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GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION FORUM · EXECUTIVE BRIEF

The AI Leadership *Clarity* Brief

*Seven decisions every leader must make before 2027,
and the cost of letting the market make them for you.*

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- 01 Where AI will create value
 - 02 Who owns AI decisions
 - 03 Which rulebook you govern to
 - 04 What data you will trust
 - 05 How much autonomy to delegate
 - 06 The workforce bargain
 - 07 Measurement and red lines



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The problem isn't the technology. It's the decisions you haven't made yet.

Most organizations now use AI. Very few get significant value from it. In my work with executives, boards and public institutions, the gap is rarely technical. It is a gap in **decisions**: about value, accountability, risk, data, autonomy, people and measurement. Leaders who don't make them still end up with an AI strategy. It just gets decided for them by vendors, by regulators, by competitors, and by employees using tools nobody approved.

This Brief names the seven decisions that separate organizations compounding value from AI from those collecting pilots. Each one is set out the same way, so you can tell what is established from what is advice:

EVIDENCE

Findings from published research, regulation and primary sources, cited at the end. Figures are stated as reported. Where a date or rule could still change, I say so.

STRATEGIC OPINION

My advisory judgment as an economist and governance strategist. It's informed by the evidence but is not itself evidence. Weigh it against your context.

FAITH LENS

A clearly fenced reflection at the end on leadership as stewardship. It sits alongside the analysis, never in place of it.

How to use this Brief

Read one decision a day. For each one, answer the three test questions honestly, then mark it on the **Clarity Scorecard** (page 11): *Decided*, *Deferring*, or *Not yet named*. Bring the decision you are deferring most to a Clarity Session. That's where the real work starts.

Adoption is nearly universal. Value is not.

88%

of organizations regularly use AI in at least one business function, up from 78% a year earlier.

McKinsey, The State of AI in 2025 (n = 1,993)¹

~6%

qualify as "AI high performers": 5%+ of EBIT attributable to AI, with significant value reported.

McKinsey, The State of AI in 2025¹

40%+

of agentic AI projects are predicted to be cancelled by the end of 2027, citing cost, unclear value and weak risk controls.

Gartner prediction, June 2025²

78%

of AI users at work bring their own AI tools, often outside sanctioned systems.

Microsoft & LinkedIn, 2024 Work Trend Index³

EVIDENCE

Only about one-third of organizations say they have begun scaling AI across the enterprise. Of the 39% that report any EBIT impact from AI, most say it accounts for less than 5% of EBIT.¹ Meanwhile the rulebook is hardening: the EU AI Act's transparency obligations have applied since 2 August 2026, and its high-risk obligations for employment, credit, education and similar uses now apply from **2 December 2027** under the Digital Omnibus (Regulation (EU) 2026/1744).⁴

STRATEGIC OPINION

The next eighteen months are a sorting window. Organizations that make these seven decisions deliberately will treat 2027 regulation as a formality and their AI spend as an investment. Those that don't will meet both as a crisis. The difference won't be budget. It will be clarity.

01

DECISION ONE · AMBITION

Where AI will create value

Which two or three value pools will we commit to transforming, and which fifty "interesting pilots" will we stop funding?

EVIDENCE

Adoption is broad but shallow. 88% of organizations use AI, yet nearly two-thirds have not begun scaling it. McKinsey's high performers set growth and innovation objectives for AI, not only efficiency, and are far more likely to have fundamentally redesigned workflows rather than layering tools onto old processes.¹

STRATEGIC OPINION

Pilots are how organizations avoid deciding. Every pilot feels like progress; a portfolio of them is a strategy of hedging. Pick the few places where AI changes the *economics* of your mission, such as cost-to-serve, cycle time, decision quality or reach, and redesign the whole workflow there. Breadth of experimentation is a phase, not a strategy.

THE TEST

1. Can your leadership team name the three AI value pools in under a minute, consistently?
2. For each one, is there an owner with a P&L or mission metric, not just a project plan?
3. Which current AI initiatives would you stop tomorrow if you were starting fresh?

90-DAY MOVE

Run a two-hour value-pool session. List every AI initiative, score each on economic impact and feasibility, and formally retire the bottom third. Redeploy that budget to the top two.

02 Who owns AI decisions

When an AI system makes or shapes a consequential decision, who is accountable, and who has authority to say no?

EVIDENCE

Institutional practice is converging on named accountability. U.S. federal agencies operate under OMB Memorandum M-25-21 (April 2025), which requires Chief AI Officers, AI governance boards, and minimum risk-management practices for "high-impact" AI.⁵ The NIST AI Risk Management Framework places *Govern* at the center of its four functions,⁶ and ISO/IEC 42001 sets out a certifiable AI management system built on defined roles and responsibilities.⁷

STRATEGIC OPINION

"Everyone owns AI" means no one does. Decide three things explicitly: a single accountable executive; a small cross-functional council (legal, risk, technology, operations, and someone who represents the people affected); and a decision-rights matrix that says which uses need approval, which need notification, and which are pre-cleared. Governance that slows everything will be bypassed. Governance that is tiered by risk will be used.

THE TEST

1. Is there one named executive accountable for AI outcomes, with authority to halt a deployment?
2. Do you have an inventory of the AI systems in use today, including those embedded in vendor software?
3. Could you explain to your board, in writing, how a high-risk AI use gets approved?

90-DAY MOVE

Appoint the accountable executive, charter the council with a one-page mandate, and complete a first AI inventory, including vendor tools. You cannot govern what you have not counted.

03 Which rulebook you govern to

Will we wait to see which rules survive, or govern now to the highest credible standard we're exposed to?

EVIDENCE

- **EU:** The AI Act's prohibitions and AI-literacy duty have applied since February 2025, general-purpose AI obligations since August 2025, and transparency duties since 2 August 2026. High-risk obligations apply from 2 December 2027 (Annex III) and 2 August 2028 (Annex I).⁴
- **U.S. federal:** Executive Order 14365 (11 December 2025) set up an AI Litigation Task Force to challenge state AI laws, and the White House's March 2026 framework asks Congress to preempt "unduly burdensome" state rules. As of mid-2026, that was a recommendation, not enacted law.⁸
- **U.S. states:** Colorado repealed and replaced its 2024 AI Act with SB 26-189, effective 1 January 2027. It requires notice, explanation and human review for consequential automated decisions.⁹

STRATEGIC OPINION

Regulatory volatility is not a reason to wait. It is a reason to build a **portable** governance core: an inventory, risk tiers, documentation, human review for consequential decisions, and incident response. That core satisfies the common denominator of the EU Act, NIST, ISO 42001 and the state laws. Preemption fights *who* enforces. They rarely change what a well-governed organization should already be doing.

THE TEST

1. Do you know which jurisdictions' AI rules reach you, through customers, staff or data subjects?
2. Are any of your AI uses in "consequential decision" territory: hiring, lending, housing, education, health, benefits?
3. If a regulator asked tomorrow, could you produce documentation for those systems?

90-DAY MOVE

Map your AI inventory against three tiers (prohibited, consequential, routine) and adopt NIST AI RMF or ISO/IEC 42001 as your organizing standard. One framework, applied consistently, beats five applied partially.

04 What data you will trust, and what you will never feed a model

Which data is fit to power decisions, and which data must never leave our control, no matter how useful the tool?

EVIDENCE

The 2024 Work Trend Index found that 75% of knowledge workers use generative AI at work, and 78% of those users bring their own tools.³ Unsanctioned tools mean organizational data, including client, personnel and strategic information, can flow to systems outside your contracts, controls and audit trail. Separately, Gartner attributes much of the expected agentic-project failure to unclear value and inadequate risk controls, both of which trace back to data readiness.²

STRATEGIC OPINION

Banning AI tools doesn't stop their use. It stops you from seeing it. The better move is to give people sanctioned, secure tools that are good enough to beat the free ones, paired with a plain-language data rule everyone can remember. Your models will only ever be as trustworthy as the data you are willing to stand behind in public.

THE TEST

1. Can every employee state, in one sentence, what data may never go into an external AI tool?
2. Have you given staff a sanctioned AI tool that is easier to use than the unsanctioned alternatives?
3. For your top value pool, is the underlying data owned, documented and clean enough to audit?

90-DAY MOVE

Publish a one-page "Green / Amber / Red" data rule for AI use, roll out one sanctioned tool enterprise-wide, and assign a data owner to each value pool chosen under Decision 01.

05 How much autonomy you will delegate to machines

Where may AI agents act on our behalf, where must they only recommend, and where must a human always decide?

EVIDENCE

Agentic AI has moved from concept to deployment: 23% of organizations report scaling an agentic system somewhere in the enterprise and a further 39% are experimenting. Yet no more than 10% report scaling agents in any single function.¹ Gartner predicts over 40% of agentic AI projects will be cancelled by the end of 2027.² Colorado's new law and the EU AI Act both emphasize human review and oversight for consequential decisions.^{4,9}

STRATEGIC OPINION

Autonomy should be *earned*, not assumed. I advise leaders to set three explicit tiers: **Assist** (AI drafts, a human decides), **Act with review** (AI executes and a human samples and can reverse it), and **Act autonomously** (only low-stakes, reversible, well-monitored tasks). Agents move up a tier only with evidence. The failure mode isn't agents that are too weak. It's agents given authority before anyone defined what "wrong" looks like.

THE TEST

1. Have you written down which decisions AI may never make without a human, and why?
2. For each agent in use, could you reverse its last 100 actions if you had to?
3. Who gets the alert when an agent behaves unexpectedly, and how fast?

90-DAY MOVE

Classify every current and planned agent into the three autonomy tiers. Require a named human supervisor, a kill switch and an action log before any agent moves above "Assist".

06 The workforce bargain

What will we tell our people, honestly, about how AI changes their work, and what will we invest so they can change with it?

EVIDENCE

The World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs Report 2025* projects 170 million jobs created and 92 million displaced globally by 2030, a net gain of 78 million, with 39% of workers' core skills expected to change.¹⁰ In McKinsey's 2025 survey, 32% of respondents expect their organization's workforce to shrink by 3% or more in the coming year, 43% expect little change, and 13% expect growth.¹ The EU AI Act already requires organizations to support AI literacy among staff who use AI systems.⁴

STRATEGIC OPINION

Silence is a message, and your people are reading it as "your job is next." The organizations that will capture AI's value are those that make an explicit bargain: here is what changes, here is what we will invest in you, and here is how gains will be shared. Trust is the adoption rate. Without it, your best people will use AI to make themselves more marketable elsewhere.

THE TEST

1. Has leadership said, in writing, what AI means for roles here and what it does not?
2. Is there a funded AI-literacy program, and does it reach front-line staff, not just managers?
3. When AI saves time, have you decided where that capacity goes: growth, service, or cost?

90-DAY MOVE

Publish a short "AI and our people" commitment, launch role-based AI literacy for every team, and name the first redeployment pathway for roles most affected by your value pools.

07

How you measure value, and where you draw red lines

What evidence will prove AI is creating value here, and what will we refuse to do with AI even if it would pay?

EVIDENCE

Of organizations reporting any EBIT impact from AI, most attribute less than 5% of EBIT to it.¹ Gartner links expected project cancellations to escalating costs and unclear business value.² Both point to the same gap: initiatives launched without a baseline, a target or a stop rule. Meanwhile the EU AI Act has *prohibited* certain practices outright since February 2025, which shows that some lines are already being drawn for you.⁴

STRATEGIC OPINION

Measure AI the way you would any capital allocation: baseline, target, time horizon and kill criteria, reviewed quarterly at executive level. Then do the harder thing. Write down your red lines before a profitable temptation arrives, not after. In my experience, the institutions most trusted with powerful technology are those that decided in advance what they would not do with it.

THE TEST

1. Does every AI initiative have a baseline metric captured before launch?
2. Is AI value reviewed at the executive table each quarter, with the authority to stop projects?
3. Could you list three things your organization will never use AI to do?

90-DAY MOVE

Build a one-page AI value scorecard (baseline, target, owner, stop rule) for your top value pools, and have the leadership team adopt three written red lines.

Your Clarity Scorecard

Mark each decision honestly. Score **2** for *Decided* (written, owned, acted on), **1** for *Deferring* (discussed, not resolved), and **0** for *Not yet named*.

DECISION	DECIDED (2)	DEFERRING (1)	NOT NAMED (0)
01 Where AI will create value	☐	☐	☐
02 Who owns AI decisions	☐	☐	☐
03 Which rulebook you govern to	☐	☐	☐
04 What data you will trust	☐	☐	☐
05 How much autonomy to delegate	☐	☐	☐
06 The workforce bargain	☐	☐	☐
07 Measurement & red lines	☐	☐	☐

Reading your score

SCORE	POSITION	WHAT IT MEANS
12–14	Clarity leader	Your foundations are in place. The opportunity is to scale: redesign workflows end-to-end and move proven agents up the autonomy tiers.
7–11	Deciding in parts	Typical of most organizations. Your deferred decisions are where risk and wasted spend concentrate. Resolve the lowest-scoring two first.
0–6	Strategy by default	Others are making these decisions for you. Start with Decisions 02 and 03: accountability and an inventory unlock everything else.

Scoring bands are an advisory heuristic (Strategic Opinion), not a validated benchmark.

The 90-Day Clarity Plan

Sequencing matters. Accountability and inventory come first because every other decision depends on them.

DAYS 1–30

Name & count

- Appoint the accountable AI executive (02)
- Charter the AI council
- Complete the AI inventory, including vendor tools
- Publish the Green / Amber / Red data rule (04)

DAYS 31–60

Choose & tier

- Run the value-pool session; retire the bottom third (01)
- Tier systems by risk and adopt one framework (03)
- Classify agents into autonomy tiers (05)
- Roll out one sanctioned AI tool

DAYS 61–90

Commit & measure

- Publish the "AI and our people" commitment (06)
- Launch role-based AI literacy
- Adopt the value scorecard and three red lines (07)
- First quarterly AI review at the executive table

FAITH LENS · CLEARLY FENCED

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

1 Corinthians 4:2

For leaders of faith, AI governance can be read as a question of stewardship. We are entrusted with people, data and influence we do not own, and we will answer for how we used them. Faithfulness here isn't caution for its own sake. It means making the hard decisions in time, protecting the people affected, and refusing to let a tool decide what conscience should. This is a spiritual interpretation offered alongside the strategy, not as a substitute for it.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The AI value gap is a **decision gap**: adoption is near-universal, significant value is rare.
- Accountability and an inventory come first. You cannot govern, measure or scale what you have not named and counted.
- Regulatory volatility is a reason to build a portable governance core now, not a reason to wait.
- Autonomy, data access and workforce change should be decided explicitly, before the market decides them for you.



YOUR NEXT STEP

Which decision are you deferring?

A **Clarity Session** is a focused 20-minute conversation with me. We identify the one decision that matters most for your organization right now, and I recommend the right next step, whether or not that involves working together.

Book your free Clarity Session →

go.drivianatud.com/book

The Book on AI Leadership

The complete playbook for leading in the AI era. thebookonaileadership.com

MyClearPath AI

AI governance and federal compliance advisory for agencies and contractors. myclearpathai.com

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Keynotes, board briefings and advisory for institutions. go.drivianatud.com

The mandate is clear. Now it's yours to execute.

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Sources & notes

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3. Microsoft & LinkedIn, *2024 Work Trend Index: AI at Work Is Here. Now Comes the Hard Part* (8 May 2024). Survey of 31,000 people in 31 countries. blogs.microsoft.com/.../2024-work-trend-index
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7. ISO/IEC 42001:2023, *Information technology: Artificial intelligence: Management system*.
8. Executive Order 14365, *Ensuring a National Policy Framework for Artificial Intelligence* (11 Dec 2025); White House National Policy Framework for AI (20 Mar 2026). Status per Jackson Lewis, lawandtheworkplace.com; Ropes & Gray, ropesgray.com. Federal–state preemption remains contested.
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10. World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs Report 2025* (Jan 2025). [digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu summary](https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/summary)

Confidence note

Figures are reported as published by each source. Survey findings reflect respondent self-reports; predictions (Gartner, WEF) are projections, not outcomes. Regulatory dates reflect the position as of October 2026 and may change through further legislation, litigation or guidance. This Brief is strategic guidance, not legal advice. Consult counsel on your specific obligations.

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