

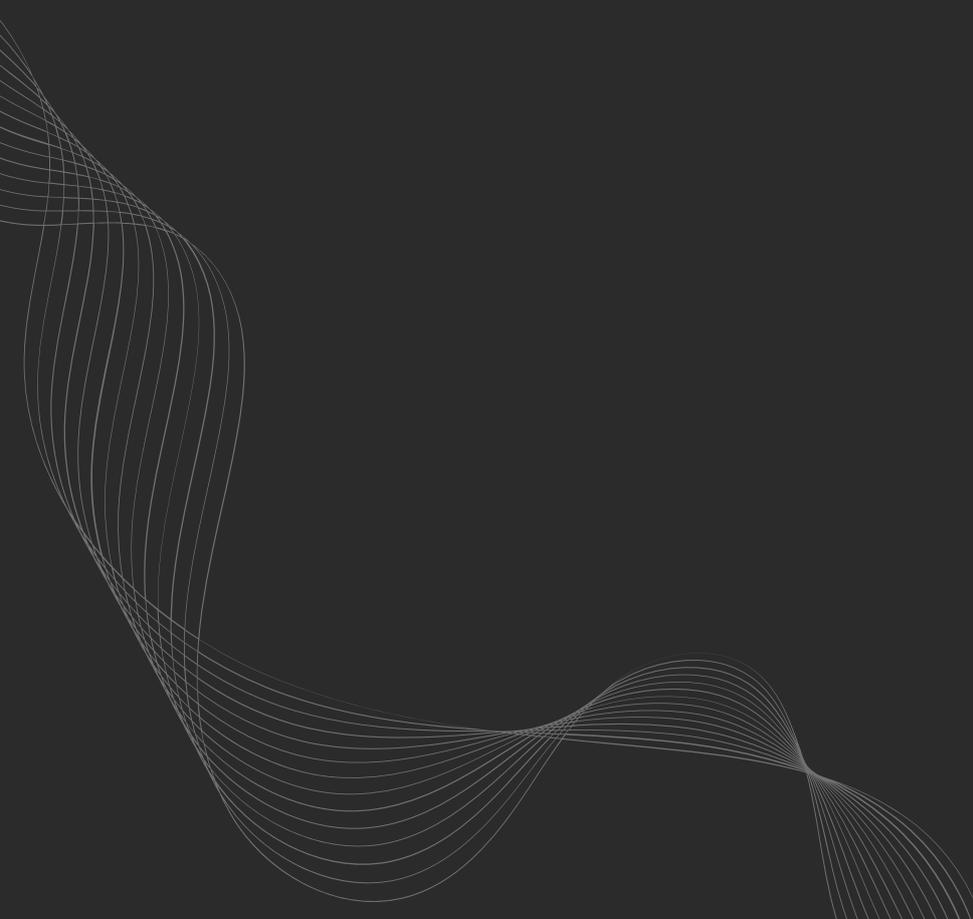
# Why RACI Fails in AI-Driven Organisations

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The AI Operating Model Playbook

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## Opening context

As organisations attempt to clarify accountability for AI, many turn to familiar tools. RACI matrices are revisited. Responsibilities are mapped. Roles are documented. On paper, clarity improves.

In practice, confusion often persists. Decisions stall. Escalations multiply. Teams hesitate to act. Senior leaders are drawn into operational detail they expected to delegate.

This gap between formal role definition and real-world decision-making highlights a deeper issue. RACI was designed for stable work in predictable environments. AI exposes its limitations.

## Why this fails in most organisations

RACI assumes responsibilities can be defined in advance and remain stable over time. It works best when tasks are discrete, dependencies are known, and outcomes are predictable.

AI does not behave this way. Decisions emerge continuously. Boundaries shift as models evolve. The distinction between who is responsible, accountable, consulted, or informed blurs in practice.

Multiple functions shape outcomes simultaneously. Data teams influence behaviour through model design. Business teams shape decisions through use and interpretation. Risk functions impose constraints that affect production behaviour. No single role fits neatly into a static box.

When RACI is applied rigidly, it creates false certainty. Teams follow the matrix rather than exercising judgement. When outcomes deviate from expectations, responsibility is debated rather than owned.

## **The operating model insight**

AI requires accountability models that are dynamic, not static.

Rather than attempting to predefine every responsibility, organisations must design accountability around decision-making authority and outcome ownership. The key question is not who is consulted, but who has the authority to decide and the obligation to act when conditions change.

This shifts accountability from documentation to behaviour. Roles still matter, but they must be interpreted in context. Decision rights and accountability must evolve as systems learn and environments change.

RACI can still play a supporting role, but it cannot serve as the primary mechanism for accountability.

## **What this looks like in practice**

Organisations that rely heavily on RACI exhibit familiar symptoms. Decisions are escalated unnecessarily because responsibility is unclear in context. Teams avoid ownership by pointing to role definitions. Senior leaders intervene to resolve ambiguity that tools were meant to eliminate.

By contrast, organisations that move beyond RACI focus on clarifying who decides, who owns outcomes, and how authority shifts as systems evolve. Accountability is discussed explicitly and revisited regularly. Teams are encouraged to exercise judgement within defined boundaries rather than defer to static charts.

## **Common mistakes to avoid**

Expanding RACI to cover every scenario, creating complexity without clarity.

Assuming better documentation will resolve behavioural issues.

Abandoning structure altogether, creating informality that fails under pressure.

Treating accountability as a compliance artefact rather than an operating choice.

## **What leaders must do differently**

Leaders must recognise the limits of traditional accountability tools in AI contexts. They should use RACI sparingly and avoid treating it as a substitute for operating model design.

Instead, leaders must focus on decision rights, outcome ownership, and the conditions under which authority shifts. These elements create real accountability even as systems evolve.

## **Conclusion**

RACI fails in AI-driven organisations not because it is poorly executed, but because it is misapplied.

AI exposes the need for accountability models that reflect continuous decision-making and evolving outcomes. Without this shift, formal clarity on paper will continue to diverge from operational reality.



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