



**RLD
GROUP**
Rebooting Leadership Drive

AI LEADERSHIP: CREATE VALUE THROUGH ALIGNMENT

INSIGHTS FROM APPLIED RESEARCH

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● Why this applied research matters

AI is advancing rapidly, and leaders need practical, credible guidance; not theory. That’s why we are listening deeply to what’s really happening as organizations integrate AI into products and internal ways of working, all while managing real business constraints.

This paper summarizes what’s actually working (and what isn’t) from systematic, cross-functional interviews with 25 senior executives across product, sales, HR, security, and operations.

Our applied research identifies recurring themes and actionable moves that drive measurable outcomes. The AI Leadership Alignment Jumpstart Diagnostic Tool helps leaders quickly accelerate alignment and value as AI scales.

● A note of gratitude

This research paper reflects the generosity and candor of the executive leaders who participated in our confidential AI Leadership Alignment Insights Interviews. Thank you for sharing what’s working, what’s not, and the real trade-offs you’re navigating as AI scales. Your input strengthened the practical guidance in these pages.

Lisa, Alenka, Rachelle, Susan

The Team

Lisa Duerre

Executive Sponsor,
Co-Author, Co-Creator
of the Diagnostic



Lisa Duerre is CEO and Co-Founder of RLD Group, a WBENC-certified leadership consulting and coaching firm. As executive sponsor and co-author of this research, she brings 20+ years of Fortune 500 leadership in Tech and a practical operating lens on what leaders need when AI accelerates work. Lisa focuses on reconnecting leadership systems - priorities, decision rights, usable guardrails, and cross-functional ways of working - so AI investments compound into measurable impact instead of rework, risk, and burnout. She co-created the AI Leadership Alignment Jumpstart Diagnostic Tool with Alenka Znidarsic, PhD, to provide practical guidance that leaders can use to diagnose fragmentation and prioritize actions.

Susan Nelson

Research Contributor,
People and
Enablement Lens



Susan Nelson is an RLD Group Senior Advisor and executive coach with 20+ years as an HR and People leader in technology. She contributed a People and enablement lens to the research: how leadership behaviors, communication, and adoption conditions determine whether AI becomes shared capability or uneven readiness. Susan helps translate executive insights into practical moves- role modeling, expectation-setting, and lightweight rhythms that build confidence and reduce burnout as AI scales. She’s known for steady, pragmatic coaching that strengthens judgment under pressure and helps leaders align teams through change.

Rachelle Niemann

Research Contributor,
Risk and Conversation
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Rachelle Niemann is an RLD Group facilitator and leadership practitioner with 10+ years in cybersecurity and risk assessment, and a focus on burnout prevention and well-being at work through expert experience design and facilitation. She contributed insights on how trust, accountability, and usable guardrails show up in day-to-day execution—and how under-designed collaboration can create rework, late-stage escalations, and fatigue. Rachelle helps teams create conditions for sustainable performance so learning, decision-making, and alignment remain visible and repeatable under pressure.

Alenka Znidarsic, PhD

Lead Researcher,
Co-Author, Co-Creator
of the Diagnostic



Alenka Znidarsic, PhD is the Lead Researcher for RLD Group’s AI Leadership Alignment Insights project. She brings a rigorous systems and engineering leadership lens to how AI scales in complex organizations—operating rhythms, decision pathways, governance design, and the structural conditions that reduce fragmentation across functions. Alenka led the evidence-based applied research and synthesis across 25 cross-functional senior executive interviews. She also co-created the AI Leadership Alignment Jumpstart Diagnostic Tool with Lisa Duerre, translating field insights into practical guidance leaders can use to diagnose fragmentation and prioritize what to fix first.

AI Leadership: Create Value Through Alignment

■ Executive Summary

AI adoption is reshaping organizations, requiring new leadership systems and alignment across product, sales, HR, security, and operations. Senior leaders are navigating this transformation amid real-world complexity, balancing urgency, experimentation, and risk. AI adoption is a complex organizational change, requiring change-management leadership.

This insight paper is grounded in evidence-based applied research, synthesizing actionable perspectives from cross-functional interviews with 25 senior executives. Every observation and recommendation is rooted in practical experience, ensuring relevance for leaders facing the realities of AI adoption. While technology is central to the narrative, the real story centers on leadership under pressure. Some teams are energized and moving fast, while others experience uneven readiness, unclear guardrails, and tool sprawl. **What looks like a capability or training problem is often an AI leadership alignment problem.**

AI exposure extends beyond technical concerns, encompassing execution, trust, rework, and risk. Through these conversations, a central theme emerges: the most pressing challenge for leaders is to reconnect leadership systems, ensuring that AI delivers measurable value and prevents the amplification of silos and fragmentation.

By reading this paper, you'll gain a practical, executive-level perspective on how to turn AI from a source of organizational fragmentation into a driver of alignment, value, and momentum. Drawing on candid conversations, we distill practical moves leaders can make in the next 30 - 90 days to help you reconnect leadership systems, accelerate responsible adoption without slowing delivery, and unlock measurable business impact whether you're scaling pilots or aligning AI across the enterprise. The **AI Leadership Alignment Jumpstart Diagnostic Tool** (included at the end) developed through this research provides leaders with an effective tool to diagnose fragmentation and address alignment.



By reading this paper, you'll gain a practical, executive-level perspective on how to turn AI from a source of organizational fragmentation into a driver of alignment, value, and momentum.

¹ Baldrige Excellence Builder (2023–2024) defines Leadership System as: "The way leadership is exercised, formally and informally, throughout your organization; the basis for key decisions and the way they are made, communicated, and carried out."

What We're Seeing Across Organizations

Across organizations in tech, it's clear that AI integration has become a top priority. Leaders are being asked to integrate AI into products, customer experiences, internal workflows, and decision-making, all while navigating uncertainty, compressed timelines, and competing priorities. This drive has energized teams and sparked widespread experimentation. In many organizations, we're seeing real wins: faster cycles, better access to information, and early productivity gains that leaders don't want to lose.

However, this momentum brings new challenges. Under pressure to move quickly, organizations are experiencing a predictable pattern: **fragmentation**. Different functions are building their own AI solutions, purchasing overlapping tools, and redoing data, process, and policy work in parallel. What starts as "moving fast" can become tool sprawl, duplicated effort, and inconsistent guardrails. While these local efforts can feel like progress, at the system level they lead to duplicated investment, inconsistent risk exposure, and uneven adoption confidence. Leaders also linked AI adoption to rising concerns about energy use, resource constraints, and sustainability tradeoffs.

Nearly every leader described the experience as "flying the plane while building it". That metaphor matters because it points to the real work ahead: aligning the leadership system while execution is already in motion. The challenge isn't simply choosing the right model or platform. It's creating the enterprise-wide conditions where AI progress advances instead of splintering, so priorities, guardrails, and workflows stay coherent across product, people, risk, and delivery.

The Core Insight: Fragmentation Quietly Derails AI ROI

When leaders describe AI as "chaotic" or note that work is being duplicated across teams, the underlying issue is rarely the tooling itself. More often, it reflects a leadership system that is not aligned for enterprise execution. As AI adoption accelerates, organizations are seeing uneven execution: pockets of momentum alongside areas where guardrails, decision-making authority, and readiness are less clear. The longer this persists, the more the gap becomes structural - embedded in governance, operating rhythms, and cross-functional collaboration. The opportunity is to convert early momentum into shared capability before fragmentation becomes durable.

Our point of view is that AI scales what's already true in the system, and leadership alignment shapes what gets amplified - repeatable learning and capability growth, or expensive fragmentation, rework, and risk.



Nearly every leader described the experience as "flying the plane while building it".



Our POV:
AI scales what's already true in the system, and leadership alignment shapes what gets amplified.

Fragmentation often arises not from lack of intent, but from leadership systems that struggle to coordinate priorities, governance, and judgment as AI adoption accelerates. In that environment, AI amplifies existing disconnects rather than producing compounding results. For technology organizations, this is not merely cultural; it directly affects delivery speed, risk exposure, and measurable ROI.

The three root drivers of fragmentation

Across organizations, we see three interconnected drivers - a reinforcing triangle. Address only one, and the pattern returns because the other two keep recreating it.

1. Silos

AI raises the cost and impact of silos. In the past, organizations could tolerate some inefficiency from siloed work, but AI changes the threshold. With AI, siloed execution compounds cost and risk. Leaders interviewed consistently described a cycle where teams, despite good intentions, splinter into parallel efforts: tools proliferate, workflows are redesigned in isolation, and governance lags real usage. The result is duplication, rework, uneven capability, and slower decisions.

Silos increase the cost and complexity of AI adoption, even if they don't necessarily slow progress.

Across interviews, we repeatedly heard signals of silo-driven AI friction:

- AI tools are everywhere, but accountability and decision-making authority are unclear,
- Different functions are building and buying in parallel,
- Data readiness is uneven, undermining reliability and trust,
- Guardrails are unclear, creating rework and slowing scale.

2. Exploration Gap

Through our interviews, leaders consistently described an exploration gap; a reluctance or hesitation to experiment and learn openly as AI is integrated into products and internal ways of working. Employees often lack the time, psychological safety, or encouragement to try new approaches, which keeps learning isolated and slows progress.

When curiosity and inquiry are constrained, teams miss opportunities to share lessons, build confidence, and accelerate adoption. The result is quiet adoption, uneven confidence, and "shadow learning" that never becomes enterprise capability. Addressing this gap is essential for unlocking organizational learning and sustainable AI impact.



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Silos increase the cost and complexity of AI adoption, even if they don't necessarily slow progress.

Summarizing the interviewees' responses, this leads to:

- Uneven capability: early adopters move fast without direction, others hesitate.
- Tools without learning conditions: no protected time to practice, compare or share.
- Uncertainty and fear narrow curiosity and push experimentation out of view.
- Lessons aren't shared, so teams repeat the same learning curve repeatedly.

Progress accelerates when leaders model an explorer mindset,² making experimentation part of the work, sharing what they learn, and creating clear guardrails so learning can happen in the open.

3. Under-Designed Conversations and Collaboration

Across interviews, AI friction rarely came down to tools. It came down to conversation design and cross-functional collaboration. When AI conversations stay inside functions, assumptions replace inquiry and learning travels too late. Collaboration becomes a coordination tax: more meetings, more handoffs, more rework - less progress.

In the context of AI, generative conversation forms the essential infrastructure for scaling judgment, trust, and learning across the organization. We saw this pattern show up as:

- Late-stage rework when risk, security, legal, or data teams enter after pilots,
- Uneven adoption when "AI skills" aren't defined, supported, and reinforced,
- Parallel efforts across sales, marketing, product, HR, and ops that create duplication,
- Escalations caused by unclear decision-making authority and inconsistent guardrails.

In the AI era, conversation isn't overhead. It's infrastructure - the mechanism that scales judgment, trust, alignment, and learning across the enterprise.

Recognizing that fragmented progress stems from deeper systemic issues, our research led us to a practical approach for alignment: the I – WE - US model. This framework helps leaders identify where fragmentation occurs; whether at the individual (I), team (WE), or organizational level (US) and take focused steps to reconnect and align their systems for sustainable progress.



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² Explorer mindset is defined as a way of engaging with the unknown that combines curiosity, inquiry, and learning-through-action - seeking knowledge and thinking critically and creatively to solve real problems.

The Leadership System Lens: I - WE - US

We use an I - WE - US lens as a systems frame for AI adoption. This framework acknowledges that sustainable AI value emerges when individual leadership capacity (I), team dynamics (WE), and organizational governance and communications (US) are intentionally aligned. By applying this lens, leaders can diagnose where the system breaks first and make targeted, repeatable moves that reconnect and accelerate progress. It helps distinguish what’s happening at the level of individual leadership and judgment (I), team and cross-functional dynamics (WE), and the organization’s operating governance, enablement, data access, and decision-making authority (US).

This matters because sustainable AI value rarely comes from fixing only one layer. AI scaling depends on leaders’ judgment under pressure and role-modeling, shared learning and decision-making across teams, and clear guardrails and ownership at the organizational level.

- **At the I level**, leaders are managing accelerated change, higher cognitive load, and ambiguous tradeoffs. When capacity is strained, judgment narrows and reflection drops. That’s when leaders default to speed without clarity or caution without momentum.
- **At the WE level**, teams make local decisions that feel rational in isolation. Without cross-functional inquiry, collaboration turns into a coordination tax: more handoffs, more meetings, slower learning. This is where “pilot success” fails to translate into enterprise adoption.
- **At the US level**, strategy, governance, and enablement often lag real usage. Decision-making authority is unclear, guardrails are inconsistent, and duplication becomes expensive. This is where organizations see shadow AI, avoidable exposure, and rework - despite strong intent.

The following table summarizes common challenges and the warning signals that emerge when they remain unaddressed; mapped across the individual leader (I), team (WE), and organizational level (US).

LEVEL	CHALLENGES	SIGNALS
I	Cognitive load + constrained judgement	Decision fatigue, inconsistent calls, reactive priorities
WE	Local optimization + coordination tax	Parallel work, rework, slow learning transfer
US	Governance + decision-making authority lag	Usage shadow AI, inconsistent guardrails, duplicated spend



Sustainable AI value emerges when individual leadership capacity (I), team dynamics (WE), and organizational governance and communications (US) are intentionally aligned.

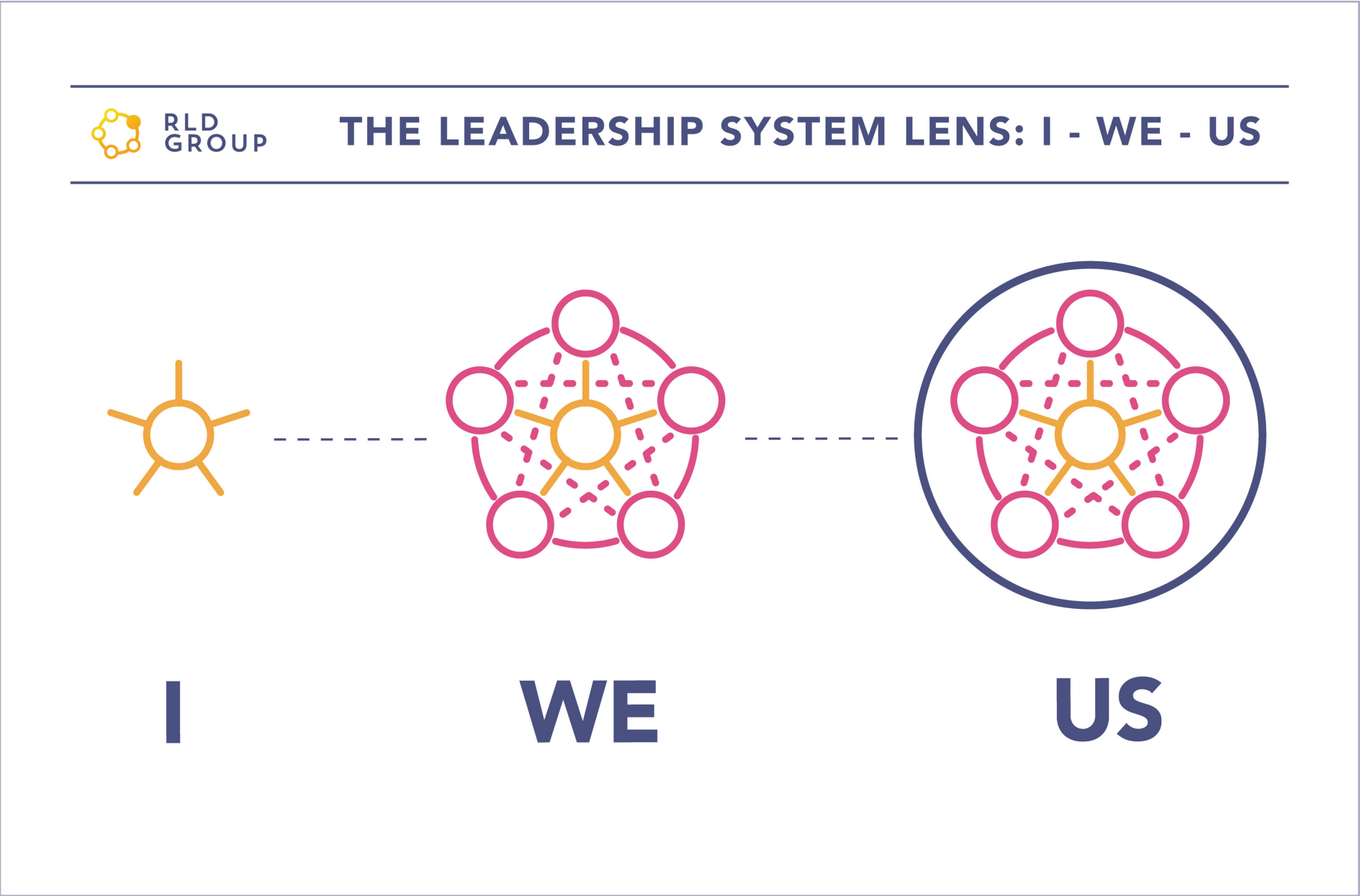
In our executive interviews, the most rapid progress was achieved when leaders moved beyond the question of “Which AI platform should we standardize?” and instead began asking, “Where is the system failing to help people execute consistently?”

Strategic Takeaway

For executives, a valuable first step is to assess where alignment is breaking down: Is the challenge rooted in individual capacity (I), team collaboration (WE), or organizational governance and enablement (US)? Focusing on the smallest, most effective action at the right level can help restore momentum and make progress sustainable. To make this assessment easier and more actionable, we have developed the **AI Leadership Alignment Jumpstart Diagnostic Tool** that translates these insights into a structured process, helping leaders quickly identify points of fragmentation and prioritize targeted interventions for lasting alignment. The tool is at the end of this paper. It is a good starting point for identifying issues and alignment opportunities.



For executives, a valuable first step is to assess where alignment is breaking down



The I-WE-US lens is a systems frame that shows how AI outcomes are shaped across individual leadership (I), team dynamics (WE), and enterprise governance + communication (US)—and why alignment across all three matters.

What's Working and Worth Scaling

With this diagnostic lens in place, executives can more effectively identify where fragmentation undermines alignment and direct their efforts toward targeted actions that restore momentum. In this chapter, we highlight practical approaches that are delivering results and can be replicated to accelerate alignment and sustainable AI value.

From our interviews, we consistently hear that a variety of strategies are helping organizations accelerate alignment as AI scales. Yet, one critical insight stands out: nothing about AI is simple. The most effective leaders are striking a delicate balance; bringing people along, reducing fear and risk, and meeting rising expectations. The main driver of progress is a shift in leadership mindset: leaders are reinventing themselves, not as AI experts, but as co-learners, working alongside AI as a collaborative team member or thought partner. This approach enables organizations to navigate complexity, foster trust, and unlock sustainable value from AI.

To illustrate this further, the following section details what's working well at the individual, team, and organizational levels.

What's Working at the Individual Level (I):

We're seeing that the following elements help leaders cultivate an explorer mindset and encourage intentional conversation and collaboration. In [AI Leadership Alignment Jumpstart Diagnostic Tool](#) terms, these leaders are reducing friction at the I layer (capacity and judgment) and creating the conditions for learning to travel to WE and US.

- **Role-modeling adoption.** Leaders go first, modeling AI usage, name the "why" and the boundaries, and carry responsibility to bring peers/colleagues along in the learning.
- **Leaders learn out loud** (psychological safety with accountability). They share what they tried, what worked, what didn't, and what they're changing. This shifts AI learning from private trial-and-error to collective capability. At the same time, effective leaders continue to think critically; viewing AI as a valuable tool and resource, but remaining mindful not to over-rely on its use or output. They ensure AI supports decision-making without replacing human judgment or accountability.
- **Leaders widen judgment under pressure.** Slowing the pace enough to ask better questions about what, where, and how to integrate AI intentionally: What problem are we solving? Where does AI add value or risk? What's the right way to talk about this? What must stay human?



Leaders are reinventing themselves, not as AI experts, but as co-learners, working alongside AI as a collaborative team member or thought partner.

- **Leaders treat alignment as design work.** Intentionally reconnecting priorities, workflows, and decision-making as AI changes the terrain: clarifying what needs to be consistent and what can remain flexible, thereby freeing up time for more human-centered work such as critical thinking, relationship building, coaching, and development.
- **Leaders model usable guardrails and safe-to-try zones.** Clear boundaries that teams can actually follow reduce shadow AI and avoidable exposure while increasing speed responsibly.
- **An opportunity for reinvention emerged.** AI enables more work to shift toward higher-value problem solving, moving beyond the simplistic “jobs going away” narrative. The way leaders talk about AI matters. By framing the future as an opportunity to reimagine and reinvent work, rather than focusing on loss, leaders encourage employees to see AI as a tool for growth and transformation.

In the following sections (WE and US), we build on this logic by examining how learning moves across teams and into the broader operating system, so early wins are amplified rather than remaining isolated.

What’s Working at the Team / Cross-functional Level (WE):

The following elements are helping teams break down silos and create repeatable, cross-functional ways of working through intentionally designed conversations and shared learning. In AI Leadership Alignment Jumpstart Diagnostic Tool terms, these teams are interrupting WE-level failure signals early: parallel efforts, slow learning transfer, late-stage rework, and misalignment surprises.

- **Build shared learning loops so wins and lessons become repeatable.** Teams create lightweight mechanisms to capture reusable patterns: what worked, what created risk, what should be standardized, and what can remain flexible. This transforms isolated pilots into shared capabilities, enabling learning to build across teams rather than being repeatedly rediscovered. Practical formats include short cross-functional demos, a living “patterns library,” or monthly working forums focused on decisions and reuse, not status updates.
- **Use “a day in the life of [role]” to ground value in workflow reality.** A practical method we heard repeatedly is to map “a day in the life of [role]” - how work actually happens - then identify where AI can remove friction, shorten cycle time, improve quality, or reduce handoffs. This aligns stakeholders around the work (not the tool), makes prioritization easier, and surfaces constraints early.



By framing the future as an opportunity to reimagine and reinvent work, rather than focusing on loss, leaders encourage employees to see AI as a tool for growth and transformation.

- **Design the right conversations early, before solutions harden.** Teams scale faster when they engage the right stakeholders upfront (e.g. product, data, security/risk, legal, HR/enablement, operations) and ask a small set of generative questions: What are we optimizing for? What must stay human? What data is acceptable? Who decides? What does “safe” mean here? This reduces late-stage governance surprises and speeds responsible adoption.
- **Establish shared guardrails and safe-to-try zones as team boundaries.** Cross-functional work accelerates when teams have usable boundaries: what data can be used, what tools are approved, what requires review, and how to escalate. Clear “green lane / red lane” guardrails reduce shadow experimentation and avoidable exposure while enabling responsible speed.
- **Embed capability-building in the workflow** (not as a separate training event). The teams that scale fastest treat capability as part of delivery: short peer “show-and-tell” moments, shared prompts/templates, office hours tied to real use cases, and micro-guidance at the point of need. This creates a common baseline without slowing teams down, reduces reliance on a few early adopters, and helps practices become repeatable across functions, so learning compounds instead of staying siloed with one team. Most importantly, this approach ensures that no one is left behind as new skills and practices are adopted.

What’s Working at the Organizations Level (US):

The following organizational practices and systems help shape a culture where explorer mindsets, cross-functional collaboration, and shared learning can thrive across teams and functions.

- **Centralize the “protect” function to enable speed.** Advanced AI adopters implemented a centralized AI Board with the stakeholders from Legal, HR, IT and Cybersecurity to protect the company and customers, while providing clear, usable guidance to teams. This reduces ambiguity and prevents late-stage surprises, so teams can move faster within known boundaries instead of experimenting in the shadows.
- **Create cross-functional governance that stays connected to real usage.** The strongest governance models are not “policy-only.” They are cross-functional by design and anchored in operational reality: ownership, decision-making authority, escalation paths, standards are explicit, and governance mechanisms incorporate feedback from what teams are actually using and building. This keeps guardrails practical, reduces rework, and avoids the common failure mode where governance lags adoption.



Design the right conversations early, before solutions harden.

What are we optimizing for?
What must stay human?
What data is acceptable?
Who decides?
What does “safe” mean here?

- **Clarify decision-making authority and keep standardization to a minimum.** Several leaders described progress accelerating when decision-making authority were made explicit (who decides tools, data access, model use, and risk sign-off) and the enterprise standardized only what must be consistent—typically a small set of approved tools/platforms and data-handling rules. This reduces tool sprawl and duplicated investment without constraining local innovation.
- **Use a structured collaboration model to surface value and unlock scaling.** A practical structure, we heard, is a “Center of AI Excellence” model: a central AI team paired with embedded AI leads or champions within business units or functions. The central team focuses on reusable patterns, guardrails, shared infrastructure, and enablement; embedded leads surface high-value problems, adoption barriers, and acceleration needs. This creates a two-way system where enterprise standards remain grounded in real workflows and learning becomes repeatable. Most importantly, it reduces silos and increases collaboration.
- **Build enablement that meets teams where they are.** Organizations that scale responsibly invest in enablement that is integrated into delivery: shared templates, vetted prompts, office hours, internal communities of practice, and short “how we do it here” guidance. The goal is not broad training volume, it is consistent execution conditions that make safe adoption easier than shadow adoption.

By identifying US-level fragmentation symptoms with the **AI Leadership Alignment Jumpstart Diagnostic Tool**, these practices reduce shadow AI, duplication, and inconsistent guardrails, so early wins scale into repeatable enterprise capabilities.

Our evidence-based approach ensures these recommendations for individual, team and organizational levels are grounded in real-world experience and deliver measurable outcomes.

Conclusion: Reconnecting AI Leadership Through AI Leadership Alignment

Meaningful transformation in AI leadership occurs when leaders take intentional, system-level action that prioritizes people, rather than relying solely on isolated training or deploying new tools.



Meaningful transformation in AI leadership occurs when leaders take intentional, system-level action that prioritizes people, rather than relying solely on isolated training or deploying new tools.

As organizations accelerate AI adoption, leaders face a pivotal challenge: bridging silos, sharing learning across teams, and linking strategy and governance to real-world usage. The most successful leaders are those who bring their people along; cultivating curiosity, capacity, and agency at every level.

As AI accelerates, uneven adoption will persist unless leaders intervene at the system level. Pockets of momentum are valuable. And without reconnection, they can harden into persistent fragmentation: duplicated effort, inconsistent risk exposure, slow learning transfer, and fatigue. By focusing on small, intentional moves at the individual (I), team (WE), and organizational (US) levels leaders can spark alignment, reduce duplication, and unlock measurable value.

The evidence from our interviews is clear: sustainable progress begins when leaders prioritize connection, clarity, and shared learning. Bringing people along is not just a moral imperative; it is the foundation for trust, resilience, and lasting impact. Leaders who model openness, encourage experimentation, and make learning visible empower their teams to navigate complexity and realize the full potential of AI.

The question for every executive is not just “What should we do about AI?” but “Who do we need to be - and how do we need to operate - as leaders, so AI accelerates alignment, value, and momentum instead of amplifying fragmentation?”



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30–90 Day Moves: The Alignment Jumpstart

Meaningful progress can begin in the next 30–90 days through small, intentional reconnection actions at the I (individual capacity and judgment), WE (teams and cross-functional collaboration), and US (organizational system; governance and enablement) levels. The goal is not to launch another program. It’s to make AI Leadership Alignment visible in how decisions get made, how guardrails are applied, and how learning becomes repeatable across the enterprise.

A simple leadership question anchors the jumpstart:

Who do I need to be - and how do we need to operate - so AI accelerates alignment, value, and momentum instead of fragmentation?

That question is where progress begins because it forces clarity on judgment, collaboration, and the workflows - not just tools.

The 30–90 day approach (high-level)

Leaders who are reducing fragmentation fastest follow a consistent sequence:

- Protect what’s working: name 1–2 AI wins you don’t want to lose as scale increases.
- Diagnose where the system breaks first (I–WE–US): individual capacity, collaboration, or governance/enablement. To dive deeper into the diagnostic process by using our [AI Leadership Alignment Jumpstart Diagnostic Tool](#), reach out to RLD Group for support.
- Choose one reconnection action: the smallest action that reduces duplication, clarifies decision-making authority, or makes learning repeatable.
- Make it executable: name an owner and the minimum enablers (decision-making authority, access, time, standards).
- Track two signals: one for speed (e.g., fewer surprises, faster decisions) and one for trust (e.g., clearer guardrails, less shadow AI).

Examples of “small reconnection actions” (illustrative, not exhaustive)

I (Individual): define a simple “green lane / red lane” for AI use; model learning out loud (tried / learned / reuse); clarify one high-stakes AI decision in plain language.

WE (Team, Cross-functional): establish a shared learning loop so wins and lessons become repeatable; run a “a day in the life of [role]” activity to prioritize value; add a brief pre-pilot checkpoint to prevent late-stage rework.

US (Organization): clarify decision-making authority; implement fast-lane vs. slow-lane governance; establish a lightweight operating structure (e.g., AI governance board and/or hub-and-spoke enablement) that stays connected to real usage.

The full [AI Leadership Alignment Jumpstart Diagnostic Tool](#) + move menu is available as a companion tool to this paper.



Who do I need to be - and how do we need to operate - so AI accelerates alignment, value, and momentum instead of fragmentation?

That question is where progress begins.

AI LEADERSHIP ALIGNMENT JUMPSTART (I-WE-US)

Fast Scan + 30-Day Reconnection Move

Created by RLD Group

Focus: leadership alignment that enables AI speed with trust.

In 5–10 minutes (finish Page 2) : Protect wins → spot fragmentation → choose ONE move → pick 1–2 signals → name owners.



TIP: Do this solo first, then use it to frame one short working conversation to confirm ownership + decision path.

1) PROTECT THE WINS (What’s working today that must be preserved as you scale AI?)

2) FAST SCAN (Pick 1–2)

Where is fragmentation showing up?

- ☐ Silos: decisions happen in pockets; duplication

- Includes “pattern drift”: teams move fast but approaches diverge (tools, guardrails, delivery patterns)

☐ Explorer mindset suppressed: experimentation is constrained/hidden
 ☐ Under-designed conversations: assumptions persist → coordination tax

3) SYSTEM LENS (Circle one)

Where does alignment need to start first?

- I: decision fatigue | narrowed judgment | reduced reflection

WE: local optimization | assumptions | rework | coordination overload

US: governance lag | duplication | shadow AI | avoidable exposure

4) 30-DAY MOVE

Pick one move you will complete in the next 30 days.

The best choice reduces fragmentation and makes decisions easier. Circle ONE lens (I/WE/US) before choosing a move.

I: Capacity (protect judgment)

I STARTER MOVES

- ☐ Block 30 min/week to test AI in your workflow; share one learning
 ☐ Create a decision filter (“use AI / don’t use AI”) for your work (risk, data, judgment, impact)
 ☐ Standardize one workflow into an AI-assisted version you’ll keep

More options

- ☐ Stop one competing ask so AI work isn’t added “on top of everything”
 ☐ Run a weekly AI judgment review (20 min): What did I use AI for? What did I decide? What changed? Next test?

Advanced (optional - go deeper)

- ☐ Decision portfolio review (30 min): top 3 repeat decisions → owner, default stance, escalation triggers
 ☐ Other (write in): _____

WE: Collaboration (reduce coordination tax)

WE STARTER MOVES

- ☐ Upgrade one high-stakes conversation: question → decision needed → next move
 ☐ Convert one low-value recurring meeting to decision + owner + next move
 ☐ Run a shared clarity loop (2x) with one partner team: know / need / decided

More options

- ☐ Hold a 60-min team explorer session: test one use case; capture learnings (worked / didn't / reuse)
- ☐ Share a learning capture ("tried / learned / reuse") with one adjacent team

Advanced (optional - go deeper)

- ☐ Workflow reimagination: co-create one workflow with AI; run a 2-week test; share learnings
- ☐ Pattern reuse: package one working approach so one adjacent team can reuse it without reinvention
- ☐ Other (write in):

US: Governance (enable speed with trust)

US STARTER MOVES

- ☐ Clarify decision rights + fast path for one AI area (low-risk approvals move fast)
- ☐ Publish 3–5 usable guardrails with examples ("OK / Not OK")
- ☐ Set a lightweight AI intake path to reduce shadow AI

More options

- ☐ Run an enablement sprint: 60-min training + one-page "how we use AI here" for one group
- ☐ Standardize one approved tool/workflow as the default for one group
- ☐ Define data boundaries (allowed / not allowed / anonymized) in plain language

Advanced (optional - go deeper)

- ☐ Workflow reimagination sprint (2–3 weeks): redesign one high-friction workflow cross-functionally; share learnings
- ☐ AI Architecture Board (lightweight): 30 min weekly to approve patterns/exceptions; publish decisions
- ☐ Rationalize tools + pilots (2 weeks): remove duplicates; name defaults; publish the "why"
- ☐ Other (write in):

5) AMPLIFICATION SIGNALS Pick 1 for speed + 1 for trust.

- ☐ Faster decisions with fewer surprises: decisions move faster without new escalations or rework
- ☐ Trust & safety: guardrails are understood; shadow AI decreases
- ☐ Adoption / sustained usage: AI is used consistently in one priority workflow (not just pilots)
- ☐ Reclaimed capacity: less busywork; more synthesis, judgment, domain thinking
- ☐ Improved cross-functional flow: requests, decisions, and handoffs move with less friction
- ☐ Less duplication: fewer overlapping tools, pilots, and parallel efforts
- ☐ More coherence: shared patterns reused; fewer one-offs and exceptions
- ☐ Basic measurement: 1–2 simple KPIs tracked (time saved, cycle time, quality)
- ☐ More open learning: people share what worked/didn't without fear

6) OWNERS + ENABLEMENT

Name the owner and the 1–2 people who enable speed (decision rights, access, standards) so this doesn't stall.

Inside

I (capacity):

Decision Owner: _____

Enabler: _____

WE (collaboration):

Driver: _____

Enabler: _____

US (governance):

Approver: _____

Enabler: _____

Outside (if needed)

Peer / advisor / partner / coach: _____

OPTIONAL: 1:1 STRATEGIC CONVERSATION (RLD GROUP)

Want a fast, confidential pressure-test of your 30-day move?

Email hello@rldgroupllc.com to schedule time with Lisa and the RLD Group Insights team

How RLD Group Helps Leaders Reconnect AI Leadership Through Alignment

Rebooting Leadership Drive™ for the AI era.

AI is moving fast - and AI scales whatever is already true in the system. When leadership systems don't keep pace, fragmentation quietly shows up as tool sprawl, rework, uneven guardrails, and rising risk.

RLD Group is a WBENC-certified leadership consulting and coaching firm. Our team brings combined expertise in executive leadership, cross-functional alignment, change management, and conversation design -helping leaders, teams, and organizations translate AI momentum into measurable impact.

We co-create the path with your leaders through a practical sequence:

● 1) Discover where fragmentation starts

We listen across functions and map signals to identify the root drivers and the first place the system is breaking.

Typically includes: Strategic Consulting for AI Leadership Alignment (executive interviews, signal mapping, I-WE-US diagnostic).

● 2) Design the operating layer together

We facilitate cross-functional working sessions to align priorities, clarify decision-making authority, and define usable guardrails (green lane / red lane) so teams move fast without governance surprises.

Typically includes: Alignment Jumpstart Working Sessions.

● 3) Enable leaders to make alignment repeatable

We translate insights into day-to-day behaviors and lightweight operating rhythms so learning becomes shared capability, not isolated wins.

Typically includes: Executive Coaching + Execution Enablement Labs.

● 4) Reinforce and scale what's working

We build structured dialogue and peer learning so decisions, standards, and lessons travel across the enterprise. This can be delivered in-house for intact teams and/or as invite-only cross-company executive forums.

Typically includes: Executive Forums (in-house and invite-only).

If you're navigating AI-era tradeoffs and want a confidential place to compare what's working and leave with practical next moves, we'd welcome a conversation.

