligent, but Unable to Analyse?", *The Straits Times* (7 April 2026).

1 AI presents the danger of getting artificially intelligent. Participants can be shown how to use AI itself to stop this, by making AI a critical thinking coach.

2 Participants can be asked to think of a tough problem to solve, and to write it down. They can then apply a critical thinking coach prompt. They could be guided to create the prompt themselves, as *per* Exercise 1. A good critical thinking coach prompt would instruct the AI to ask probing questions and guide the participant through a rigorous thinking process and help them consider different perspectives, rather than just give answers. A sample critical thinking coach prompt is set out in the Annex.

3 Let the participants chat with AI for a while, pursuant to the critical thinking coach prompt, to practise thinking through the issues. The participants could then share what problem they asked AI to help them think through, how AI helped their thinking process, and the insights they got from this.

4 AI can be a teacher, sparring partner, devil's advocate, and critic. The following exercises are optional for the workshop, depending on the available time, but can be suggested for participants to try on their own:

(a) Simplifying explanations – give them a dense piece of writing and ask them to read it and explain it in three to five written sentences; then get them to use AI to help them with this task, producing three to five written sentences. They can then share both versions with the rest of the participants and ask them which was better.

(b) Ask the AI to set a quiz for that dense piece of writing.

(c) Ask the AI to "Be brutally honest" when analysing their writing sample, and see the difference that makes to the critique, compared to their prompt for Exercise 2.

(d) Design an onboarding programme for a new staff taking their job – how would they use AI to help the new staff get up to speed without having to spend too much time briefing the new staff? For example: give the new staff reading materials, and then set them a quiz generated by AI to make sure they have learned the relevant information; create a chatbot with the reading materials as the source documents, so the new staff can ask the chatbot any questions; make a video of certain reading materials, so the material is easier to absorb.

5 Participants can be shown how to create videos, slide decks, posters and other materials using Google Notebook LM or similar tools, and are encouraged to do so on the spot. (They can even be allowed to choose fun topics like the best pineapple tarts or the most value-for-money tours to Europe!)

6 The key is to make the workshop light-hearted and fun, and to encourage participants to play as they discover how to use the AI tools. When people feel relaxed and engaged and are enjoying themselves, creative juices will flow more easily, and participants will then find it easier to come up with ideas on how to integrate AI use with their workflows.

IV. Sustaining the momentum

13 However, the workshop is only the beginning. It is necessary to translate the learning from the workshop to practice on the ground. After the workshop, to sustain the momentum, LAB found the following activities helpful:

(a) Designating certain individuals (such as the workshop facilitator) as "AI champions", tasked with helping colleagues with their AI queries and experiments (and recognising them for this role in some way, through certain perks or awards).

(b) Getting each participant to identify at least one workflow that can be supported by AI and to commit to doing this within a certain timeframe (*eg*, four to six weeks). They could write down what the current process looks like, what it would look like using AI, and how they will know if it is working. For example, if the goal is to use the substituted service affidavit bot to draft such affidavits, a lawyer or paralegal who currently spends an hour drafting such an affidavit might set a goal of reducing this to 15 minutes, and testing this on the next three affidavits they need to draft, and see if the bot is successful – or whether it might need more tweaking.

(c) The senior management of the law firm could regularly check in on the progress of para 13(b) above, and support the participants by helping to clear any

obstacles (*eg*, by supporting a paid subscription to certain AI tools, or hiring a legal tech consultant to help solve certain technical issues impeding the AI workflow).

14 Examples of bots created by LAB staff outside the workshops include: a bot to generate scenarios for junior lawyers new to family law and Specialist Legal Executive candidates[14] to practice the application of matrimonial asset division principles, a bot to draft structured client attendance notes for Syariah Court divorce matters, a chatbot to support legal officers giving legal advice to members of the public and a bot to analyse the case workloads of the legal officers (in order to identify imbalances and provide data-driven recommendations for case assignments).

V. Resources

15 The previous section covered what can be done to inspire law firm personnel no matter what their age and education level (as long as they are literate) to experiment with and embrace the use of AI, and how to sustain that momentum, using LAB's experience as an example.

16 Admittedly, LAB has certain advantages which may not be available to private firms, in terms of access to government AI tools and AI expertise. However, many AI tools are not that costly – it is the willingness and ingenuity in using them which money alone may not be able to buy. The core insight from LAB's experience is that the small-group, hands-on format and the focus on participants' own real work problems for the workshops are the key to getting all officers on board the AI train.

17 However, it is true that AI adoption is not a cost-free exercise, and does require a certain amount of expertise – enthusiasm and exposure are not enough. While interest in AI is growing, many firms struggle to move from initial experimentation to sustained use.

14 Specialist legal executives are LAB paralegals who may not have a law degree but have been gazetted to attend court and give legal advice for certain categories of cases after rigorous training and assessment.

18 This is where the programmes and grants provided by the Ministry of Law ("MinLaw") could be a gamechanger for a law firm thinking of embarking on an AI journey.

VI. Support available for law firms for their artificial intelligence journey

19 There is a range of initiatives available from the Government to help law firms address AI adoption challenges in a more structured way.

VII. Getting it off the ground: Legal Innovation and Future-readiness Transformation initiative

20 For many firms, the main difficulty is not deciding *whether* to use technology, but *where* to start and *how* to implement it. The Legal Innovation and Future-readiness Transformation ("LIFT") initiative is intended to support this transition. It focuses on supporting the end-to-end change management process, helping firms to redesign and optimise workflows by embedding technology into daily work, rather than having a one-off tool adoption.

21 Under LIFT, which is now in its pilot phase, MinLaw will deploy legal technology consultants to the firms[15] to work with them directly to understand their context and challenges. LIFT starts with an innovation workshop conducted for firm leadership and staff to surface their key pain points and build shared alignment on how AI could support the firm's work (akin to the workshops conducted by LAB, as described in paras 8–12 above). The consultants then support the firm through the substantive phase of diagnosing their needs, recommending suitable solutions, identifying appropriate grants to apply for, implementing the chosen solutions and following up on optimising those solutions.

15 For five to six weeks of effective contact time.

22 The approach is product-neutral, focusing on solutions that fit the firm's budget, requirements and implementation feasibility. LIFT includes project coordination, training, and post-implementation follow-up[16] – which are areas that firms often struggle to resource internally.[17]

VIII. Easing cost concerns: Productivity Solutions Grant for the Legal Sector and Enterprise Development Grant

23 Cost remains a real consideration, especially for smaller firms. To help manage this, firms may tap on existing funding support when adopting legal technology and AI. The Productivity Solutions Grant for the Legal Sector ("PSG-Legal") supports the adoption of pre-approved legal technology and AI solutions, by defraying 50% of the first-year costs.

24 Where a firm's needs fall outside PSG-Legal's scope, *eg*, where solutions need to be customised or tied to broader operational change, the Enterprise Development Grant ("EDG") may be relevant. EDG supports projects to help firms upgrade, innovate, grow and transform their business, including process redesign and bespoke technology adoption. While the application process requires clearer articulation of objectives and outcomes, EDG offers flexibility for firms with more specialised requirements.[18]

25 Funding alone does not guarantee effective adoption, but when combined with workflow analysis, training, and leadership support, it can lower the barrier to implementing and sustaining new ways of working.

16 For up to five months.

17 See Ministry of Law, "Pilot of the Legal Innovation and Future-readiness Transformation (LIFT) Initiative" <https://form.gov.sg/69706884d31fe2ad6c136d3e> (accessed 24 June 2026).

18 Corppass may be used to apply for the Productivity Solutions Grant for the Legal Sector and the Enterprise Development Grant: "Business Grant Portal" <https://www.apply.gov.sg/grants/business> (accessed 24 June 2026).

IX. Addressing trust and professional concerns: "Guide for Using Generative AI in the Legal Sector"

26 Even where cost and capability issues are addressed, lawyers may remain cautious about AI because of ethical and professional responsibilities. To provide greater clarity, MinLaw's "Guide for Using Generative AI in the Legal Sector"[19] sets out key principles and best practices for responsible use of generative AI in legal work. It also provides practical guidance on how this can be implemented through case studies from law practices and in-house legal teams, where such tools have been safely and effectively deployed to support legal work.

27 The Guide is not binding nor prescriptive. It does not mandate or prohibit solutions. Instead, it highlights key considerations *viz* professional ethics, confidentiality and transparency and the need for human oversight – whether human-in-the-loop or human-on-the-loop. For many firms, it serves as a useful reference point when developing internal guidelines or discussing acceptable uses of AI among partners and staff.

28 When combined with hands-on experimentation, the Guide helps frame AI as a support tool that can be used thoughtfully and safely, rather than as a risk to be avoided altogether.

X. Discover and discuss legal technology and artificial intelligence: LegalTech GoWhere and TechLaw.Fest

29 Another common challenge for law firms is knowing where to begin. The legal technology landscape is increasingly crowded, and it is not always clear which solutions are relevant to a firm's day-to-day workflows.[20] LegalTech GoWhere seeks to cut through this by creating regular opportunities for legal

19 Ministry of Law, "Guide for Using Generative AI in the Legal Sector" (2026) <https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/files/Guide_for_using_Generative_AI_in_the_Legal_Sector___Published_on_6_Mar_2026_.pdf> (accessed 24 June 2026).

20 The following allows practitioners to stay updated on the latest events: LegalTech GoWhere at <https://sg.linkedin.com/showcase/legaltech-

(cont'd on the next page)

technology and AI discovery and conversation. Organised as a series of monthly events by MinLaw and the Singapore Academy of Law, it brings together lawyers and in-house counsel to explore legal technology and AI in practical settings. Sessions range from workshops and focus group discussions to panel discussions, speed networking and cyber health clinics, allowing participants to learn not just about the solutions available, but also how others across the profession are thinking about and using them.

30 In parallel, events such as TechLaw.Fest provide opportunities for peer learning. Beyond product showcases, these forums allow practitioners to hear directly from other firms about their experiences – what worked, what did not, and what they would do differently. For many firms, this kind of informal knowledge-sharing reduces uncertainty and makes the prospect of adoption feel more manageable.

XI. Supporting firm-led change

31 Taken together, these forms of support are best viewed as enablers, not drivers, of transformation. Leadership signalling, internal workshops, and safe opportunities to experiment will help to build culture, interest and confidence. Implementation support and funding will help translate that culture into practice. Guidance and ecosystem platforms provide context and reassurance along the way.

32 As the LAB experience shows, AI adoption ultimately depends on people. The tools are there. The support is there. However, lasting change can only come from firms empowering their own lawyers and staff to experiment, learn, iterate and do what best suits its own culture, clients and practice mix.

33 Is your firm ready to take the first step?

gowhere/> (accessed 24 June 2026) and TechLaw Fest 2026 at <https://www.techlawfest.com/event/home/home> (accessed 24 June 2026).

Annex

Sample critical thinking coach prompt

Act as my Critical Thinking Coach. I want you to guide me through a systematic analysis of a problem or decision using proven critical thinking methodologies.

Your approach should be:

(a) Ask me probing questions rather than giving direct answers

(b) Help me think broadly, deeply, and clearly about the situation

(c) Guide me through structured analysis step-by-step

(d) Challenge my assumptions and help me consider different perspectives

Start by helping me clarify the fundamentals:

(a) What exactly am I dealing with?

(b) What do I want to achieve, and why?

(c) What do I think I already know about this situation?

(d) How do I know what I think I know?

Then guide me through this framework:

(a) Problem definition and impact assessment

(b) Desired outcomes (ideal, good, acceptable)

(c) Possible solutions and approaches

(d) Resource requirements for each option

(e) Evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness

(f) How I will measure success

Present 2–3 focused questions at a time, build on my answers, and help me develop my own well-reasoned conclusions.

Here's the problem/decision I want to think through: [PARTICIPANT DESCRIBES THEIR SITUATION HERE]