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You Can't Delegate AI

Why Leaders Must Operate the Tools Before They Govern Them

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Leon Coe

Houston's AI Guy



Founder, Amplify Intelligence



President & Founder, Houston AI Club



Founded & exited VoCo, a voice-AI company



Lifelong Houstonian



Executive AI coaching:
operate the tools before
you govern them.



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The AI risk I am most worried about is the gap between the people **approving AI** and the people **actually using it.**

 **Approving AI**
Very few



 **Operating AI**
Very many



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SHOW OF HANDS

1

AI tools available?

2

Leaders use AI weekly on real decisions?

3

Those same leaders approve workflows, policies, vendors, or budgets?



Access



Judgment



Redesign

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SLIDE 3 | LAST YEAR WAS 'HOW'

Last Year Was "How"

Last year

Prompts

Workflows

First applications



How to get started

*Why getting started
was not enough.*

This year

Judgment

Governance

Redesign

Access



Judgment



Redesign

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SLIDE 4 | BOUGHT ACCESS, NOT ADOPTION

Most companies did not adopt AI. They bought access.

● ACTIVE

ACCESS

licenses | tools | pilots | committees

● INACTIVE

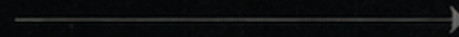
ADOPTION

operating rhythm | decisions | redesigned workflows | measurable change

Access



Judgment



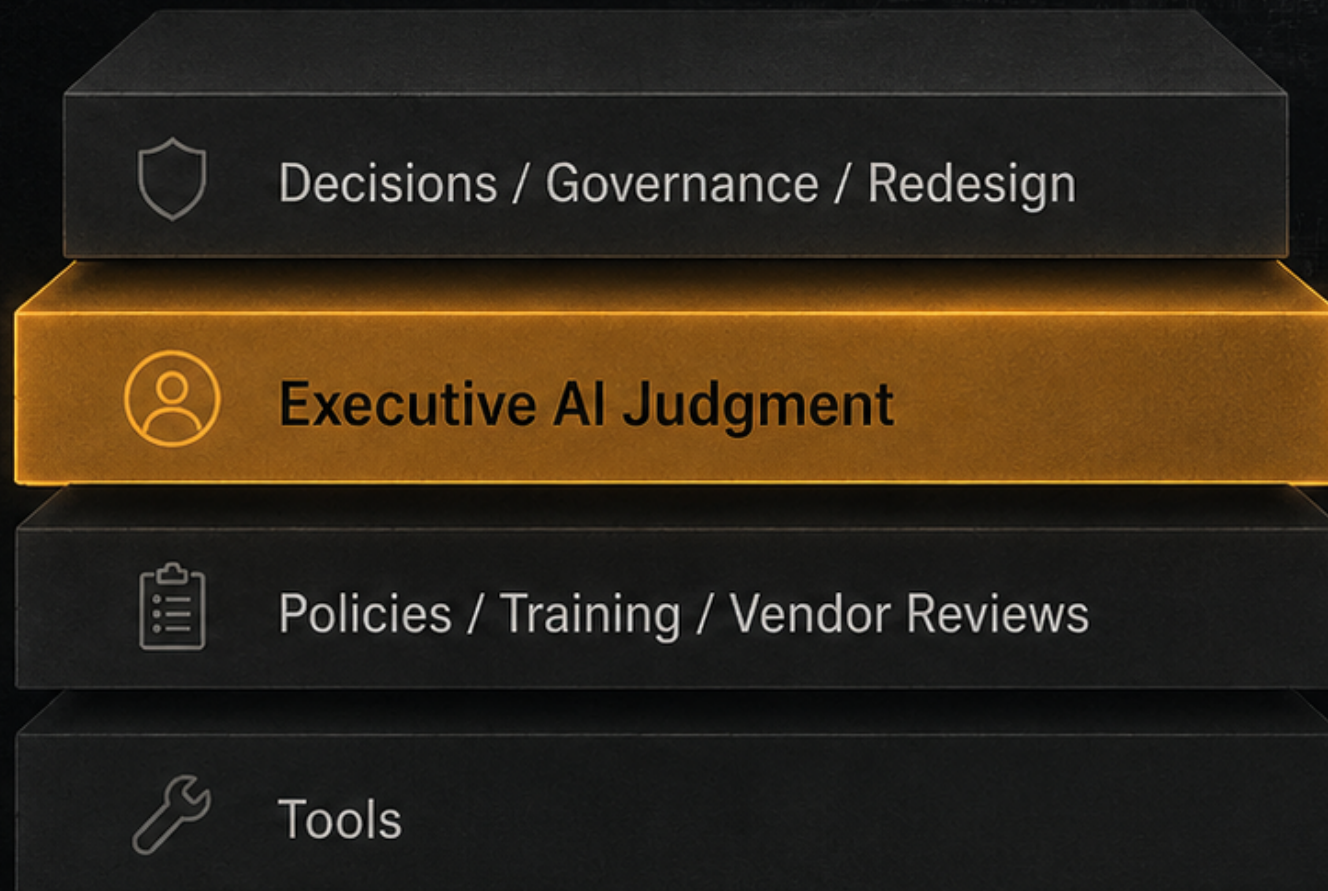
Redesign

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Policies help.
Training helps.
Vendor reviews help.

But none of them
replace executive
AI judgment.



..... The layer that
turns literacy
into decisions.

Access



Judgment



Redesign

AI is leverage before it is automation.

Automation replaces a step.

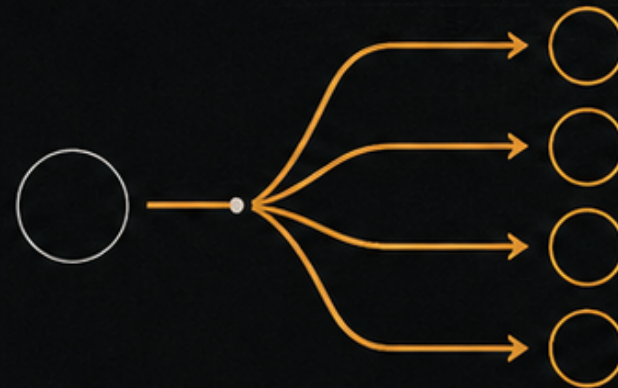
AI expands the quality, speed, and surface area of judgment.

Automation



replaces a step

Leverage



expands judgment

context
tradeoffs
communication
prioritization
ambiguity
follow-through

Access

Judgment

Redesign

Serious AI use is steering.

Context. Constraints. Criteria. Critique. Revision.



⊗ **Weak use:** vague ask → plausible answer → vibes

✓ **Serious use:** standard → context → revision → decision



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Most organizations are stuck between 1 and 2.

Most organizations
are here.



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The sequence is backwards.

Typical sequence:



Access



Training



Use cases



Roadmap



Executive alignment

Better sequence:



Leadership fluency



Business assessment



Roadmap



Training



Implementation



Four Mechanics Leaders Must Understand

Engine. Memory. Access. Repeatability.
Models. Context / Projects. Connectors. Skills.

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Models are engines.

Different engines have different cost, speed, context, and reasoning depth.

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	 Speed	 Cost	 Context	 Reasoning depth
 Fast / routine	 high	 low	 limited	 shallow
 Strong / judgment	 medium	 medium	 moderate	 moderate
 Reasoning / high-stakes ambiguity	 low	 high	 deep	 deep

 Approved for use != appropriate for this decision.

Context is what the AI can use. Projects are where context persists.

Project = durable context for one body of work.

AI Workspace

Executive AI Judgment

Ask a decision question...

[Blurred content area]

Current project

Houston Refinery Turnaround

Updated just now

Status

● Active

Scope

Turnaround execution planning and decisions

Access

Leadership, Operations, Engineering

Context sources

- Transcripts public
- Policies internal
- Examples internal
- Decision criteria internal
- Customer records sensitive
- Incident notes sensitive

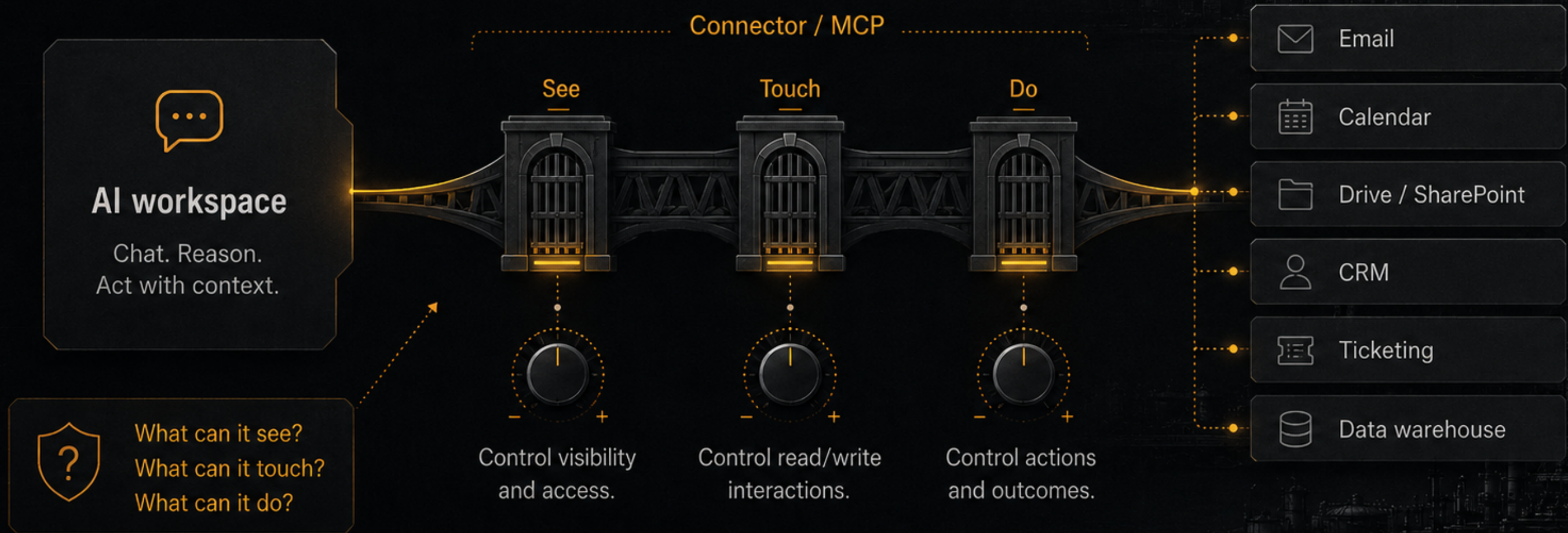
More context.
Better quality.

Context defines exposure.
Be precise. Be intentional.



Connectors turn chat into infrastructure.

Every connector is a permission decision.



Skills make repeatable work governable.

If you have done it three times, it is probably a skill.



Access → **Judgment** → Redesign



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The dangerous jump is going straight from prompt to agent.

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Access

Judgment

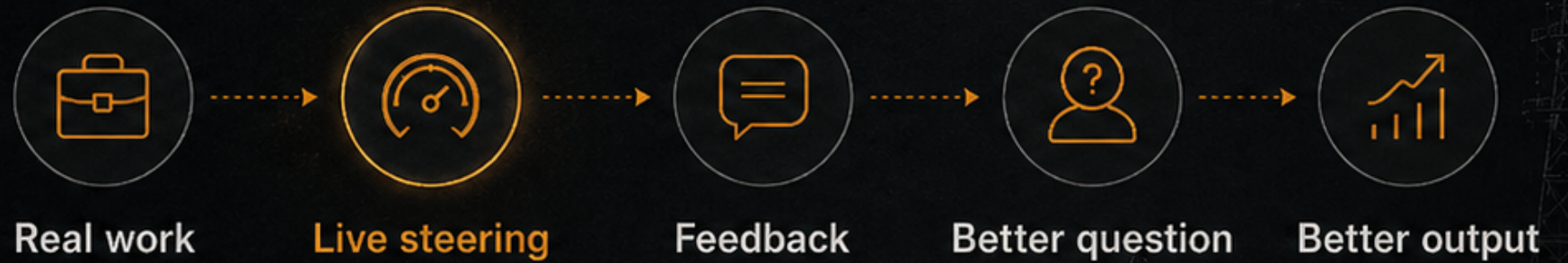
Redesign

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Not training.

Operating with the tool,
on real work, with feedback.

Pair programming,
but for executive AI judgment.



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Do not ask AI for an answer.

Steer it toward a defensible decision.

⊗ Lazy prompt

Write a memo about whether we should let a team connect an AI assistant to company email and documents.



✓ Decision-grade steering

- ✓ Decision
- ✓ Missing facts
- ✓ Permissions
- ✓ Controls
- ✓ Success criteria
- ✓ Stop conditions

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No live connectors. No sensitive data. Judgment before access.



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The model did not become safe. The work became better governed.

? Plausible answer

The model produced a response that sounded reasonable and aligned with the prompt. It reflected patterns in the data and language, but not the realities, constraints, or standards that matter in our organization.

- Unstructured | Free-form output
- Unfiltered | Broad data access
- Unreviewed | No decision checkpoints

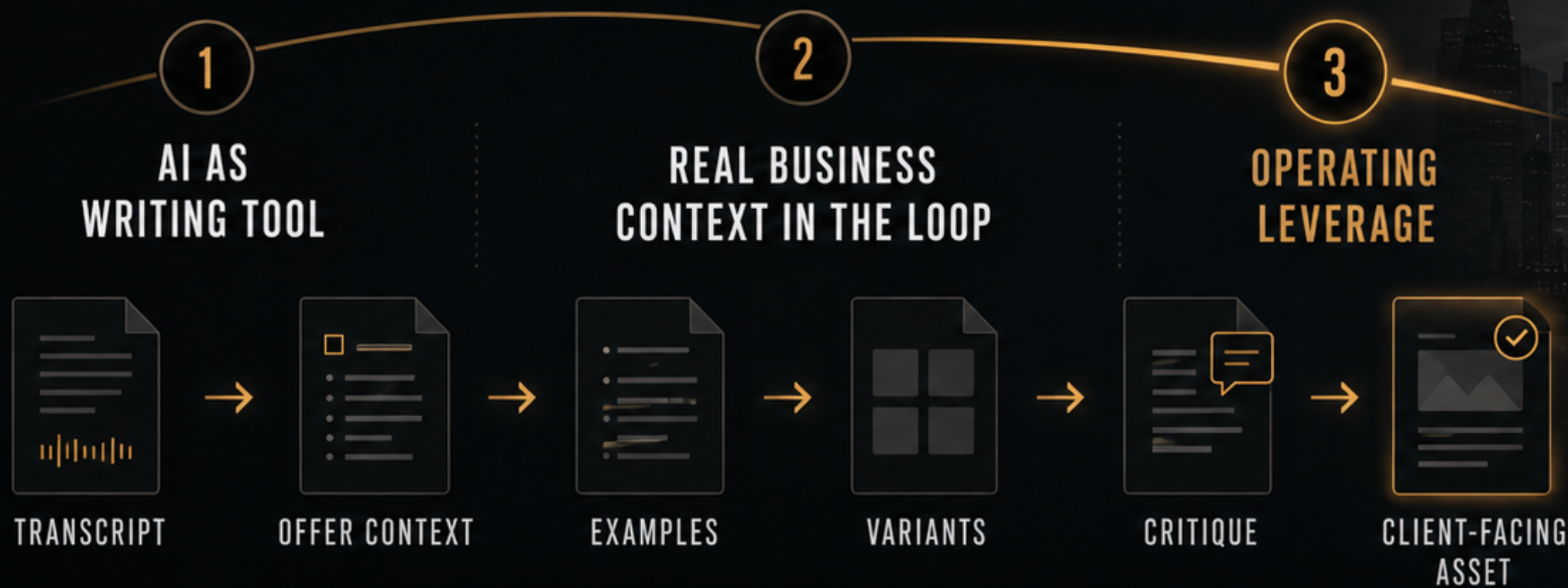


✓ Governed decision support

- Recommendation** | Actionable guidance based on standards, risk posture, and intent.
- Pilot scope** | Defined use case, objectives, boundaries, and success criteria.
- Allowed data** | Approved sources only, with sensitivity and lineage validated.
- Prohibited data** | Restricted categories, sources, and topics explicitly blocked.
- Review points** | Human checkpoints for quality, risk, and alignment.
- Stop conditions** | Clear thresholds that pause or halt the work.



REAL BUSINESS CONTEXT BECAME OPERATING LEVERAGE.



🕒 ROUGHLY 45 MINUTES: FUZZY OFFER → USABLE ASSET



BEFORE YOU APPROVE ANOTHER AI INITIATIVE, OPERATE ONE YOURSELF.



1.
PICK ONE
REAL DECISION.



2.
STEER IT
THROUGH
THREE PASSES.



3.
ASK BETTER
GOVERNANCE
QUESTIONS.



YOU CAN DELEGATE IMPLEMENTATION. **YOU CANNOT DELEGATE AI JUDGMENT.**

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CLOSE | OPERATE BEFORE YOU GOVERN

Build executive AI judgment.

Private coaching for leaders who need hands-on fluency before policy, vendors, connectors, and agents.



Real decisions



Live steering



Better governance questions



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You can delegate implementation. You cannot delegate AI judgment.

