

# AI is Not a Feature: Stop selling it like one!

Read this article is if you have heard this: 'Our software uses 'AI', it solves all your problems'.



ChatGPT based on this prompt: Create an image that represents this article.

Every morning when I listen to the news, I hear multiple statements saying the same story:

- “Our software X uses AI; therefore, it is the solution to all your business needs ...”
- “... and we use AI to do your tasks (accounting, sales planning, marketing, etc.) ...”
- “We give Agents the right personality ...”

This happens everywhere. On the news, online, and even on LinkedIn, where I see multiple postings of tools, frameworks, booklets on how AI will solve every company's challenge.

But most of them do not care to explain how they will do it, or how it links to any specific problem.

This pattern isn't new. We've seen similar 'universal solution' marketing before:

1. **“Energy Frequency” Health Devices**, wearables that claimed to use “personalised frequencies” and bio resonance to improve overall health and address many different conditions.
2. **Management and Universal Frameworks** (e.g., “One Method for All Teams”), Frameworks such as pure “Agile everywhere,” “Six Sigma everywhere,” or other management fashions that are often promoted as universal cures for productivity, quality, and culture across all industries and functions. Many organizations try to roll them out as a blanket solution.
3. **Universal “All-Weather, all-Season” Tyres** as a Total Replacement, sold as a one-set-does-everything solution, making consumers think they can forget about separate winter and summer tyres entirely.

Across these examples, the pattern is the same: a product is positioned as a universal, low-effort fix, but the evidence and real-world performance only support narrow, modest effects.

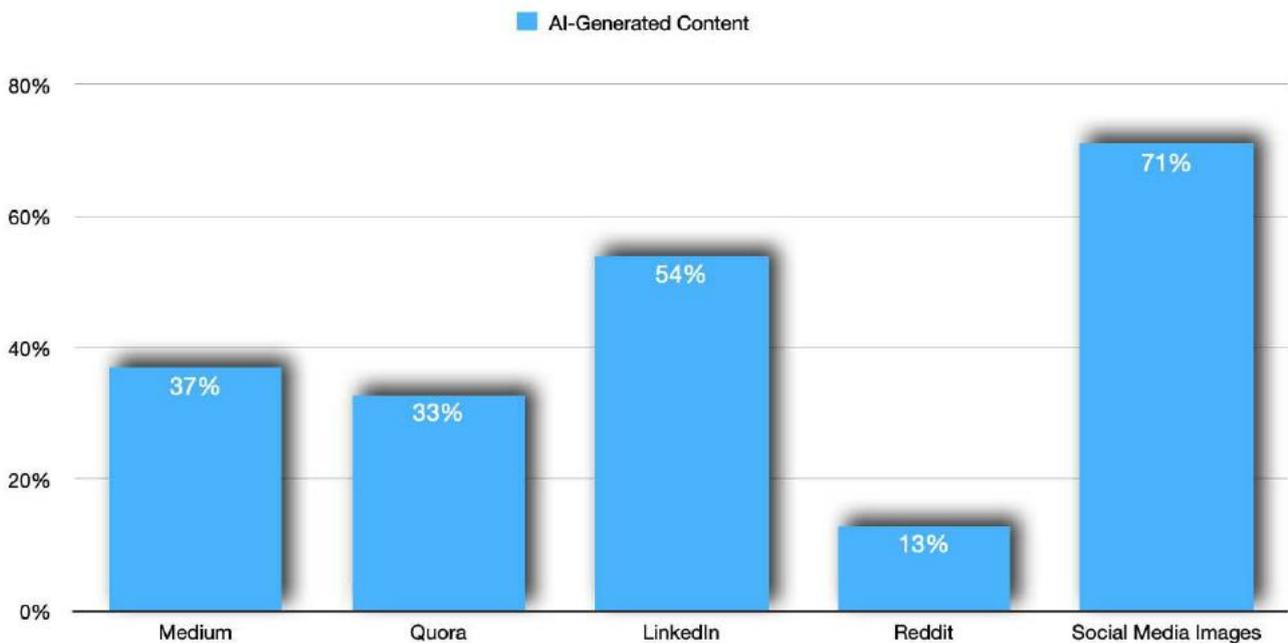
## The “AI for Everything” Platforms in Business

Many “AI platforms” and “AI copilots” have been pitched as general-purpose tools that will automate workflows, improve decision-making, and boost productivity across every function in a company with minimal configuration. Data shows that many pilots stall or remain in demo mode because:

1. **Misaligned problem-solution fit:** Vendors often assume “AI” itself is the solution, but the underlying problems (data quality, process design, incentives) remain unsolved; the model can’t fix broken input or unclear objectives.
2. **Generic models, specific needs:** General models trained on broad data rarely capture domain-specific edge cases, regulations, or risk tolerances; tailoring and governance are expensive and slow, so the real-world ROI is lower than promised.
3. **Integration and trust gaps:** Even if the model works technically, integrating into existing systems, workflows, and human decision processes is hard. I've seen AI recommendations unused because employees don't trust outputs they can't explain to their managers.

## We are not facing an AI replacement crisis. We are facing an AI clarity crisis.

The problem is not adoption, it is understanding. Across platforms:



AI articles in Social Media

Platform	AI-Generated Content	Timeframe	Notes
Medium	37%	2024	Long-form content surge from 1.8% in 2022.
Quora	33%	2024	Q&A posts heavily impacted.
LinkedIn	54%	2025	High in professional posts.
Reddit	13%	2024	Slower growth; up 146% since 2021.
Social Media Images	71%	2025	Broad category across platforms.

## ***This matters because AI is increasingly being used to explain AI.***

If half the content describing “AI solutions” is generated by AI itself, we should pause and ask a basic question: **How confident are we that the underlying problems are understood?**

### **The issue: selling “AI” instead of outcomes to be achieved with AI assistance**

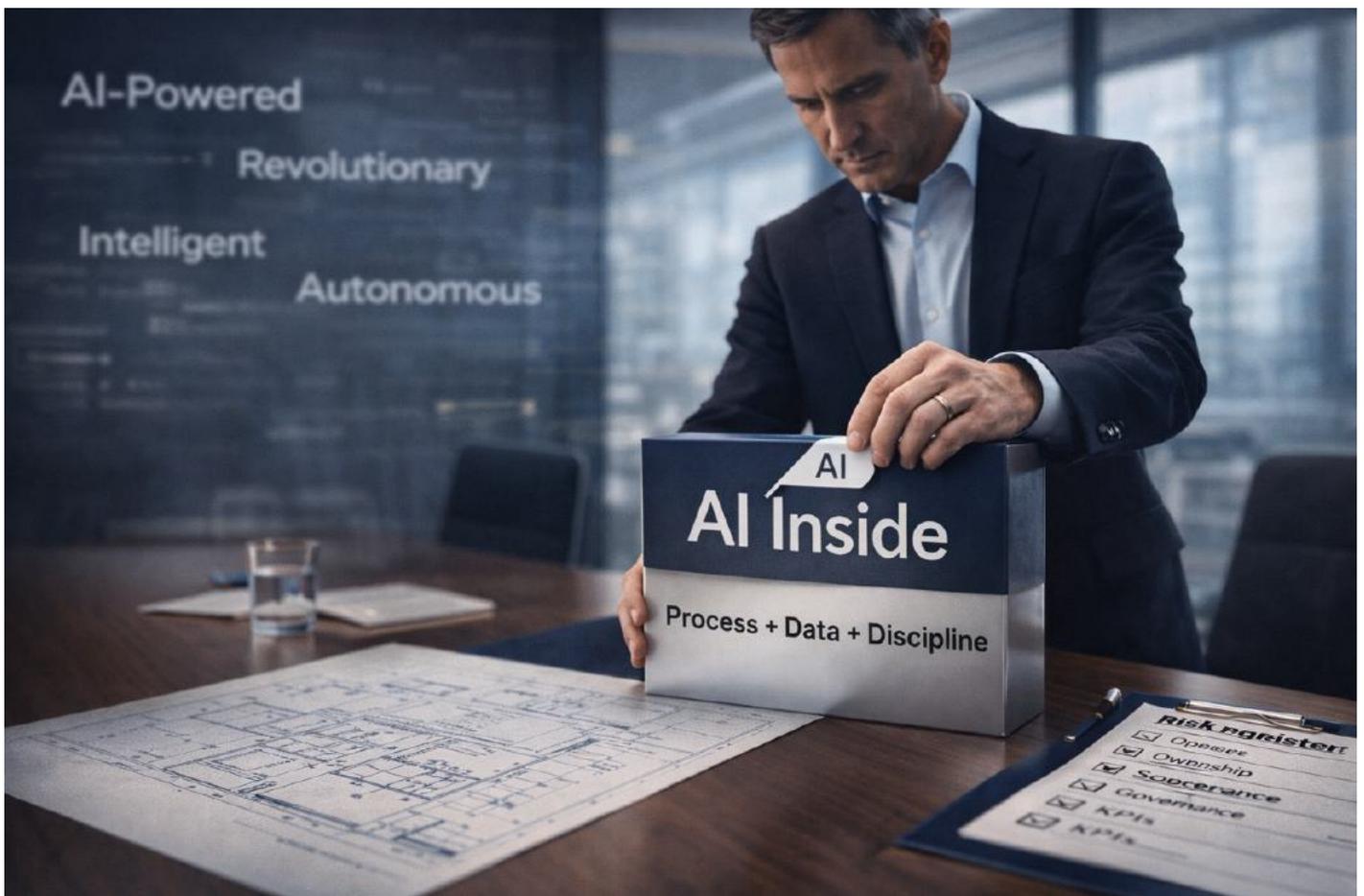
I code with AI almost daily and it's mind-blowing how often it takes a completely different direction when I let it decide the approach. No matter how clear the goals are, how many times I repeat the intention, or how trained the model is.

How can anyone credibly claim to solve another organisation’s problems without first understanding:

- How the process works,
- Where decisions are made,
- What constraints exist,
- And which trade-offs are acceptable?

Digital transformation has never worked that way:

- Automation does not remove design decisions.
- Intelligence does not remove accountability.
- Technology does not replace thinking.



Another ChatGPT Image from the same prompt

## Why the word “AI” misleads

Terms like *learning*, *understanding*, and *intelligence* are powerful, but misleading.

They are what AI pioneer [Marvin Minsky](#) once described as “**suitcase words**” (terms that carry hidden assumptions we didn't explicitly agree to).

- “Learning” sounds human. It isn't.
- “Understanding” sounds contextual. It isn't.
- “Intelligence” sounds general. It isn't.

AI systems are narrow by design, but being excellent at one task tells you nothing about another.

## The real AI Definition (and why that matters)

One of the most useful contributions to this discussion comes from the **Elements of AI** course offered by the University of Helsinki.

It makes an important point that is often ignored:

1. There is no single, universally agreed definition of artificial intelligence.
2. Instead of forcing one, the course focuses on what AI systems typically do well.

Most AI systems share two characteristics:

- **Autonomy**: they can perform tasks without constant human instruction
- **Adaptivity**: they improve performance by learning from data or experience

## AI is a tool, method, or component in a project, not a feature

As the **Elements of AI** course makes it clear, it has no consciousness, no intent, no general intelligence, just systems optimised to perform *specific tasks* under defined conditions.

“AI” is not something you “add” to a product, it is a **method** you apply.

Like every digital initiative before it, an AI driven solution still requires:

1. A clear business objective
2. Defined scope
3. Data flows and process design
4. Build
5. Testing
6. A decision on whether it meets the expectations

None of this has changed, only the tooling has.

## The underlying Concern

Historically, when something like this has happened, entire layers of work disappeared. Automated factories did not just replace craftsmen, they replaced the toolmakers, the intermediaries, and many of the checks embedded in the old process.

I broadly agree with the direction described in @Matt Shumer 's recent article '[Something Big Is Happening](#),' where he argues that we are witnessing is the emergence of a self-improving tool-builder. It is not just another productivity tool; it is a system that increasingly improves its own tooling.

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That momentum is unlikely to slow. A super-efficient tool-builder naturally collapses multiple specialised steps into fewer systems, which means many roles that exist to manage hand-offs, coordination, and validation will change or disappear.

Where I would add caution is on **delivery reality**. Even with rapidly improving capability, AI programmes are still hard to execute well. They are expensive, outcomes are often loosely defined, governance is unclear, and success is difficult to measure. Corporate enthusiasm does not replace a business case, and intelligence does not remove the need for accountability.

The organisations that succeed will not be the ones most excited by capability, but the ones that treat AI as a serious transformation programme: scoped use cases, explicit ownership, measurable outcomes, and a willingness to stop initiatives that do not pay back. That discipline, not model intelligence alone, is what will determine who benefits and who absorbs the cost.

Delivering AI projects is still hard because:

- AI initiatives are expensive
- Outcomes are often vague
- Governance is unclear
- Success is hard to measure

Corporate enthusiasm does not replace a business case and Fear of Missing Out does not create value.



## Reframing the conversation

The issue is treating “AI” as an answer rather than a tool, method, or component in a project.

“AI” becomes powerful only if it is paired with:

- Real process understanding,
- Delivery discipline,
- Explicit outcomes,

When it isn't, it becomes expensive noise that distracts from real business transformation.

## Key Takeaways:

- AI is a tool, method, or component, not a feature
- Focus on specific outcomes, not AI capabilities
- Apply proven transformation discipline
- Focus on the why and measure the results

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*This article draws on publicly available research and reporting, including platform-level adoption statistics, industry analysis, and the Elements of AI course developed by the University of Helsinki.*

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## Sources

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