Cracking the AI Code

AI Won’t Transform Your Company… Unless You Do This

The 5 Must-Haves
The 5 Implementation Golden Rules
The 5 DOs and DON'Ts

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Executive Summary

AI adoption is accelerating across industries, but 80% of organizations fail to move beyond isolated pilots. The gap between experimentation and enterprise-wide transformation is widening as companies face challenges in data quality, workforce readiness, organizational alignment, and governance. Yet leading players in energy, transportation, finance, manufacturing, and SaaS are already demonstrating how AI can unlock step-change improvements in productivity, speed, cost efficiency, and customer experience. This playbook summarizes those proven patterns and turns them into actionable guidance for executives seeking to build AI-native organizations.

Key Insights at a Glance

- **AI is no longer optional:** organizations that embed AI into their strategy grow faster, run leaner, and maintain higher resilience.
- **Leadership determines success:** transformations without CEO-level ownership stall.
- **Data is the #1 barrier:** without quality, accessible, governed data, agentic workflows break down.
- **Hybrid is the future:** 63% of companies reject cloud-only AI due to latency, cost, sovereignty and safety concerns.
- **Workforce readiness is essential:** top performers train tens of thousands of employees and build large champion networks.
- **Governance fuels trust:** safety, ethics, risk controls, and transparency are now critical for adoption.
- **Impact is real and measurable:**
  - Up to 60–90% reduction in cycle times in operations and support
  - 40% faster engineering iterations
  - 96% CSAT on AI-enabled customer support
  - €50–100M annual impact in industrial environments
  - 10,000s employees trained in some of Europe's largest transformation programs

Must-Have #1

CEO / CxO-Level Ownership & Strategic Anchoring

AI transformation fundamentally rewires how the organization operates — impacting processes, roles, data flows, technology stacks, risk management, customer experience, and workforce structure. Because of its scope and consequences, AI cannot be delegated to IT or innovation teams. Only CxO-level sponsorship can align priorities, budgets, cross-functional resources, and change adoption at scale. Without strategic anchoring, organizations remain stuck in disconnected pilots and fail to scale AI across units.

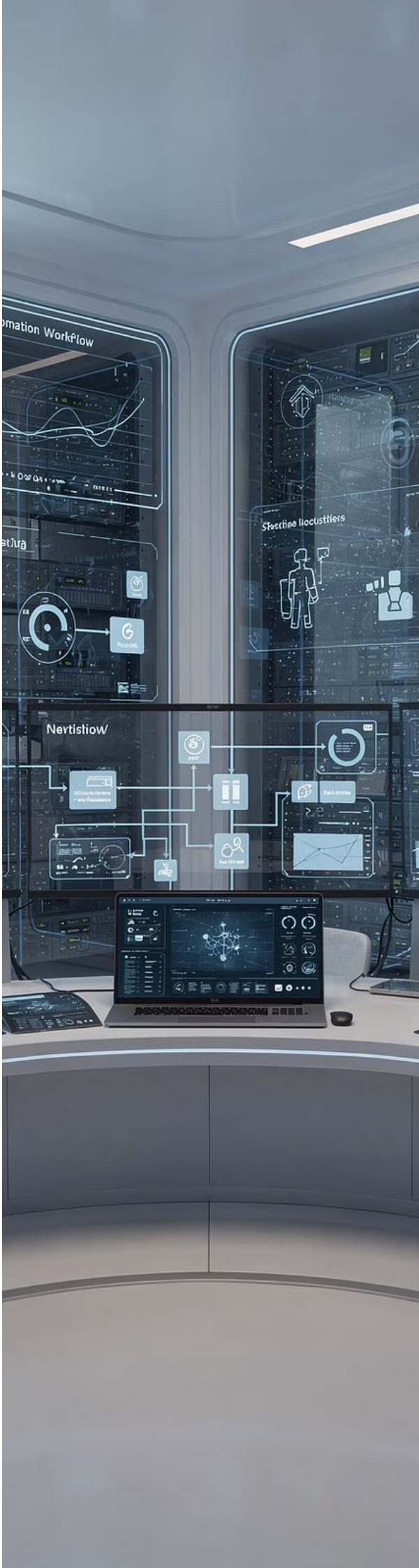
Examples

- **Crédit Agricole** embeds AI into its core strategy, targeting halved time-to-market, 20% fewer administrative tasks, and 50% compliance efficiency gains.
- **CDC** treats AI as a national mission and invests €500M in European AI scaling.
- **Salesforce** requires executive training and leadership ownership monthly.

Must-Have #2

AI Operating Model (Factory + Platform + New Roles)

Scaling AI requires an industrialized system, not ad-hoc projects. An AI Operating Model ensures AI is delivered repeatedly and reliably — combining an AI Factory for building solutions, an AI Platform for enabling workforce-wide usage, and new organizational roles for governance and adoption. This creates consistency, controls risk, standardizes pipelines, and avoids duplicated or low-quality initiatives. Without this operating system, AI adoption remains fragmented and inefficient.



Examples

- **Engie** industrialized RAG development through its internal AI Studio
- **SNCF** built "SNCF GPT," enabling tens of thousands of employees to use AI securely.
- **Mirakl** created an internal agent platform used by 55% of employees to build custom agents.
- **Horse** built a Center of Excellence to transform processes across 17 factories.

Must-Have #3

Data Foundations & Hybrid Architecture

AI and agentic workflows rely entirely on data access, quality, and trust. A unified, governed data landscape ensures agents can access the right information, avoid hallucinations, and operate safely. Hybrid architecture (edge, on-prem, cloud) ensures performance, sovereignty, and compliance — especially in industrial environments where latency, safety, or IP constraints are non-negotiable. Without solid data and architecture foundations, AI fails to scale or produces unreliable results.

Examples

- **Renault Group** is creating a full virtual twin of the company to coordinate over 3,000 applications
- **Lenovo's IDC study** shows 63% of organizations reject cloud-only AI due to latency, security, and cost.
- **Dassault Systèmes** uses virtual twins and strict data lineage to ensure model reliability and IP protection.
- **Horse** relies on on-premise high-performance compute because it produces one engine every 11 seconds.

Must-Have #4

Workforce Transformation & Culture Shift

AI changes how work gets done — shifting tasks from execution to supervision, analysis, and higher-value activities. For AI to deliver value, employees must understand how to use AI tools, how to collaborate with agents, and how to redesign their own workflows. Without a trained, confident workforce and a culture open to change, adoption fails even if the technology is excellent.

Examples

- **Renault Group** launched the *ReKnow University* with AI Certification Programs for 100,000 employees
- **Air Liquide** trained 60,000 employees and empowered 500 champions in six months.
- **SNCF** trained 35,000+ employees, including frontline technicians and managers.
- **Salesforce** requires 2 training days per month for every employee worldwide.
- **Engie** built an AI Academy and deployed AI tools to frontline technicians

Must-Have #5

Governance, Ethics & Trust

AI touches highly sensitive areas: customer interactions, safety-critical decisions, confidential data, and regulatory compliance. Trust determines whether employees adopt AI — and whether regulators allow scaling. Governance frameworks provide boundaries, risk controls, evaluation layers, and traceability. They also clarify accountability, ensuring AI failure modes are anticipated, mitigated, and monitored. Without strong governance, organizations face legal, ethical, operational, or reputational risks.

Examples

- **Air Liquide's AI Charter** formalizes safety, people-centric AI, and responsible use.
- **SNCF's AI Committee** governs prioritization, compliance, and cyber risk.
- **CDC** treats data sovereignty with the same seriousness as financial assets.

The 5 Implementation Golden Rules

Strategy & Prioritization

AI creates maximum impact when it is tightly aligned with the organization's strategy and prioritized around value. Clear KPIs, defined ambitions, and a curated portfolio of high-impact use cases ensure resources aren't scattered across low-value experiments. Prioritization accelerates ROI and keeps the entire organization focused.

Examples:

- Use-case portfolios targeting €5–30M+ value per use case
- SNCF's "Top 10 Transformative Use Cases" reviewed at executive level

Build the AI Operating System

This phase establishes the infrastructure, roles, workflows, and teams needed to scale AI beyond pilots. It ensures repeatability and industrialization by building a productized approach to AI delivery and usage. Without an operating system, each use case is reinvented from scratch, slowing progress.

Examples:

- Mirakl's internal platform enabling 55% of employees to build agents
- SNCF GPT: 25k+ internal users accessing a secure, scalable AI workspace

Fix Data & Architecture

Data is the lifeblood of reliable AI. Ensuring consistent, secure, permissioned access allows agents to operate accurately and safely. Hybrid architecture ensures performance and sovereignty — especially crucial for industrial, health, or public-sector environments.

Examples:

- Crédit Agricole's secure data marketplace enabling cross-entity data access
- Dassault's data lineage ensuring certification for regulated processes

The 5 Implementation Golden Rules

Organization, People & Adoption

Technology adoption fails without human adoption. This phase drives organizational adaptation and builds AI literacy, confidence, and new ways of working. Champions mobilize local teams, while redesigned processes and change management programs ensure people know how to collaborate with AI agents meaningfully.

Examples:

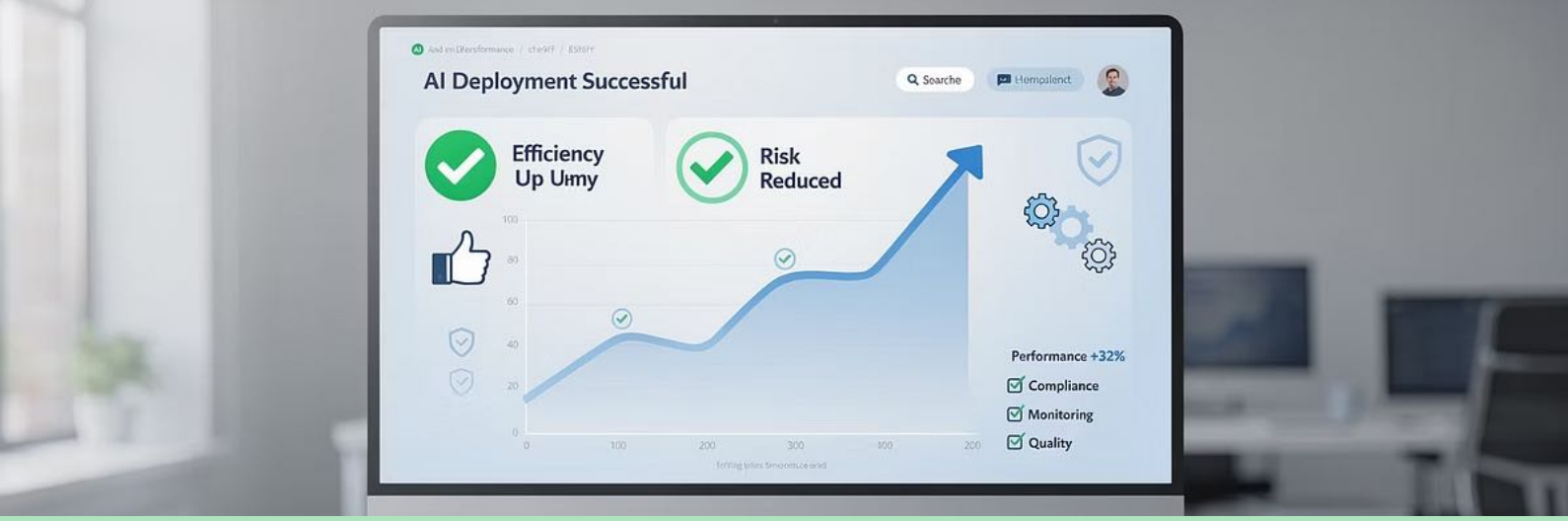
- Renault Group: ReKnow University
- Engie: AI Academy + AI Studio for process industrialization

Governance & Risk

AI introduces new risks (bias, hallucination, misuse, confidentiality breaches). Governance frameworks ensure AI is deployed responsibly from day one, monitored continuously, and escalated when behavior deviates from expectations. Trust is foundational to scale.

Examples:

- Air Liquide's responsible AI principles
- SNCF's governance-by-value and cybersecurity integration



Transformation Scorecard

DOs

1

Make AI a CEO-Level Transformation

Without CxO sponsorship, cross-functional alignment collapses, budgets are insufficient, and AI remains a series of isolated experiments.

2

Build an AI Factory & Platform

You need a scalable, repeatable delivery system. The factory accelerates development; the platform democratizes access.

3

Attack Core Processes First

High-value processes enable clear ROI, broad visibility, and fast impact. Starting with marginal workflows delays value creation.

4

Train at Scale & Create Champions

Adoption is the bottleneck. Champions accelerate change, ensure local support, and normalize usage.

5

Govern & Measure AI

AI introduces new risks; governance ensures control, compliance, transparency, and adoption.

Transformation Scorecard DON'Ts

1

Don't Delegate AI to IT or Innovation Only

AI affects strategy, workforce, customer experience, and operations. It must be business-led.

2

Don't Start with Low-Value, "Safe" Use Cases

Long-tail use cases rarely deliver ROI and create disillusionment.

3

Don't Ignore Data Governance or Architecture

Poor data = unreliable AI. Cloud-only = compliance risk. No governance = safety issues.

4

Don't Underestimate Change Management or Social Dialogue

Adoption, not technology, is the hardest part — especially in industrial and unionized environments.

5

Don't Let AI Erode Human Expertise

Over-reliance on AI can weaken judgment, reasoning, and technical depth.