
AI PATTERNS

The AI anti-pattern field guide

Fifteen ways AI goes wrong inside a company.
Which ones sound like your company?

AI by Committee

AI as a Second Job

The Peer-Appointed Champion

AI Left to Emerge

Shadow AI and Data Leakage

The Tool Pile

The Noise Problem

The Pilot Graveyard

The Unsaid Option

Automating the Mess

The Unchecked Draft

Licenses Without Lessons

The Quiet Users

Counting Logins

AI by Department

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

AI patterns: which ones sound like your company?

Fifteen ways AI goes wrong inside a company. Each one has its own page, with what it costs and a first move.

WHO IT'S FOR

Owners and leaders who want to see what's slowing AI down at their company.

HOW TO USE IT

1. Read each pattern and mark it: sounds like us, partly, or not us.
2. For each one you marked, read the rest of that page.
3. Pick the one pattern that costs you the most and start there.
4. Ask your leadership team to mark the guide on their own, then compare answers.

Want a second opinion on where to start? [Book a 30-minute call](#).

Many of these patterns start with one of three setups: AI run by a committee, AI split across department heads, or AI handed to an interested volunteer.

SEVERITY

High means the pattern blocks AI from working anywhere in the company or carries real risk. Medium means it wastes money or time and usually travels with a High one.

The lines under "How it sounds" are typical phrasing we wrote, not quotes from clients or interviews.

RADAR AREA

Each pattern pulls down one or two areas most, and touches others.

Strategy and ownership · People and AI fluency · Culture and change readiness · Data, security and rules · Workflows and know-how · Measurement and quality

THE 15 PATTERNS

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AI by Committee

Everyone owns a piece of AI, and nobody owns the whole.

RADAR AREA

Strategy and ownership

Also: Workflows and know-how

HOW IT SOUNDS

"We set up an AI working group, and it meets every other Thursday." "Each department picked its own tool, and we'll compare notes." "We're waiting on the committee's recommendation."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

A group with one person from each department gives AI a couple of hours a week. Say 6 people meet for 2 hours: that's $6 \times 2 = 12$ hours of company time, or $12 \div 8 = 1.5$ eight-hour days, in one meeting (an illustration, not a sourced figure). Then everyone goes back to the day job with a list of to-dos and works them piecemeal between other work. If the next meeting is weeks away, the list waits and gets done in a rush right before it. The meetings produce lists, demos and small pilots. The decisions that cost something, like which tools, what data stays out and which work changes first, get pushed to the next meeting. Each member reports back to their own boss, so each department's view wins inside its own area.

WHY IT HAPPENS

A committee feels fair and safe. Nobody has to give one person authority over other people's departments, and nobody carries the blame alone if it goes wrong. Each member's first team is their department, so the committee works for the departments and nobody works for the whole business. Our view, which no study measures directly, is that committees also tend to settle on what nobody objects to, and the options that matter most are often the ones somebody objects to.

WHAT IT COSTS

- Staff time, as an example. Five people giving AI 2 hours a week: $5 \times 2 \times 48$ weeks $\times$ \$37.64 an hour = **\$18,067 a year**. The \$37.64 is total compensation per hour worked at private-industry worksites with 1 to 49 workers, the lowest of the four size bands (BLS Employer Costs for Employee Compensation, June 2026, Table 6). A bigger worksite costs more per hour. Five people, two hours and 48 working weeks are our assumptions, so owners should use their own.
- Fragmented work. In SAS and IDC's survey of 1,600 small and mid-sized companies, 44.8% had "no structured view of their AI use cases, with activities remaining fragmented across teams and functions," and only 12.5% managed them as a portfolio "with clear owners, success metrics, and regular review and prioritization."
- We searched for a study showing that committee-run AI fails more often and didn't find a credible one, so that claim stays our reasoning.

THE COMMITTEE SETUP

This is the first of the three setups. AI only gets the time left over after the day job, so it never becomes a first-class priority.

FIRST MOVE

Keep the group as a sounding board and name one owner with the time and authority to decide. Write down the three kinds of decisions the owner makes alone and the ones that come back to the leadership team.

AI as a Second Job

The person who got AI still has a day job.

RADAR AREA

Strategy and ownership

Also: People and AI fluency

HOW IT SOUNDS

"Our IT director is handling AI on top of everything else." "She's the one who's into AI, so it's hers now." "We'll get to the AI plan after the busy season."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

AI gets added to the CTO's, CIO's or IT director's list, or to whoever showed interest first, like the person who built a quick app with an AI coding tool. The interested volunteer is the most common version: someone keen offers to lead, and they're often the best person for it. They're capable and willing, and they still have no time for both jobs, so the work stalls, takes much longer than it should and drifts without a clear focus. The AI work happens in the gaps between their real job, gets dropped every time the day job calls, and has to be picked back up from scratch.

WHY IT HAPPENS

The owner can't justify a full-time hire for a job nobody has defined yet, and handing it to a trusted person feels efficient. It's the Hero Culture loop: the more the company relies on one person, the busier they get, and the less room they have for the new work. The person is never the problem. The setup asks them to do two jobs in the hours of one.

WHAT IT COSTS

- **Salary.** A senior IT leader giving AI 20 hours a week: $20 \times 48 = 960$ hours a year, at about \$130.31 an hour, comes to **\$125,100 a year**, half of that leader's loaded salary. The closest federal pay category, computer and information systems managers (11-3021), has a US median wage of \$175,140 (BLS OEWS, May 2025). Loaded at BLS ECEC's 70.0% wages share, that's $\$175,140 \div 0.700 = \$250,200$, and $\$250,200 \div 1,920$ working hours = \$130.31.
- **Switching.** In a UC Irvine study of 24 information workers, interrupted work took an average of 25 minutes 26 seconds to resume, and 22.8% of it wasn't resumed the same day (Mark, Gonzalez and Harris, CHI 2005). APA's summary of task-switching research says people lose more time on each switch when the tasks are complex or unfamiliar (APA, 2006), and AI work is both for most people today.
- **Priorities.** In PMI's Pulse of the Profession 2018 (5,402 project professionals), 39% named "change in organization's priorities" as a primary cause of failed projects, first on the list.
- **Time.** In the Federal Reserve Banks' 2026 Small Business Credit Survey, 25% of employer firms using AI and 37% of those planning to named "time to implement or train employees" as a challenge.

FIRST MOVE

Count the hours. Ask the person carrying AI how much time they gave it last month and what got dropped to make room. Then decide on purpose: protect that time in writing, or give AI to someone whose job it is.

The Peer-Appointed Champion

One peer asked to change how everyone else works, with no authority to make it stick.

RADAR AREA

Culture and change readiness

Also: Strategy and ownership, People and AI fluency

HOW IT SOUNDS

"Talk to Dave, he's our AI champion." "I can show them how it works, but I can't make them use it." "Why is he telling my team how to do their jobs?"

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

The owner names a respected peer as the AI champion. The champion runs demos, shares tips and builds a few tools. Use picks up in their own team and stalls in departments whose leaders didn't ask for it. The friction rarely shows as an argument. It shows as polite non-use, and the champion's relationships with peers get harder.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Change needs a sponsor with authority. A peer has influence and no authority, so every request to change how a department works is one peer asking another, and that puts both of them in an awkward spot. People also want to hear about change from two places, and a peer isn't either one. There's a fair point on the other side: MIT NANDA's 2025 report found that many strong deployments began with power users who became early champions, paired with "executive accountability." The champion helps. The champion without a sponsor is the pattern.

WHAT IT COSTS

- "Projects with extremely ineffective sponsors were only 27% likely to meet their objectives as compared to 79% with extremely effective sponsors" (Prosci, Best Practices in Change Management). $79 \div 27 =$ about 2.9 times as likely.
- In Prosci's 12th edition study (2,668 respondents, 2023), employees preferred the CEO or president for why the business is changing (37%) and their own supervisor for how it affects them (58%).
- PMI's 2018 survey found 26% named "inadequate sponsor support" as a primary cause of failed projects.
- The cost to the champion's peer relationships isn't measured anywhere we found, so that's our reasoning from leading teams through change.

WHERE IT COMES FROM

Often the interested volunteer, the person in AI as a Second Job, is asked to roll AI out to everyone else. AI as a Second Job is the time problem. This pattern is the authority problem.

FIRST MOVE

Keep the champion as the teacher and give the change a sponsor. The owner says why at a team meeting, and each manager tells their own team what changes for them and when.

AI Left to Emerge

No decisions made on purpose, so whatever grows in the dark is what you get.

RADAR AREA

Strategy and ownership

Data, security and rules

Also: Workflows and know-how

HOW IT SOUNDS

"Marketing uses one tool, sales uses another and finance won't touch it."

"We'll let it develop and see what sticks."

"I didn't know operations had built that."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Each department picks its own tools, rules and uses. Nobody has a list of what's in use or what data it touches. Good ideas stay in the team that found them, and the same problem gets solved three different ways.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Leaders don't want to slow anyone down, and making decisions feels early when the tools change every month. Without a decision, the defaults decide: the free plan, the tool someone saw on LinkedIn, the department with the most energy. It's the Silo Republic with faster tools.

WHAT IT COSTS

- In the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Ipsos survey of 1,070 small business workers (May 2026), 19% said AI adoption at their organization was driven mostly by employees exploring tools on their own, against 11% who said it was driven by organizational guidance.
- SAS and IDC found 44.8% of small and mid-sized companies had no structured view of their AI use cases, and 44.9% said successful pilots "remain siloed and are not reused elsewhere."
- The cost of duplicate tools and duplicate work is our reasoning. We haven't found a study that measures it for AI.

HOW IT DIFFERS FROM AI BY DEPARTMENT

Here nobody was given AI, so nothing was decided. In AI by Department, each head was given AI for their area, and each area decides on its own.

FIRST MOVE

Spend one hour making the list: every AI tool in use, who uses it, on which plan and touching what data. Making the list is the first decision the company has made on purpose.

Shadow AI and Data Leakage

Your people already use AI. The open questions are whose account it's on and where the data goes.

RADAR AREA

Data, security and rules

Also: Culture and change readiness

HOW IT SOUNDS

"I paste the client file into my ChatGPT and it writes the summary."

"I built a little tool over the weekend that pulls from our customer list."

"Which plan? The free one, I think."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Staff use personal AI accounts for work and paste in client files, contracts, pricing and code. Some build their own apps with AI coding tools, connected to company data. Nobody knows which of those personal plans can use what's typed into them to train the provider's models.

WHY IT HAPPENS

People have real work, and the tools are a browser tab away. When the company hasn't provided approved tools or written rules, people fill the gap themselves, and most of them are trying to do good work faster.

WHAT IT COSTS

- Scale. Microsoft and LinkedIn's 2024 Work Trend Index found "78% of AI users are bringing their own AI tools to work," and 80% at small and medium-sized companies.
- Breaches. IBM's 2025 Cost of a Data Breach study found "security incidents involving shadow AI accounted for 20% of breaches," organizations with high levels of shadow AI saw "an average of \$670,000 in higher breach costs," and "63% of breached organizations either don't have an AI governance policy or are still developing a policy." The sample is 600 organizations that had a breach, and IBM sells security.
- Model training. OpenAI's help center says that for services for individuals, like ChatGPT, "we may use your content to train our models," with an opt-out, while business plans and the API aren't used for training by default. Anthropic's consumer plans use chats for training if the user allows it. Google tells Gemini app users, "Please don't enter confidential information that you wouldn't want a reviewer to see or Google to use to improve our services." The safe public wording is "can be used to train models unless you turn it off" or "if you allow it."

FIRST MOVE

Move it into the open instead of banning it. Ask what people use and why, put work use on business plans the company controls, and write one page on what data stays out. Then pick the best home-built tools and make them supported ones.

The Tool Pile

Every tool made sense when you bought it. Together they don't add up to a plan.

RADAR AREA

Workflows and know-how

Measurement and quality

Also: Strategy and ownership

HOW IT SOUNDS

"We've got Copilot, ChatGPT Team and two AI add-ons in the CRM."

"Who's using the meeting-notes tool?"

"The vendor said it would save ten hours a week."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Subscriptions pile up: suite add-ons, chat tools and AI features inside every app the company already pays for. Each purchase answered a demo or a pitch. Few are tied to a task, an owner or a measure, and use drops off after the first month.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Buying is the easiest AI decision there is, and it feels like progress. Nobody inside was asked which friction the tool should remove first. These are solutions looking for problems, based on what worked elsewhere instead of what this company needs.

WHAT IT COSTS

- SAS and IDC found only 12.5% of small and mid-sized companies manage AI use cases as a portfolio with clear owners and success measures.

FIRST MOVE

List every AI tool with its monthly cost, its owner and the one task it's for. Anything without a task gets a 30-day test with a named owner or gets cancelled. Start with the friction, then ask how AI can make it better.

The Noise Problem

So many people selling AI answers that it's hard to tell good help from bad.

RADAR AREA

Strategy and ownership

Also: People and AI fluency

HOW IT SOUNDS

"Every week there's a new tool I'm supposed to be behind on."

"Three vendors told me their AI employee replaces a hire."

"I watched a video that said we should automate everything."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

The owner gets AI pitches every day, reads advice that contradicts itself and sees peers posting about their wins. The leadership team can't agree, partly because each person is hearing different noise. Decisions get made on the last demo anyone saw, or get put off until things settle down.

WHY IT HAPPENS

The market moves fast and claims are cheap. With AI, the whole market can feel like a mystery to an owner, and there's rarely someone with no product to sell who can sort it for them.

WHAT IT COSTS

- In the Chamber and Ipsos survey, 41% of small business workers said "it is unclear how AI applies to their specific business."
- A head of procurement quoted in MIT NANDA's report: "I receive numerous emails daily claiming to offer the best GenAI solution. Some have impressive demos, but establishing trust is the real challenge." That buyer works at a large company, and owners of small ones get the same emails.
- We don't have a dollar figure for noise, so the cost is our reasoning: delay, and tools bought on the strength of a demo (see The Tool Pile).

WHERE IT SHOWS UP

Noise is what fills the plan when busy leaders own AI part time. In AI by Department, it turns into recency: the plan follows whatever each head heard about last.

FIRST MOVE

Before the next demo, write down the three business problems you'd pay to solve this year. Judge every pitch against that list, and say no to anything that doesn't touch one of the three.

The Pilot Graveyard

Lots of promising pilots, and none of them became how the work gets done.

RADAR AREA

Workflows and know-how

Measurement and quality

Also: Culture and change readiness

HOW IT SOUNDS

"The pilot went great, and then everyone got busy."

"We tried AI for that last year."

"It works for Jen, but nobody else uses it."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Pilots start with energy and show good results for one person or one team, and then they stop. Nobody owns the move from test to everyday process, nothing gets written down, and the next pilot starts from zero. Over time people stop volunteering, because they've seen how it ends.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Pilots are set up to start, not to finish. There's no owner for the rollout, no success measure agreed up front and no time set aside to change the process around the tool.

WHAT IT COSTS

- SAS and IDC found 44.9% of small and mid-sized companies say successful pilots stay siloed, 19.4% repeat them informally and only 11.2% scale them in a systematic way.
- The human cost is change fatigue and a belief that nothing will change. For AI that cost is our reasoning, because it makes the next good idea harder to start.

FIRST MOVE

Before the next pilot starts, write three lines: who owns the rollout if it works, what number says it worked and which written process changes. If nobody can fill in the first line, don't start the pilot yet.

The Unsaid Option

The hardest AI options never get said out loud inside the company.

RADAR AREA

Culture and change readiness

Also: Strategy and ownership

HOW IT SOUNDS

"Nobody's going to suggest automating their own department."

"I had an idea, but it felt too far out to bring up."

"We all know what should happen, and nobody wants to be the one to say it."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Leadership conversations about AI stay safe: small tools, no changes to roles, structure or what the business sells. The bigger options, like redesigning a role, combining two teams, stopping a service or rethinking pricing, come up in hallway talk or not at all. The owner ends up choosing from a shorter list of options than the business has.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Normal human reasons. People inside weigh how an idea could affect their own job, their peers' jobs and how they'll be seen for raising it. Their position makes some things hard to say, and that's a fact about the position, not a flaw in the person. Westrum's work on how information flows in organizations and Lencioni's work on fear of conflict both point to the same place.

WHAT IT COSTS

- In interviews with 40 employees, 85% (34 of 40) said that at least once they "had felt unable to raise an issue or concern to their bosses even though they felt the issue was important." The most common reason was "the fear of being viewed or labeled negatively" (Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin, Journal of Management Studies, 2003). It's a small qualitative study, so the sample size goes next to the number.
- In a 2013 Stanford and The Miles Group survey of more than 200 CEOs, directors and senior executives, 65.7% of CEOs said they don't receive coaching or leadership advice from outside consultants or coaches. Those are mostly larger companies than ours.
- The cost of an option nobody raised can't be measured, so this one is our reasoning.

FIRST MOVE

Ask each member of the leadership team to write down, without their name, one AI option they think is worth discussing and expect nobody else to raise. Read the list together with no names and no judgment, and pick one to look at properly.

Automating the Mess

AI speeds up the process you already have, including the parts that don't work.

RADAR AREA

Workflows and know-how

Also: Measurement and quality

HOW IT SOUNDS

"Can AI fix our onboarding?"

"Let's have AI answer the tickets so we don't have to sort out the ticket process."

"Only Maria knows how month-end works, but maybe AI can learn it."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

AI gets put on top of a process nobody has written down or agreed on. The output is inconsistent, exceptions pile up and people blame the tool. Meanwhile the knowledge that would make it work is still in one or two people's heads.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Fixing a process is slow and sometimes political, and buying AI feels like a way to skip that step. When one person holds all the context, the rest of the team can't use a tool to do that work. AI can't follow a process nobody has written down.

WHAT IT COSTS

- The 2025 DORA report (nearly 5,000 technology professionals worldwide) found that AI "magnifies the strengths of high performing organizations and the dysfunctions of struggling ones," and Google's announcement of the report says AI adoption "does continue to have a negative relationship with software delivery stability." That's software teams, so for other work it's direction.
- We don't have a dollar figure for automating a broken process, so the cost is our reasoning: rework, exceptions handled by hand and a team that decides AI doesn't work here.

FIRST MOVE

Pick the one process you most want AI to help with and write down how it's done today, with the people who do it. Fix the obvious breaks first, then try AI on the written version.

The Unchecked Draft

It looks finished, and someone downstream has to make it right.

RADAR AREA

Measurement and quality

Also: People and AI fluency

HOW IT SOUNDS

"This report reads well, but half the numbers are wrong."

"I sent it back three times."

"AI wrote it, so I figured it was fine."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

AI-made work moves between people without anyone checking it. Polished drafts carry wrong facts, missing context or confident filler. The person who receives it spends time fixing it and starts trusting the sender's work a little less.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Companies push people to use AI without setting norms for checking it. Speed shows up where everyone can see it, and the fixing happens out of sight on someone else's desk. The researchers who named this "workslop" point to "indiscriminate organizational mandates" and too little guidance.

WHAT IT COSTS

- In a BetterUp Labs and Stanford Social Media Lab survey of 1,150 US full-time desk workers (published in Harvard Business Review, Sep 22, 2025), 40% had received workslop in the past month. Each incident took an average of 1 hour 56 minutes to deal with, which the researchers estimate at \$186 a month per affected employee, based on respondents' own time and salary estimates.
- As an illustration for a 50-person company: $50 \times 40\% = 20$ affected people, and $20 \times \$186 \times 12 \text{ months} = \text{\$44,640 a year}$. Applying a national survey to one company is our assumption, BetterUp sells coaching, and the figures are self-reported.
- In the 2025 DORA report, 30% of technology professionals reported little or no trust in AI-generated code.

FIRST MOVE

Set one rule: whoever sends AI-assisted work has checked it and can explain it. For anything going to a customer, name the person who reviews it before it goes.

Licenses Without Lessons

Everyone got access. Nobody got time to learn it.

RADAR AREA

People and AI fluency

Also: Culture and change readiness

HOW IT SOUNDS

"We rolled out Copilot to everyone in March."

"I tried it once and it gave me garbage."

"There's no time to learn new stuff right now."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Licenses get bought and announced, maybe with a lunch-and-learn. Then people are on their own. A few power users get real value, most use it for an email now and then, and leaders read low use as low interest. Tools arrive without habits.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Training feels optional when time is tight, and AI tools are sold as easy to pick up. Skill with AI grows person by person, through practice on each person's own work, and that takes protected time nobody scheduled.

WHAT IT COSTS

- Half of small business workers use AI at work, and "about one in 10 respondents say they were offered formal AI training" (Chamber and Ipsos, May 2026, 1,070 workers).
- "Only 39% of people globally who use AI at work have gotten AI training from their company" (Microsoft and LinkedIn Work Trend Index, 2024).
- In Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Voices (Mar 2026), 73% said more training and resources would help.
- Time is the barrier owners name. 25% of small employer firms using AI and 37% of those planning to named "time to implement or train employees" (Federal Reserve Banks, 2026).

FIRST MOVE

Give people one protected hour a week for a month to use AI on their own work, and pair each person who's stuck with someone further along.

The Quiet Users

People use AI every day and don't say so.

RADAR AREA

Culture and change readiness

Also: Data, security and rules

HOW IT SOUNDS

"I use it, but I don't advertise it."

"If they knew AI did half of this, they'd wonder what I do all day."

"Is it even allowed?"

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

AI use is common and hidden. People don't share what works, don't ask about data rules and don't flag problems. Leadership underestimates how much AI is in use, which means it misjudges both the risk and the opportunity.

WHY IT HAPPENS

People worry about looking replaceable or breaking a rule nobody has written down. When the company hasn't stated a position, staying quiet feels safest. Westrum's research describes this kind of information flow, where people share only what feels safe to share, and it's a response to the setup, never a character flaw.

WHAT IT COSTS

- "52% of people who use AI at work are reluctant to admit to using it for their most important tasks," and "53% of people who use AI at work worry that using it on important work tasks makes them look replaceable" (Microsoft and LinkedIn Work Trend Index, 2024, 31,000 workers in 31 markets). Microsoft sells AI tools, and the data is from early 2024.
- Nearly half of small business workers (47%) cite privacy or security concerns as a barrier to using AI (Chamber and Ipsos, 2026).
- The cost of hidden use is our reasoning: good uses don't spread, and risky uses don't get caught.

FIRST MOVE

Say the company's position out loud: AI use is welcome, this is what stays out of it, and using AI won't count against anyone. Then ask each team to share one way they use it at the next meeting.

Counting Logins

Everyone's using AI, and nobody can say what it changed.

RADAR AREA

Measurement and quality

Also: Strategy and ownership

HOW IT SOUNDS

"Usage is up, so it must be working."

"I'm sure it saves time. I couldn't tell you how much."

"We'll measure ROI once it's rolled out."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Success gets reported as logins, seats or prompts. Nobody recorded how long the task took before, so nobody can show what changed. Budget conversations about AI turn into one opinion against another.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Activity is easy to count, and outcomes need a "before" number somebody remembered to take.

WHAT IT COSTS

- SAS and IDC found 44.1% of small and mid-sized companies don't measure AI's impact, and another 20.6% discuss it without measuring it consistently. That's $44.1\% + 20.6\% = 64.7\%$ without a consistent measure. Only 11.1% use impact data to steer future investments.
- We have no dollar figure for unmeasured AI, so the cost is our reasoning: money keeps going to whatever is most visible, and the uses that work can't prove it.

FIRST MOVE

For each AI use you care about, write down one "before" number this week, like minutes per task, errors per month or days to close the books. Check it again in 90 days.

AI by Department

Every department head owns AI for their area, and nobody owns how it fits together.

RADAR AREA

Strategy and ownership

Also: Workflows and know-how, Measurement and quality

HOW IT SOUNDS

"Each of our department heads is responsible for AI in their area."

"Sales is trying a tool someone heard about on a podcast."

"Finance ran a survey, and ops is comparing three tools."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Each department head owns AI for their own area. They run meetings, send surveys and compare tools, and each team builds its own habits. Because the heads are busy, the plan follows whatever they tried last or heard about on the drive in. There's no thread between departments, and no continuity unless one head happens to be deeply interested.

WHY IT HAPPENS

It feels like the natural split. Department heads know their own work best, and giving each one AI for their area avoids naming one owner over everyone. But each head carries AI as a Second Job, so it gets the time left over, and recent ideas win because there's no time to weigh them against a plan. See The Noise Problem. This is the department heads setup. Recency as the driver is our reasoning. We didn't find a study that measures it for AI decisions.

WHAT IT COSTS

- Siloed work. SAS and IDC found 44.9% of small and mid-sized companies say successful pilots "remain siloed and are not reused elsewhere," and 44.8% had "no structured view of their AI use cases, with activities remaining fragmented across teams and functions."
- Time. Each head carries the switching cost in AI as a Second Job, so a company with five heads pays it five times. That's our reasoning from the Mark, Gonzalez and Harris figures, not a measured result.
- The cost of departments solving the same problem different ways is our reasoning. We haven't found a study that measures it for AI.

FIRST MOVE

Ask each department head for their top three AI uses and the tools behind them, and put the lists side by side. Then name one owner for how they fit together, with the department heads as partners.

Recognize these patterns?

Every organization is a unique combination of patterns. An assessment identifies which ones are present and builds a roadmap to address them.

Someone should own AI at your company.

An AI strategy decides who owns the work, which tools stay, and what changes first.

How we work: drag6.com/engagement