The Risk Of Treating AI As An IT Project

Idea In Short

Executives must own AI as a strategic, cross-functional capability that reshapes decisions, workflows, and business models—not as a collection of IT tools. Define a few high-impact use cases, redesign the underlying processes, and install clear governance for value, risk, and accountability before scaling any AI initiative.

AI now belongs to the same set of categories as capital deployment, talent management, customer trust, and operating model design. It is not an isolated technical challenge anymore; it alters the way that work flows, decisions are made, risks are managed, and value is created.

This situation poses a challenge for many executive teams because they continue to classify AI within the same mental framework as cloud migration, software deployment, or modernization of the data platform. The budget goes to IT, the dashboard goes to IT, and the risk discussion goes to IT. And business executives await “the AI team” to deliver use cases.

However, is that the right approach?

AI Is A Management Decision Before It Is A Technology Decision

Technology-related questions start with “Do we have the possibility of implementing this particular technology?” Strategy-related questions are even tougher – “Which decision, process or business model should be changed due to the implementation of this technology?”

The difference is important. According to McKinsey’s survey on Global AI adoption in 2025, 88% of the participants stated that their companies were using AI in their daily operations in

at least one department. At the same time, 64% were not yet scaling AI within their organization, and only 33% of them started doing this. The discrepancy is obvious: implementation is different from transformation.

This is also the reason why students and business professionals studying AI strategies may find themselves in need of something else apart from technological notes. A proper paper on AI in business has to combine knowledge on systems, risks, leadership, and the economy. This is when a USA essay writing service could be useful for a learner who needs professional assistance in their studies.

As Annie Lambert, an educator and business writing expert, puts it:

> The most effective AI articles don't explain what the software does first; they explain the decision environment into which the software comes.

Four Strategic Dangers Of The IT-Only Framework

Using AI as an IT project only is not guaranteed to cause failure immediately. Instead, it often creates a slow process of drift. While the organization obtains AI solutions and pilot projects, the core business operations remain the same.

Typically, the risks involved will include:

- **Weak governance:** Business divisions deploy AI, but nobody at the senior level claims the value
- **Too much pilot:** Many solutions are piloted, but few go into the business operations
- **Risk unawareness:** Legal, brand, workforce, and customer risks become apparent late
- **Low trust:** The employees do not know when to trust AI

The Deloitte report on enterprise AI in 2026 clearly demonstrates this dichotomy. According to the report, 66% of enterprises have obtained productivity and efficiency improvements from AI deployment, but only 20% of them have achieved revenue improvements. Moreover, 34% were deploying AI in order to fundamentally change their products, services, processes, or business models, while 37% used it to make superficial changes to

the existing processes.

That is the strategic issue. Surface-level AI may make work faster. Deep AI changes what the company is capable of doing:

AI Treated As An IT Project	AI Treated As A Strategic Capability
Success means tools are deployed	Success means decisions or workflows improve
IT owns most of the roadmap	Business, risk, finance, and technology share ownership
Use cases come from tool features	Use cases come from business pressure points
Governance focuses on access and security	Governance covers value, risk, accountability, and behavior
Training teaches tool usage	Training changes judgment, roles, and work design
ROI is measured by adoption	ROI is measured by margin, speed, quality, trust, or growth

AI Transforms Workflow, Not Just Workload

Most AI systems start with employee productivity. Emails get drafted faster, documents get summarized, searches performed, and codes written with AI help. All that is fine, but not enough to make any difference at the corporate level.

A bigger problem is workflow redesign. Where does work start? Which handoffs get eliminated? Which decision points can become automated using AI? Which approvals cannot be replaced by humans? And which processes just do not need to exist anymore?

Take a service organization that uses AI to draft answers to customers as an example. It is nice to have. A better strategy will be to rethink its entire service delivery process – from intake, through triaging, response, escalation, quality control, to getting feedback from product teams. The first solution makes a task faster. The second changes the operating model itself.

The same applies to consulting, finance, supply chain, marketing, and product development. The consulting firm can employ AI to synthesize interviews. In a better approach, AI will be

employed to find connections in various projects, test hypotheses and help partners make better recommendations. A retail store can employ AI to write product descriptions. In a better approach, AI could be employed to connect demand signals, inventory selection, pricing, and customer experience.

Governance Has To Be Designed Prior To Scaling

AI governance cannot come too late, when the first failure occurs. With employees deploying AI across the entire organization, there should be a framework within which the organization manages value, risk, privacy, quality, and accountability related to AI.

The NIST developed an AI Risk Management Framework to help organizations manage AI risks to individuals, organizations, and society. The framework is voluntary, but it sends a useful message to organizational leaders – that the trustworthiness of AI requires governance at all stages of AI.

Executives do not have to make governance about long, laborious approvals. They just have to decide on a few things:

- What AI applications are supported?
- What type of data must never be used in public products?
- Whose approval must be obtained for risky use cases?
- How does one verify AI output?
- Who is responsible when AI impacts customers, employees, and/or finance decisions?

These questions cannot be left to the purview of IT. Legal sees liability. Finance sees value. HR sees role design. Operations sees process transformation. Marketing sees brand risk. The board sees enterprise-wide exposure.

Strategic Test For Any AI Use Case

A simple test ensures leaders don’t think from tools up. Ask three questions before approving any AI project.

1. First, which decision-making will get better? The answer is vague; the use case is

flawed

2. Second, which process will change? If the current process remains unchanged and AI is simply layered on top of it, chances are its value remains small
3. Third, which risk gets bigger at scale? A test with 20 users cannot hide issues that will manifest themselves with 20,000

The above test ensures AI projects remain connected to strategic priorities. It minimizes the risk of innovation theater.

What Should Be Owned Directly By Senior Leaders

There is no requirement for executives to manage model architecture directly. What is required is for them to own the system of management associated with AI.

This includes defining the level of aspiration. Is AI essentially a cost lever, a growth lever, a decision-making lever, or a business model lever? This includes selecting the few areas in which AI makes a difference. One cannot transform all functions simultaneously.

It includes:

- The value proposition of AI investments
- The organizational model modifications necessary to scale
- The risk appetite of customer-facing and employee-facing AI applications
- The human resources strategy for roles impacted
- The metrics for demonstrating business impact

Without such ownership, AI is just a suite of tools. With such ownership, AI is a way to create an entirely different type of organization.

The Actual Danger Is Strategic Procrastination

The risk is not whether the IT group will succeed or fail. Plenty will be able to implement a worthwhile solution. The danger is that leadership groups will confuse technological success with strategic success.

An organization could have AI capabilities within each and every department, and yet

struggle with decision-making. It could generate reports through automation, and yet avoid making tough calls. It could generate chatbots, and yet keep driving customer frustrations. It could engage in pilot programs for years on end, all without ever challenging its existing operating model.

AI belongs within IT, but it must not be contained only within IT. Those that benefit from AI will view it as a leadership challenge: a mix of strategy, governance, process design, organizational culture, and technology. This perspective makes it harder to manage, but that is also where the competitive edge lies.

Summary

Leaders must stop treating AI as a series of isolated IT deployments and instead take direct ownership of a few high-impact, cross-functional use cases that reshape decisions, workflows, and business models. That means designing governance upfront, sharing accountability beyond IT, and measuring impact in margins, speed, quality, trust, and growth—not tool adoption or number of pilots.