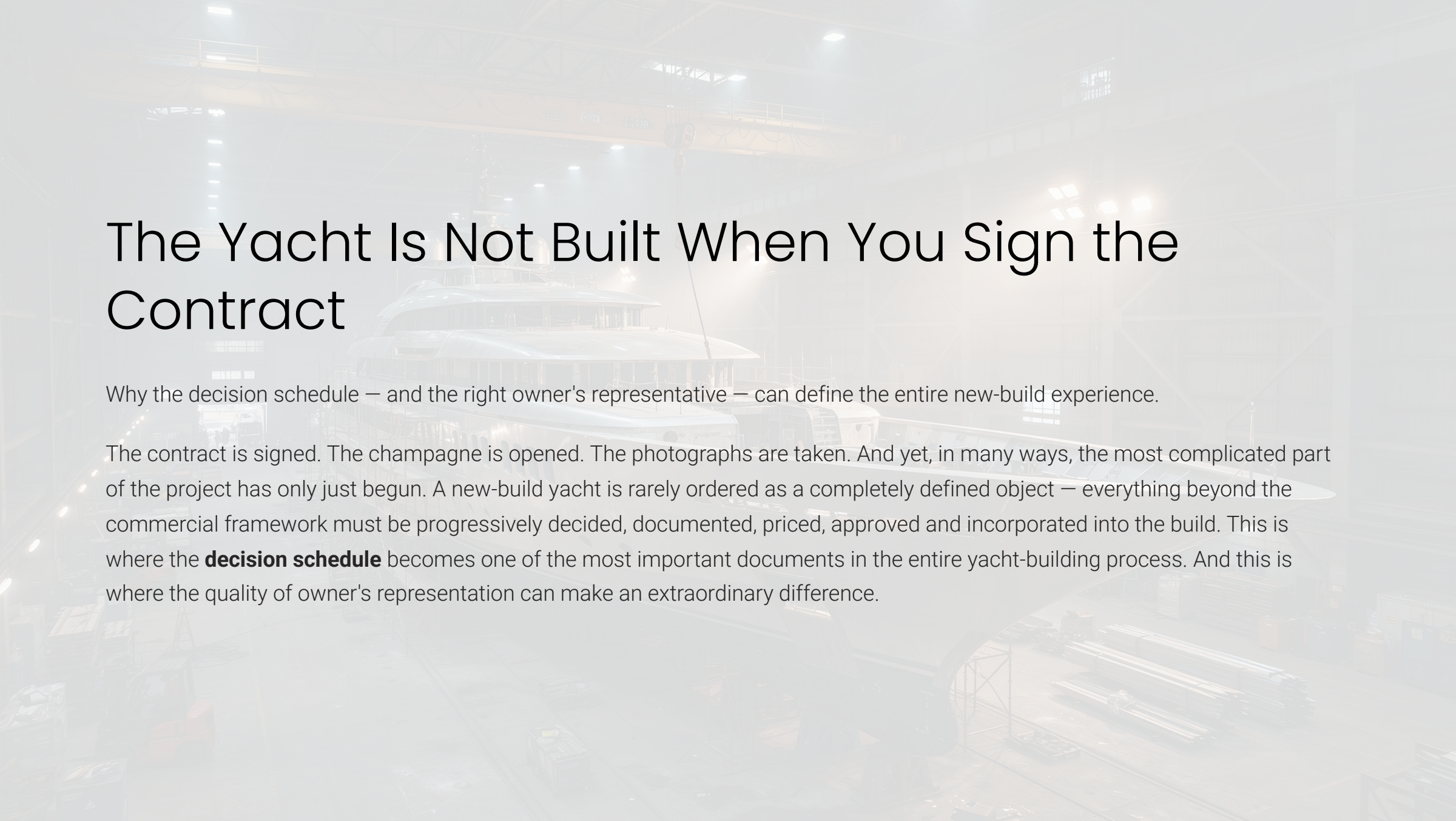


A large yacht is under construction in a spacious shipyard. The yacht's hull and upper decks are visible, with various structural elements and equipment around it. Overhead cranes and industrial lighting are part of the background. The scene is dimly lit, with a focus on the yacht's form.

The Yacht Is Not Built When You Sign the Contract

Why the decision schedule — and the right owner's representative — can define the entire new-build experience.

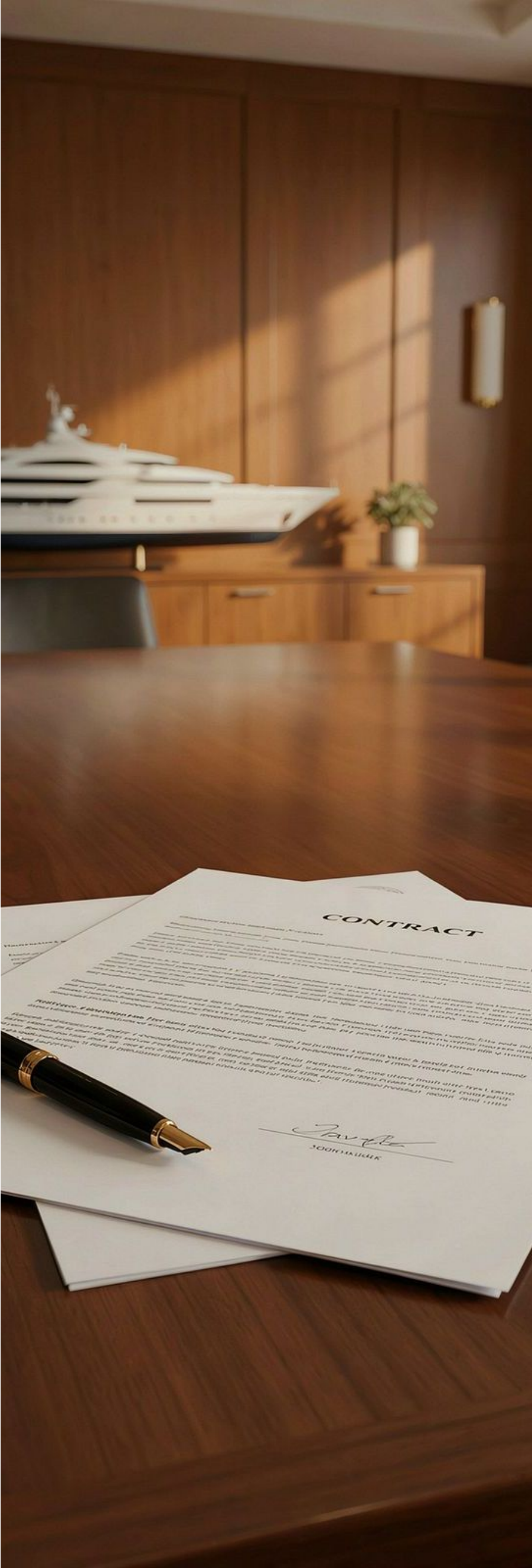
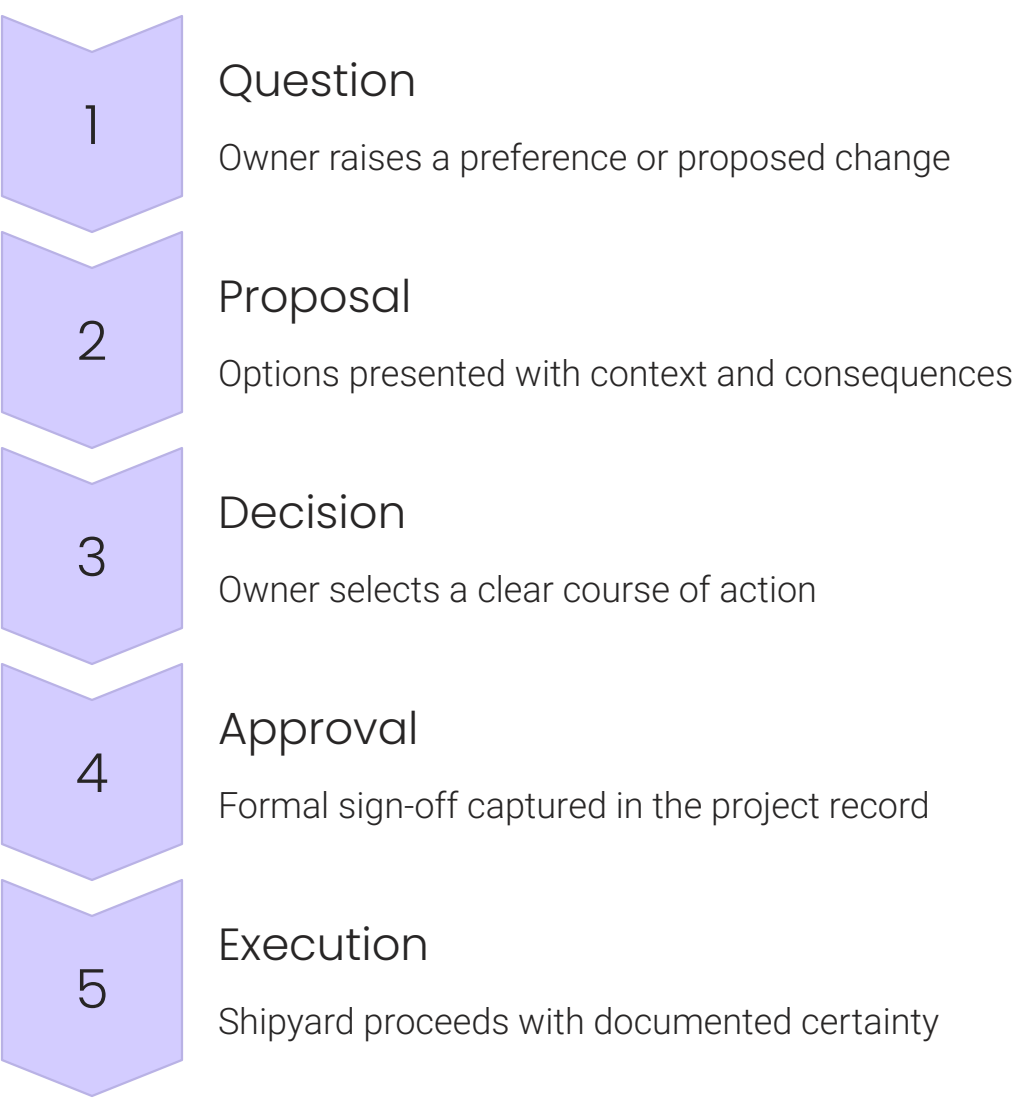
The contract is signed. The champagne is opened. The photographs are taken. And yet, in many ways, the most complicated part of the project has only just begun. A new-build yacht is rarely ordered as a completely defined object — everything beyond the commercial framework must be progressively decided, documented, priced, approved and incorporated into the build. This is where the **decision schedule** becomes one of the most important documents in the entire yacht-building process. And this is where the quality of owner's representation can make an extraordinary difference.

The Contract Creates the Foundation. The Decision Schedule Builds the Yacht.

A yacht purchase contract is not simply a document establishing price and delivery. It establishes the rules of engagement. It defines what has been purchased, what is included, what constitutes an option, how changes are treated, how additional work is approved, how responsibilities are allocated, and what happens when something changes.

That foundation matters because, once construction begins, there will inevitably be decisions that were not fully defined on the day the contract was signed. An owner may want a different stone. A different timber treatment. A different lighting configuration. A modification to a cabin. A revised AV system. A change to the galley equipment. A different exterior finish. Or simply a detail that looked perfect in a drawing but does not feel right when experienced at full scale.

These decisions are normal. The problem is not change. The problem is **uncontrolled change**. A well-structured decision schedule creates a controlled path that protects both parties.





Why Shipyards Need the Decision Schedule

From the outside, an owner can sometimes perceive the shipyard's insistence on deadlines, approvals and formal work orders as bureaucracy. In reality, it is often the opposite. A shipyard is coordinating hundreds of suppliers, designers, engineers, craftsmen and production teams. Each decision can have consequences far beyond the individual item being selected.

The shipyard needs certainty. It needs to know what it is building, when it is building it and who has authorised the change. The decision schedule provides that certainty – and protects the owner's interests at the same time.

Stone Selection

Affects procurement lead times and material ordering from specialist suppliers

Ceiling Detail Change

May affect structural engineering and certification requirements

Lighting Revision

Triggers changes to electrical design, load calculations and wiring routes

Furniture Modification

Impacts dimensions, access routes and installation sequencing

- ❏ A seemingly small owner request can become a significant production event. Every change ripples through a highly coordinated system.

Why Owners Need It Even More

The same process that protects the shipyard protects the owner — often even more directly. Without a disciplined decision process, the owner can easily find themselves in a situation where conversations become memories, preferences become assumptions, and informal approvals become disputed interpretations. That is where frustration begins.

The Owner Remembers

"I wanted the darker stone — we discussed this clearly at the yard visit in March."

The Shipyard Remembers

"The darker stone was discussed but never formally approved. We proceeded with the original specification."

Both parties may genuinely believe they are right. Neither may have intended to create a problem. This is precisely why professional yacht construction requires documentation. The decision schedule is not there to slow the owner down. It is there to make sure that **everyone is moving in the same direction at the same time.**



Every Decision Has a Clock

One of the least appreciated aspects of a new-build project is that decisions are not simply decisions. They are decisions with consequences in time. A shipyard may require an owner selection by a particular date because the material must be ordered. Another decision may need to be completed before engineering drawings are frozen. Another may be technically possible later — but at a substantially higher cost.

This is why a good decision schedule is effectively a **project-management instrument**. The deadline is not merely an administrative date. It is a protection against unnecessary cost and delay.



What Needs Deciding

Every outstanding selection is catalogued, so nothing falls through the cracks during a complex multi-year build



Who Decides

Responsibility is clearly assigned — owner, representative, designer or captain — to prevent decisions stalling at the wrong door



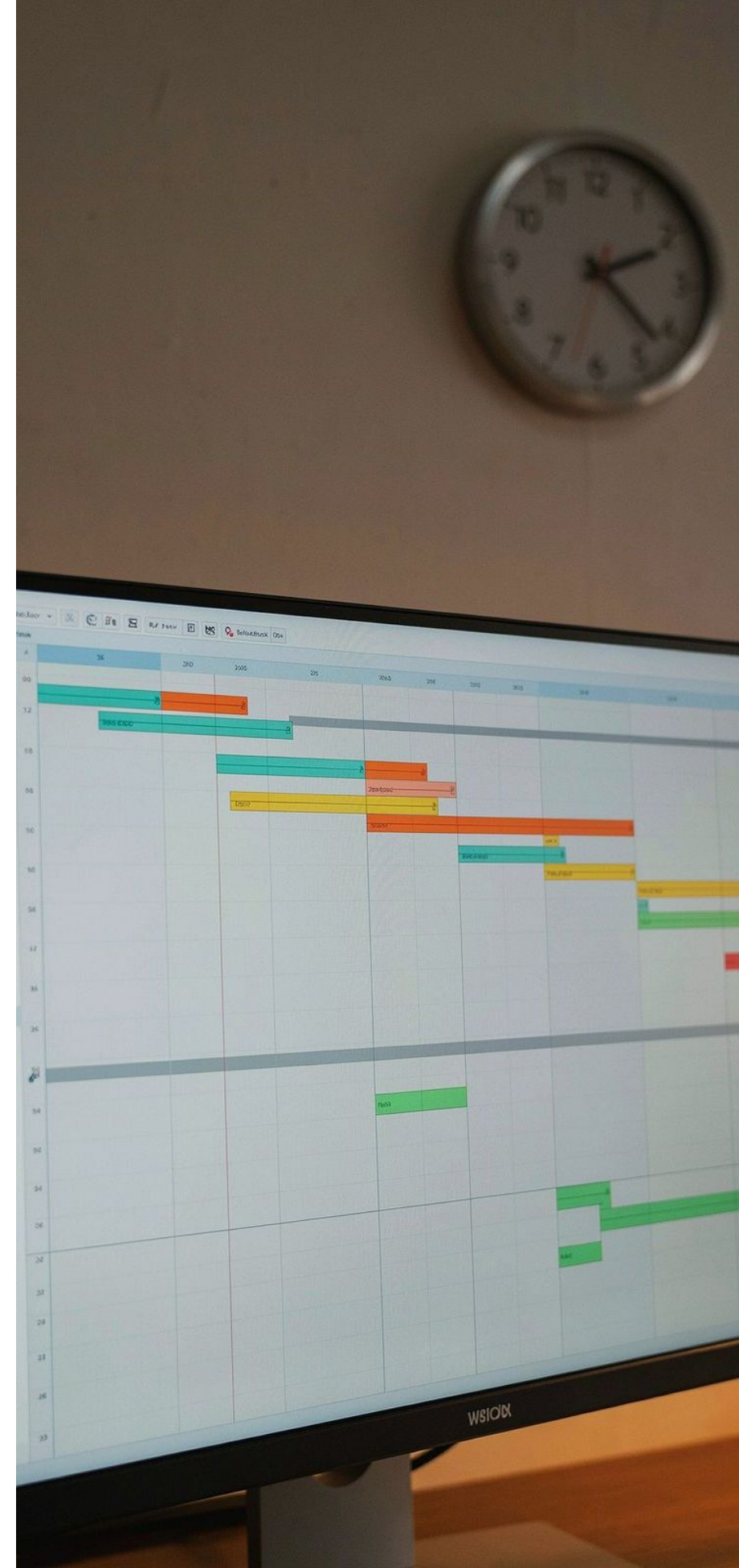
When It Must Be Made

Hard deadlines tied to procurement, engineering sign-off and production sequencing are visible to all parties in advance



Cost & Schedule Impact

Whether the decision falls within the contract, creates additional cost, or affects the delivery timeline is explicitly documented





The Danger of the Informal Conversation

Yacht projects are highly personal. They involve designers, captains, technical teams, shipyard representatives, sales teams, project managers, interior specialists and, ultimately, the owner. Naturally, conversations happen everywhere – at the shipyard, at the owner's home, on board another yacht, at a boat show, over dinner, during yard visits, on WhatsApp and during video calls.

And often, these conversations contain extremely important decisions. The problem is that informal communication is not a reliable project-management system.

A sentence

can be interpreted differently by different people

A sketch

can be mistaken for an approved drawing

A discussion

can be remembered as a firm instruction

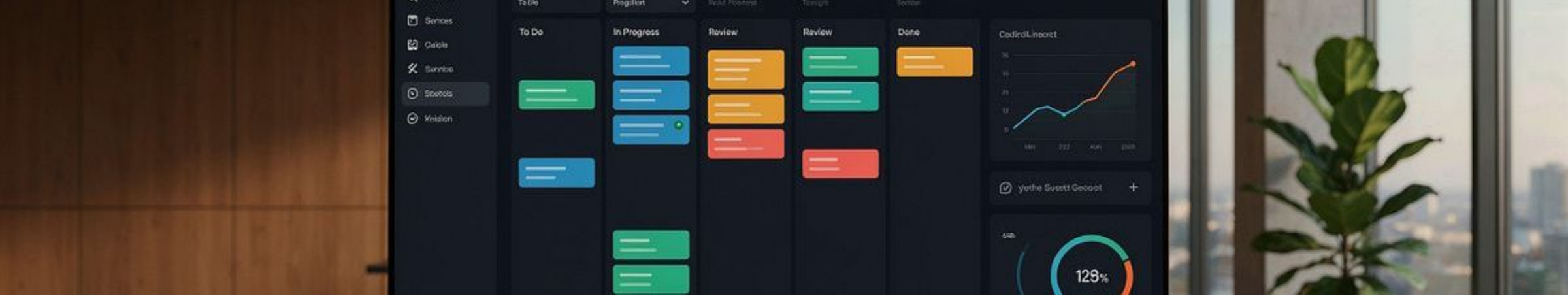
A preference

can be mistaken for a final selection

A preliminary price

can be mistaken for an agreed price

This is why professional projects need a formal mechanism that converts discussion into an auditable decision. Talk is valuable. **Documentation is essential.**



The Modern Client Portal Changes the Relationship

The better shipyards increasingly understand this. Dedicated client portals are becoming an important part of the new-build experience, allowing the project team and owner's representatives to manage communication and documentation in one controlled environment. This is more than convenient technology. It creates a **shared version of reality** – a single record that every party can access, reference and rely upon.

- Proposals and technical documents
- Approved drawings and specifications
- Decision schedules and outstanding actions
- Change requests, quotations and approvals
- Meeting records and project milestones
- Progress reports and construction updates
- Photographs, videos and yard imagery



In a project that may run for several years and involve thousands of individual decisions, the ability of every party to refer back to the same record is enormously valuable. The owner sees what has been proposed. The shipyard sees what has been approved. The project team sees what remains outstanding.

The Owner's Representative Is Not There to Fight the Shipyard

This is perhaps the most important distinction in professional yacht representation. An inexperienced representative can turn the relationship into an adversarial one — where every quotation becomes a negotiation, every deviation becomes a dispute, and every delay becomes someone else's fault. That approach may create the appearance of strong representation. It can also make the project unnecessarily difficult, damaging the relationships that a successful build genuinely requires.

A truly experienced owner's representative understands that the objective is not to defeat the shipyard. The objective is to **protect the owner's interests while allowing the shipyard to successfully build the yacht it has contracted to deliver**. That requires balance, professional judgement and deep familiarity with how shipyards actually work.

1

Know When to Challenge

Identify genuine deviations from the contracted specification and escalate them appropriately

2

Know When to Accept

Recognise when a shipyard position is commercially reasonable and avoid unnecessary friction

3

Know the Consequences

Understand when a seemingly minor change could have major downstream production implications

4

Know When to Decide

Prevent project stalls by ensuring decisions are made when they need to be made



The Best Owner's Representative Creates Flow

The real value of exceptional representation is often invisible. When the system works properly, the owner does not constantly feel the machinery behind the project. Questions arrive with context. Options are presented clearly. Costs are understood. Consequences are explained. Deadlines are visible. Approvals are documented. The shipyard receives clear instructions. The project keeps moving.

The Owner's World

Driven by experience, taste, expectations, lifestyle and emotion. The owner has a vision — and the representative's job is to protect it through every layer of production complexity.

The Shipyard's World

Driven by engineering, production, procurement, contracts, sequencing, labour, suppliers and deadlines. The representative must understand this world as fluently as the owner's.

That is the objective. Not noise. Not unnecessary meetings. Not endless negotiation. **Flow.** A good owner's representative effectively acts as a translator between two very different worlds — understanding both with equal fluency, and maintaining the integrity of the owner's vision as it passes through every stage of production.





Taste Is Particularly Vulnerable to Poor Communication

This matters enormously in yacht building because so much of the final result is subjective. A yacht can be technically excellent and still disappoint its owner. Not because of a contractual failure. Not because of a construction defect. But because the details through which luxury is actually experienced — the thousands of small choices that define the lived reality of the yacht — were not protected with sufficient precision.

The exact tone of a timber

Timber varies between samples and finished panels. Without careful documentation and yard oversight, the final result can drift significantly from what was selected.

The temperature of a lighting system

Colour temperature and dimming behaviour shape the entire atmosphere of a space. These are design decisions, not simply technical ones.

The proportion of furniture

A piece that reads perfectly in a drawing can feel wrong at full scale. Experienced representation identifies this risk before the furniture is built.

The transition between materials

The relationship between two finishes — how they meet, contrast and complement — is one of the most visible expressions of design quality aboard a finished yacht.

These are not merely technical specifications. They are matters of taste. A good owner's representative must protect not only the **commercial and contractual position**, but also the **design intent** — ensuring that what the owner imagined, what the designer communicated, and what the shipyard builds remain aligned throughout.

The Decision Schedule Is Where Intention Becomes Reality

This is why the decision schedule deserves more respect than it usually receives. It is not an administrative spreadsheet. It is not bureaucracy for its own sake. It is the bridge between the contract and the physical yacht — the document through which an owner's vision is progressively translated into the specific, documented, authorised instructions that a shipyard can actually build from.

The contract establishes the boundaries. The decision schedule progressively fills the yacht within — and sometimes formally beyond — those boundaries. The owner makes decisions. The shipyard translates them into engineering and production. The owner's representative ensures the translation remains accurate. When additional work is required, it is properly identified, priced, reviewed and approved. When something falls within the original contract, that too is explicitly recognised. The process creates accountability in both directions. That is healthy.





The Best Protection Starts Before the First Change Order

There is a tendency to focus on change orders only once additional costs appear. That is too late. The most important work happens before the change order — and often before the first rivet is set. The foundations of a well-managed project are established in the early weeks and months: in how the contract is read, how the specification is understood, how allowances and options are mapped, and how the decision schedule is structured.

1 Negotiate the original contract with full understanding

Every clause, allowance and option should be understood before it is agreed, not discovered during the build when the leverage to address it has disappeared.

2 Map the decision schedule from day one

Time-critical decisions should be identified immediately so that the owner can plan engagement around production milestones, not react to urgent requests.

3 Establish how decisions will be communicated and recorded

Agreeing the process before the first change is requested removes ambiguity at the moment when it would cause the most damage.

4 Identify responsibilities clearly across all parties

Owner, representative, captain, designer and shipyard project manager must each know their role in the decision process before the project is in full motion.

The stronger these foundations are, the fewer unnecessary disputes appear later. Strong beginnings create smooth middles and successful completions.

Cannes and Monaco: The Conversation Starts Before the Yacht Is Ordered

As the industry heads into the Cannes and Monaco boat-show season, thousands of prospective owners will walk aboard yachts and begin imagining their next project. For many, the experience will begin with the design, the volume, the materials, the technology, the master suite and the beach club. These are the right things to feel. But before signing a new-build contract, there is another question worth asking: **How does this shipyard manage the decisions that come after the contract is signed?**

These questions can reveal as much about the future relationship as the yacht itself. Ask for the answers before the champagne is poured.

- 1

How are owner selections recorded?

Ask to see the actual decision-schedule format and understand who owns the document
- 2

How are changes priced and approved?

Understand the formal process from request to quotation to sign-off before a single change is raised
- 3

What happens when a decision misses its deadline?

Consequences should be defined in advance, not discovered when a delay or cost has already been incurred
- 4

How does the shipyard work with the owner's representative?

The answer to this question will tell you a great deal about the culture of the project relationship you are entering



The Value of Having the Right Owner's Representative

A successful new-build yacht project is ultimately about more than managing specifications, deadlines and change orders. It is about maintaining alignment between the owner's vision and the shipyard's ability to deliver it. That requires experience on both sides of the table.

An effective owner's representative understands the contract, the decision schedule, the design process and the realities of shipyard production. They know when a decision needs to be challenged, when it needs to be made, and when the best course of action is simply to keep the project moving.

At IONAIRE, this is where we focus our role.

We work alongside owners throughout the build process, helping translate expectations into clear decisions, keeping commercial and technical matters properly documented, and maintaining a constructive working relationship with the shipyard.

Our objective is not to create another layer of management. It is to create clarity between the parties.

When the owner, representative and shipyard are working from the same information — with the same understanding of what has been agreed and what needs to happen next — the project becomes easier to manage for everyone.

The result is not simply better control. It is a better ownership experience. Because a great yacht should not only be delivered well. The journey to get there should feel equally well managed.

IONAIRE

Owner Representation | Yacht Management | Strategic Advisory

For owners considering a new-build project, or already navigating one, IONAIRE provides independent owner representation designed to protect the owner's interests while maintaining the constructive relationship essential to a successful build.

Dubai | International

