

47 Questions.

*Every leadership team should ask
about AI adoption.*

A diagnostic for any leadership team.
Read in order. The sequence is the diagnostic.

BEGIN →

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INTRODUCTION

*The problem is not access to technology.
It is the absence of redesign around it.*

Most companies have deployed AI tools. Few have changed how work actually gets done. A majority of companies are struggling to extract value from AI, and many deployed models lose effectiveness within months. These 47 questions help any leadership team identify where adoption is performative and where it is real. Each is answerable with data the company has today.

HOW TO USE THIS

Pick one active AI deployment inside your company. Walk through the 47 questions with the leadership team in the order presented. Any question without a credible answer is the starting point for workflow redesign, not another tool purchase.

SECTION ONE

Before You Deploy.

Most companies skip this phase entirely.

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- 01 Which specific workflow will have demonstrably fewer human steps six months from now because of this tool, and who has documented that target in writing?

 - 02 What happens to the existing software budget line when this new capability is fully operational, and has anyone modeled the overlap?

 - 03 Who is the single named executive accountable for the financial return on this specific deployment, not the broader initiative?

 - 04 How does the organization distinguish between a tool that augments an employee and a system that replaces a task entirely, and who made that classification?

 - 05 What is the documented baseline metric for the process this tool is entering, measured before any new software was introduced?

 - 06 Which core business process is the primary target for this investment, and what evidence supports choosing it over a peripheral support function?

 - 07 What is the specific mechanism for discovering when employees are using unapproved models for company work outside sanctioned channels?

SECTION TWO

Workflow Design.

*Who approves what, where the handoffs are,
what happens when the system is wrong.*

- 08 Who explicitly mapped the current human handoffs in this process before the new system was introduced, and where is that map?
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- 09 When the system produces an incorrect output, what is the exact written protocol for correction, escalation, and retraining?
-
- 10 Which specific approvals have been automated, and who retains personal liability for those decisions if they go wrong?
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- 11 How does the organization ensure that the speed of automated output does not overwhelm the capacity for human review downstream?
-
- 12 What happens to the institutional knowledge embedded in a process when the manual steps are no longer performed by a person?
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SECTION TWO · CONTINUED

Workflow Design.

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- 13 Which specific tasks have been completely removed from a job description rather than just made incrementally faster?
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- 14 How are middle managers being trained to review work produced by a system rather than a junior employee, and who writes the standard they review against?
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- 15 What is the fallback procedure when the system experiences an unexpected outage during an operation where timing matters?
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- 16 How does the company measure the difference between time saved by the tool and time effectively reallocated to work that matters more?
-
- 17 Who determines the acceptable error threshold in this specific operational context, and how was that number derived?

SECTION THREE

Adoption Reality.

Whether the deployment actually changed how work gets done, or just created another dashboard.

18 If every AI tool were removed tomorrow, which specific ones would the team actually fight to keep, and what does that tell you about the rest?

19 How many employees log into the system daily because it is useful versus how many use it only when explicitly prompted by a manager?

20 What is the measurable difference in output quality between the top quartile of users and the bottom quartile, and what explains the gap?

21 Which department has organically developed the most unexpected use case for the available tools, and how did that happen without a directive from leadership?

SECTION THREE · CONTINUED

Adoption Reality.

- 22 How does the company identify and support employees who are quietly struggling to adapt to the new workflow rather than surfacing their difficulty?
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- 23 What specific evidence proves that the tool has changed how work is structured rather than just adding another step to the existing process?
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- 24 How is the organization addressing the initial productivity dip that typically occurs in the first months after a new system is introduced?
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- 25 Which specific managers are actively resisting adoption because the new system changes their traditional oversight role, and what is the plan for that?
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SECTION FOUR

Trust Boundaries.

*What the system decides, what it recommends,
and what it should never touch.*

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- 26 What specific categories of data are strictly prohibited from being processed by any external model, and where is that policy documented?
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- 27 Who has the final authority to override a recommendation made by the system, and how is that override logged and reviewed?
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- 28 How does the company ensure that proprietary operational methods are not inadvertently used to train a vendor's public models?
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- 29 Which decisions have been explicitly classified as too consequential or too nuanced to delegate to a machine, and who made that classification?
-
- 30 How does the company audit whether the system is quietly making the same wrong recommendation across similar cases, and what triggers an investigation?
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- 31 How does the organization maintain transparency with clients or partners about the extent to which a machine handles work on their behalf?
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- 32 What specific safeguards prevent the system from executing an action that could cause irreversible financial or reputational harm without a human confirming it first?
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SECTION FIVE

Proof and Measurement.

What can be measured. What is board ready.

What is just a vanity metric.

33 Which specific line item on the P&L will show a measurable change within ninety days, and what is the projected magnitude?

34 How does the company isolate the financial impact of this tool from other operational changes happening at the same time?

35 What is the exact calculation used to determine return on investment for the current deployment, and has anyone pressure tested the assumptions?

36 Which metrics currently reported to the board measure activity rather than outcome, and what would replace them?

SECTION FIVE · CONTINUED

Proof and Measurement.

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- 37 How frequently is the financial impact of the deployment reassessed against the original business case, and what triggers a reassessment?
-
- 38 What specific evidence demonstrates that the value of time saved is being captured as cost reduction rather than just creating idle capacity?
-
- 39 How does the organization quantify the cost of technical debt being created by rapid unstructured deployment of multiple tools simultaneously?
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- 40 What is the specific threshold at which a pilot project is declared a failure, shut down, and its budget reallocated?

SECTION SIX

Scale and Risk.

What happens when it scales across the company or portfolio.

What breaks. What exit diligence sees.

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- 41 What specific infrastructure components will fail when the current pilot is expanded to the full organization, and who has modeled that scenario?
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- 42 How does the company plan to manage the escalating costs of external model usage as adoption increases across departments?
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- 43 What is the contingency plan if a critical vendor significantly changes their pricing, terms of service, or discontinues a product the workflow depends on?
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- 44 How does the organization prevent current investments from becoming obsolete within twelve months given the pace of change in the underlying technology?
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- 45 What specific documentation will be available during exit diligence to prove the sustainability and repeatability of the operational improvements attributed to these tools?
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- 46 How is the company preparing for the commoditization of capabilities it currently treats as a competitive advantage?
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- 47 What risk management framework governs the scenario where a system error propagates across the organization before anyone detects it?

COLOPHON

*Any question without
a credible answer is
the starting point.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carl Brunson led design through Verikai's ~\$120M acquisition as a one-person function, then ran marketing after close and drove 5x demo requests. Now runs Buildcraft Design, an advise-plus-ship studio for AI workflow design and implementation.

WORK WITH CARL

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Discovery Sprint inquiries welcome.