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Roadmaps vs. Groundmaps

Why AI Changes Strategic Planning

“Artificial intelligence is not simply changing how organizations work. It is changing the conditions under which organizational strategy succeeds.”

Dr. Matt Meador



Figure 1. The visible roadmap rests on hidden organizational ground that AI continuously reshapes.

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Author: Dr. Matt Meador

Founder, MetHer By Design, LLC

Executive Director, Learning AI Institute

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Executive Summary

Organizations have relied on roadmaps for decades to communicate direction, priorities, milestones, and expected outcomes. Artificial intelligence changes more than the work itself, it changes the assumptions, capabilities, risks, and decision structures beneath every roadmap. This paper introduces the Groundmap as a conceptual model for examining the organizational conditions that influence strategic execution in AI-enabled environments.

The Road Has Not Changed. The Ground Has.

For decades, organizations have relied on roadmaps because the environment changed slowly enough that periodic planning was sufficient. Leaders could establish objectives, assign resources, monitor progress, and adjust as conditions evolved.

Artificial intelligence disrupts that assumption.

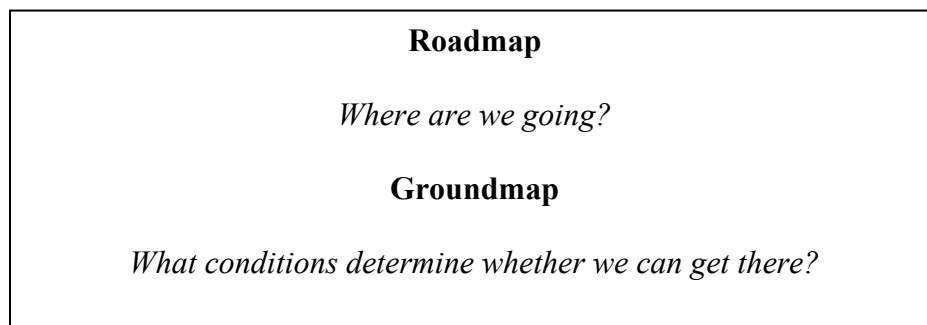
AI does not simply automate work. It changes workforce capability, decision speed, governance expectations, regulatory requirements, customer expectations, and organizational knowledge.

The destination on the roadmap may remain unchanged. The conditions supporting the journey do not.

In an AI-enabled environment, strategic success depends not only on choosing the right path, but on continually evaluating the ground beneath that path.

What Is a Groundmap?

A Roadmap describes the path an organization intends to follow. A Groundmap evaluates whether the organizational conditions beneath that path remain capable of supporting successful execution.



While a roadmap organizes work, a Groundmap evaluates the conditions that determine whether that work can succeed. It helps leaders identify hidden assumptions, changing capabilities, governance responsibilities, organizational readiness, and the human decisions that AI cannot replace.

The Hidden Layers Beneath Every Roadmap

Every roadmap rests on assumptions that often remain invisible until they fail.

Leaders rarely place trust, governance, decision ownership, workforce capability, or organizational readiness on a roadmap. Yet these factors frequently determine whether execution succeeds.

AI increases the importance of these hidden conditions because it changes them continuously rather than occasionally.

The Role of the LAIR Framework

The Groundmap identifies what leaders should examine.

The LAIR Framework provides a disciplined way to examine it;

- Literacy ensures leaders understand changing conditions.
- Application helps determine where AI should responsibly assist.
- Interpretation helps organizations evaluate emerging evidence rather than simply collect it.
- Responsibility ensures accountability remains human even when AI contributes to the work.

Looking Ahead

AI has not eliminated the value of strategic planning. It has increased the importance of understanding the conditions beneath every strategy. Roadmaps will continue to guide organizations toward their goals. Groundmaps may help ensure those goals remain achievable.

This paper introduces the concept.

Future publications from the Learning AI Institute will explore how organizations can evaluate, strengthen, and continuously improve the ground beneath their strategy.

Because better strategy begins beneath the surface.

About the Organizations

Learning AI Institute advances research, education, and organizational capability in artificial intelligence through evidence-informed frameworks, executive education, and applied research.

learningaiinstitute.org

MetHer By Design partners with organizations to strengthen AI readiness, governance, workforce capability, and strategic implementation through consulting, executive advisory services, and the LAIR Framework.

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