Decentralization is an imperative in web3 – and it can also be useful in other business contexts. In web3, the aim is to eschew centralization for security, openness, and community ownership, while in more traditional businesses, decentralization can help with stakeholder engagement and more informed decision making – for instance, decentralization is key to executing the popular concept of a " self-managed organization ."

Yet starting out entirely decentralized can be difficult or even totally impractical. Early design elements of a project or business often require more centralized vision and control. And centralization at early stages can make it easier to coordinate, launch, and rapidly iterate toward product-market fit .

Starting out with some degree of centralization, though, doesn't necessarily force you to stay that way. Here, we're going to explain a high-level framework for designing for future decentralization up front, and offer some guidance about when and how to do so. The guidelines apply to both web3 projects and more traditional organizations.

Our intention is to help those interested in decentralization think about how to approach the challenge. There is, alas, no one-size-fits-all approach because the precise mechanics of decentralization are very much a function of the specific business context. So this is intended as an introduction – it isn't a playbook for making decisions component-wise but rather a framework for how to start thinking about the overarching problem.

If there's one thing to remember, it's that decentralization needn't be "all-or-nothing." With proper planning, you can decentralize over time. And to plan effectively, it's important to understand the different dimensions along which your business can decentralize, and how to do so at the proper times.

To make an analogy to an experience many of us have had, progressive decentralization is like an organization becoming fully remote. Starting out in a single central office with in-person meetings is helpful for coordination, but over time it can make sense to become more distributed. But to manage distributed work, it's essential to invest in remote communications technology, as well as in carefully documenting business practices and architecture. Designing an organization knowing that one day you'll all be remote makes the future state easier. The same is true with progressive decentralization.