

AI Is the Future! Execution Is the Problem.



After reading this morning [“Business leaders agree AI is the future. They just wish it worked right now”](#), there is no doubt that there is little debate left about whether artificial intelligence will transform organisations.

Business leaders broadly agree that it will. What is far less clear is how, when, and under what conditions that transformation actually delivers value.

Recent surveys and case studies point to a consistent pattern: Companies are investing heavily in AI, launching pilots, appointing task forces, and rolling out tools.

Yet only a small minority are seeing sustained improvements in margins, productivity, or customer outcomes.

This is not a technology failure. It is an execution failure.

The “Easy Button” Illusion

Much of the early enthusiasm around generative AI (including myself) was driven by the belief that it would act as an **“Easy Button”**.

Point it at a problem, apply a model, and value would emerge.

In practice, organisations quickly discovered that AI systems are inconsistent, context-sensitive, and heavily dependent on how work is structured around them.

Examples cover all sectors, from customer service chatbots that struggle with nuance, to safety and compliance tools that misinterpret long documents, the pattern is the same:

- AI performs well in bounded, repetitive tasks.
- It struggles when context, judgement, and accountability are unclear.

The implication is uncomfortable but important: **AI does not remove complexity, it exposes it!**

Productivity Without Structure Increases Risk

In many environments, AI demonstrably raises individual productivity. People can draft faster, analyse quicker, and explore scenarios more efficiently.

However, productivity gains alone are not the same as value creation.

This distinction matters most in regulated and operationally complex environments such as finance, risk, compliance, and large-scale operations.

In these contexts, work is governed by controls, review mechanisms, escalation paths, and audit requirements.

- A credit analyst using AI to draft an assessment still requires oversight.
- A compliance officer using AI to flag exceptions still applies judgement.
- A risk manager using AI to model outcomes still owns the decision.

When AI is introduced into workflows that were designed for manual execution, without redefining roles and responsibilities, the result is speed without clarity.

Outputs may arrive faster, but accountability becomes blurred and quality assurance weakens.

Why AI programmes stall

Across transformation programmes, the same root causes appear repeatedly:

- Data is fragmented, poorly governed, or inconsistently structured.
- Roles and decision rights are not updated to reflect AI involvement.
- Review and escalation mechanisms remain designed for pre-AI workflows.
- Ownership of AI-influenced decisions is unclear.

As a result, organisations see promising pilots fail to scale. Confidence erodes. Investment is delayed. AI becomes perceived as expensive, unreliable, or “not ready yet”, despite its underlying capability.

The issue is not that AI does not work. It is that operating models have not been redesigned to accommodate it.

The real work of AI transformation

Organisations that extract value from AI focus less on tools and more on structure. They treat AI adoption as an operating-model change, not a technology rollout.

That means:

- Defining who reviews AI-generated outputs and under what conditions.
- Establishing clear escalation triggers when AI recommendations require human judgement.
- Assigning accountability for decisions influenced by AI.
- Updating audit trails and controls to reflect AI participation in workflows.

This work is slower and less visible than deploying a new model or chatbot. It is also where most of the value sits.

A more realistic path forward

AI will continue to improve, models will become more capable, more specialised, and better integrated into enterprise systems.

But no amount of technical progress will compensate for unclear governance, weak delivery discipline, or poorly designed workflows.

The organisations that succeed will not be those that adopt AI fastest, they will be those that redesign how work is done, reviewed, and governed before scaling across the enterprise.

AI is the future. Execution determines whether that future delivers value.

#ArtificialIntelligence #AIAdoption #DigitalTransformation #OperatingModel #ExecutionDiscipline

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