



TRUST-FIRST AI



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has completed all the requirements of the online program

**CXO Blended Program
Chief AI Officer**

256 Total Hours
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A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ronny Shirr', is written over a horizontal line.

Ronny Shirr
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Emerging AI Authority

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CERTIFIED CHIEF AI OFFICER



Engineering AI Authority

A Transitional Leadership Model for Trust-First AI Adoption

Abstract

Artificial Intelligence is actively shaping enterprise decisions, influencing operations, and accelerating automation across business functions. Yet while capability continues to expand, governance models have not evolved at the same pace. Most organizations are advancing AI without establishing the structural authority required to ensure these systems operate in a manner that is trustworthy, compliant, and aligned to enterprise risk.

This gap is not technical. It is structural.

AI introduces a new category of enterprise capability, one that produces decisions rather than simply executing predefined processes. That shift requires a corresponding evolution in how authority is defined, enforced, and governed.

The emergence of the Chief AI Officer reflects a growing recognition that AI requires centralized ownership at the executive level. However, for many organizations, formalizing a permanent CAIO role remains premature relative to current maturity. A transitional leadership model provides a practical path forward, introducing coordinated AI governance, architectural alignment, and strategic oversight within existing structures while the long-term role continues to take shape. When viewed through the lens of Trust-First AI, this approach enables organizations to move from experimentation to enforceable, auditable, and strategically aligned AI capability.

AI Adoption Is Outpacing Authority

AI is being deployed across enterprises at a rate that exceeds the ability to govern it effectively. Business units are enabling AI-driven workflows, technology organizations are deploying platforms and copilots, and data teams are accelerating model development. These efforts create momentum, but they also introduce a new category of enterprise exposure.

Decisions are increasingly influenced by systems that cannot be fully explained or validated at the moment they act. Traditional governance mechanisms rely on policies, review cycles, and retrospective analysis. They reconstruct behavior after execution rather than controlling behavior during execution.

This creates a structural imbalance. AI operates in seconds, while governance often operates in months. The distance between those two speeds is where risk accumulates.

More importantly, it is where authority does not yet exist.

The Structural Gap in AI Ownership

Within most enterprises, AI responsibility is distributed across existing functions. Technology organizations manage platforms and infrastructure. Security defines controls. Legal and compliance establish policy. Business units are accountable for outcomes and value realization. Each of these functions plays a critical role, yet none are designed to govern AI as a unified system of decision authority.

The result is fragmentation. Platforms are deployed without consistent enforcement. Policies are defined without architectural alignment. Outcomes are produced without clear accountability for how decisions were made. The organization operates with capability, but without cohesive authority.

The increasing visibility of the Chief AI Officer role reflects an acknowledgment of this gap. It is not the creation of a new role, but the recognition of a function that has not yet been formally established. AI introduces a requirement for ownership that extends beyond traditional boundaries, where strategy, governance, architecture, and risk must be coordinated as a single function. The challenge is not recognition of the need, but the maturity required to operationalize it.

A Transitional Leadership Model for AI Authority

Rather than immediately formalizing a permanent CAIO executive role, organizations are beginning to adopt a transitional model that introduces coordinated AI authority while operating within existing structures. This model establishes clarity without requiring immediate organizational redesign.

The objective is not hierarchy. It is authority through alignment.

This approach enables organizations to define how AI is governed across technology, business, and risk functions, ensuring that initiatives are consistently aligned to enterprise priorities and regulatory expectations. It allows governance to be introduced at the same pace as adoption, rather than attempting to retrofit control after scale has already been achieved.

Over time, this model provides a natural pathway toward a formalized CAIO function. In the near term, it establishes the conditions necessary for AI to operate with accountability, consistency, and control.

Operating Within Existing Enterprise Structures

This model does not require disruption. It integrates into existing governance frameworks where platform ownership, risk oversight, and business accountability already exist. The intent is not to replace these functions, but to introduce coordination across them.

Most organizations already maintain processes for evaluating and prioritizing emerging capabilities. The transitional model operates within these constructs, ensuring that AI initiatives are governed consistently and aligned to enterprise objectives.

Coordinated AI authority functions as a connective layer, aligning governance, architecture, and strategy across domains. This reduces fragmentation without imposing structural change, allowing organizations to evolve their governance model as AI adoption matures.

Trust-First AI as an Architectural Foundation

Trust-First AI reframes governance as an engineered capability rather than a policy construct. It recognizes that systems operating autonomously cannot be governed effectively through retrospective controls alone. Governance must exist at the same layer and speed as execution.

This requires a shift from access control to participation authority, ensuring that systems cannot act without defined authorization. Behavior must be captured at the moment it occurs, creating an immutable record of decisions and actions. Outcomes must be provable, not reconstructed after the fact.

This approach transforms governance from observation to enforcement. Trust is no longer assumed. It is established through architecture.

In this model, governance is no longer a control mechanism. It becomes a condition of execution.

Introducing these principles early in the adoption lifecycle is critical. Retrofitting governance into active AI systems is complex, disruptive, and often incomplete. Designing it from the outset creates a foundation that supports both innovation and control.

Regulatory Direction and the Shift to Evidence

Regulatory expectations for AI are converging around transparency, accountability, and traceability. Frameworks such as the National Institute of Standards and Technology AI Risk Management Framework and standards from the International Organization for Standardization reinforce that organizations must demonstrate how AI systems operate, how decisions are made, and how outcomes can be validated.

This represents a fundamental shift from compliance as documentation to compliance as evidence. It is no longer sufficient to define policy or maintain records of intent. Organizations must be able to show, with precision, what occurred at the moment of execution.

Establishing governance models that align to this direction is no longer optional. It is a prerequisite for scaling AI in regulated environments and for maintaining confidence at the executive and board level.

From Experimentation to Enterprise Capability

As AI adoption matures, organizations encounter a predictable inflection point. Initial experimentation generates value and insight, but as adoption expands, questions of risk, accountability, and control begin to surface. Legal, audit, and security functions require clarity. Executive leadership requires assurance.

Without defined authority, progress slows.

Establishing coordinated AI authority changes this trajectory. When governance is engineered into the system, organizations can scale AI with confidence. They can move from isolated use cases to enterprise-wide capability without increasing exposure.

The transitional leadership model accelerates this progression by introducing structure at the point where it is most needed, allowing organizations to continue advancing while maintaining alignment to enterprise risk and regulatory expectations.

Indicators of Governance Maturity Gaps

Organizations rarely identify the need for AI authority through planning. They recognize it through friction. Questions begin to surface around ownership of AI-driven decisions, the ability to explain outcomes, and the implications of error or regulatory scrutiny.

These signals indicate that existing governance structures are no longer sufficient.

At this stage, the absence of defined authority becomes a limiting factor. Establishing a coordinated leadership approach provides the clarity required to resolve these tensions and ensures that AI adoption proceeds with consistency and control.

Conclusion

AI adoption without defined authority introduces structural risk. The emergence of the Chief AI Officer role reflects a broader shift in how organizations must govern systems that produce decisions rather than simply execute processes.

The question is no longer whether this authority is required. It is how deliberately it will be established.

A transitional leadership model provides a practical path forward. It allows organizations to introduce coordinated AI authority, align governance to emerging regulatory expectations, and

embed trust as an architectural foundation without requiring immediate organizational transformation.

Within a Trust-First AI framework, this approach enables organizations to move beyond experimentation and establish AI as a controlled, provable, and strategically aligned enterprise capability.

Final Thought

AI is already participating in enterprise decisions.

Authority has not yet caught up.

The organizations that define it first will be the only ones that can trust what they build.

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