The Number One AI Adoption Challenge

(It is not what most organisations think)

Most organisations believe their biggest AI challenge is adoption:

- Getting people to use it.
- Convincing teams not to fear it.
- Rolling it out safely.

But is that framing is getting outdated?

What I see as the real challenge: **AI has collapsed differentiation faster than governance, trust, and security can keep up**.

This is my reasoning:

At Davos this year, that tension was everywhere. Leaders spoke about productivity, skills, and acceleration. Fewer spoke about what creates advantage when everyone has access to roughly the same "**game changing tools**". Link.

Because that is the uncomfortable truth now: **AI has commoditised capability**.

A recent essay on how to a moat in the build age of AI makes the point directly. When software can be cloned in days, sometimes hours, product advantage disappears. What used to take a year now takes a handful of prompts and a coding assistant. The delivery window has collapsed from months to weeks. Link

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That changes the adoption conversation entirely

If AI tools are easy to copy, then adopting them faster does not make you safer. It makes you more exposed.

Which helps explain a pattern many organisations are experiencing:

- Heavy experimentation.
- Lots of pilots.
- Very little confidence moving into production.

Deloitte's data shows three quarters of organisations are stuck exactly there. Link.

- Pilot fatigue.
- Momentum without conviction.
- Agentic systems advancing faster than governance frameworks.

This is not resistance, but rational hesitation.

Where the global picture matters

One year after the DeepSeek shock, Chinese open-source models now surpass US models in global downloads. Not because they are "better", but because they are accessible, fine-tuneable, and deployable locally. The psychological barrier has broken. The question is no longer "can we do this?" but "how do we control it?" Link.

That shift is critical. Open models change the adoption calculus:

- They allow organisations to move intelligence closer to where data lives.
- They reduce dependency on opaque APIs.
- They make isolation, inspection, and constraint possible again.

This is not a geopolitical argument but a security and governance one.

- When intelligence is remote, black-boxed, and shared, control weakens.
- When intelligence is local, modular, and replaceable, control returns.

That is the strategy I increasingly apply in practice:

- Not chasing the "best" model.
- Designing systems that assume models will change.

Where the conversation becomes practical

The durable advantage is not the model.

It is the architecture around it:

- Clear ownership.
- Model agnosticism.
- Explicit boundaries between data, reasoning, and action.
- The ability to switch, audit, and contain.

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These are not technical preferences, but organisational capabilities.

And they align directly with what drives adoption.

Do people resist AI?

1. They do when they do not trust it.
2. They hesitate when accountability is unclear.
3. They disengage when systems feel imposed rather than owned.

The organisations that move forward do something different:

- They embed AI into workflows people already understand.
- They invest in literacy, not evangelism.
- They redesign roles deliberately, rather than letting headcount decisions drift.

That is consistent across the adoption examples referenced:

- Leadership.
- Governance.
- But above all, clarity.

If your AI adoption is stalling, the answer is not more tools. **It is a harder question**.

What is your AI product value when AI tools are abundant?

- If your advantage depends on a specific model, you do not have one.
- If it depends on trust, control, and how you deploy intelligence safely at scale, you might.

That is where the real adoption challenge sits now:

- Not fear of AI.
- **Fear of losing control over decisions, data, and accountability.**

And that fear is justified.

Which is why the next phase of AI adoption will not be won by speed.

This is also why, in my own work, I increasingly implement AI solutions using local and open models rather than defaulting to remote, closed APIs.

Local LLMs allow sensitive data to stay where it belongs, give teams visibility into how reasoning happens, and make training and fine-tuning a controlled, auditable process rather than an act of trust.

It is slower upfront. More deliberate. But it restores something most AI programmes quietly lose, ownership.

And without ownership, adoption never really sticks, no matter how powerful the model looks in a demo.

#ArtificialIntelligence #AIAdoption #AIGovernance #EnterpriseAI #DigitalTransformation #RiskManagement

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