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FIELD GUIDE · NO. 08

# The Executive's Field Guide to Directing AI

What changes for leaders when the machine does the doing – and how to run an organisation on the equation.

READ

**12 minutes**

PAGES

**8**

FOR

**Leaders**

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## THE SHIFT

## You used to manage doers. Now you direct directors.

For a generation, leadership meant getting more and better output from people doing the work. When the machine does the routine work, the job changes: you are no longer managing the doing – you are building an organisation of people who direct machines and own the verdict.

That is not a tooling decision. It is an operating model. The companies that win the intelligence age will not be the ones with the most AI licences; they will be the ones whose people have moved up the ladder – from operating, to orchestrating, to directing. Your job is to lead that climb.

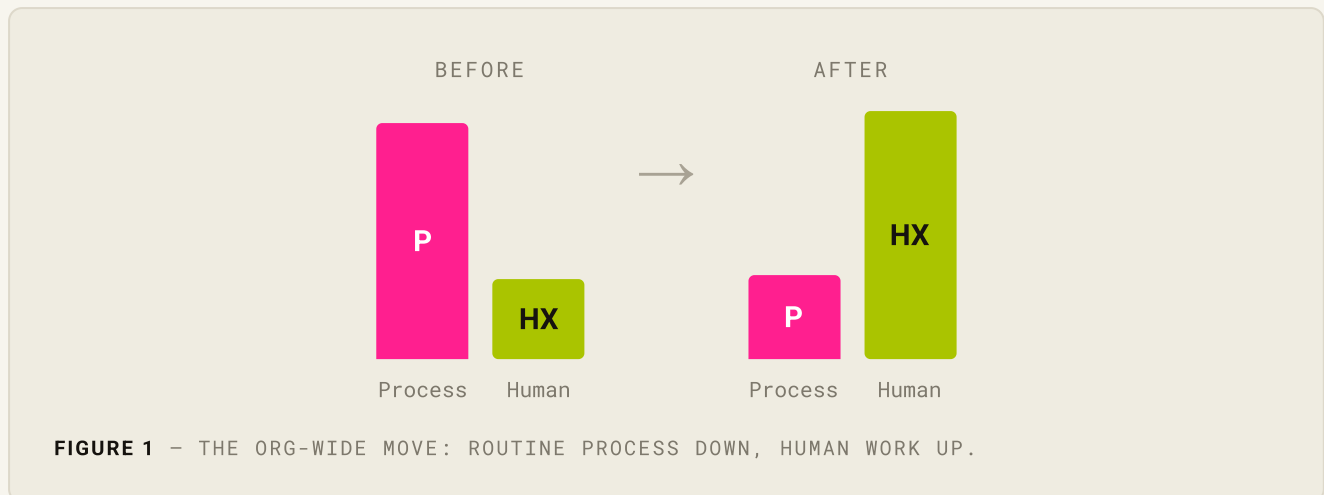
## | A philosophy without practice is decoration.

Buying the tools is the easy part, and the part everyone has already done. Changing what your people *do* with their hours is the work – and it is leadership work, not IT work.

## THE MOVE

## Shrink P. Grow HX. Across the org.

The same equation that governs a role governs a company. Routine process (P) moves to the machine; human experience (HX) – judgment, direction, relationships – is what you grow in its place.



### THE LEADERSHIP VERSION

At the individual level, the equation reclaims hours. At the organisation level, it reclaims **capacity** – the same people, freed to do the judgment-heavy work that actually compounds.

## IN PRACTICE

## Three moves to start the climb.

### 01 Name the routine to automate.

Pick processes, not people. Make it explicit which routine work the organisation is handing to machines – and protect the hours it frees.

### 02 Raise the bar on judgment.

Reward the work the machine cannot do: framing problems, deciding what is good, owning outcomes. Promote directors, not the fastest typists.

### 03 Make accountability explicit.

Name a human owner for every AI-assisted output. The verdict stays human, and everyone knows whose it is.

#### START NARROW, THEN CASCADE

Prove the move on one team before you take it org-wide. A real result in one function is worth more than a policy across all of them.

MEASUREMENT

## Three honest numbers.

Resist the universal ROI figure – anyone who promises one is selling the slide, not the change. Measure what actually moved.

### Hours

Routine hours reclaimed per role, measured before and after.

### Processes

Recurring processes moved off people and onto the machine.

### Rungs

People moved up the ladder – operator, orchestrator, blank collar.

03

#### Blank collar

Directs, judges, and owns the verdict.

02

#### Orchestrator

Directs tools on some of the work.

01

#### Operator

Does the routine work by hand.

FIGURE 2 – THE NUMBER THAT MATTERS MOST: HOW MANY PEOPLE CLIMBED.

## WARNINGS

## What sinks it.

- **Speed without direction.** Pointing AI at routine output just makes more routine output. Faster busywork is still busywork.
- **Literacy as paperwork.** A signed policy is not a capable team. Train behaviour, not binders.
- **ROI theatre.** A single headline number invites everyone to game it. Measure the real, role-level shift instead.
- **Tools over operating model.** Licences do not change behaviour. Leadership does.

### THE HONEST TEST

Six months in, ask one question: are your people spending their reclaimed hours on judgment — or on more of the routine work the machine was supposed to take? The answer tells you whether you led the shift or just bought the tools.

ARE YOU READY?

## The leadership checklist.

- We have named which routine processes move to the machine.

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- We protect the hours that automation frees, on purpose.

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- We reward judgment and ownership, not raw throughput.

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- Every AI-assisted output has a named human owner.

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- We measure hours, processes, and rungs – not a universal ROI figure.

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- We are training behaviour, with evidence – not issuing a policy.

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**TAKE IT FURTHER**

The Director Track runs this on your own leadership team, and the company engagements run it across the org. [blankcollar.university/director](https://blankcollar.university/director) · [/companies](https://blankcollar.university/companies).