

The Jonesi Consultancy | Houston, TX

EXECUTIVE AI ADOPTION · LEADERSHIP GUIDE

AI POLICY IS NOT AI ADOPTION



Why the Organizations That Feel Most Prepared Are Often the
Least Ready

*A policy sets the boundaries. It does not build the capability to operate
inside them.*

THE CATEGORY ERROR

A great many organizations have handled AI. They convened a group, drafted a document, circulated it for acknowledgment, and moved the item off the agenda. The policy is genuinely good. It was worth writing. And in a meaningful number of those organizations, almost nothing about how work gets done has changed. This is not a failure of the policy. Policy answers what is allowed. It cannot answer whether anyone is capable of doing it, whether the work has been redesigned to make use of it, or whether anybody will notice if nothing happens.

1 Six Different Things, Routinely Treated as One

LAYER	WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT DOES AND DOES NOT DO
 POLICY	What is permitted and prohibited.	Answers "may I?" Produces clarity and a defensible position. Produces no capability whatsoever.
 GOVERNANCE	Who decides, who reviews, and how exceptions are handled.	Answers "who says?" Keeps the policy alive as tools change. Without it a policy is accurate on the day it is signed and stale within two quarters.
 TRAINING	The skill to use the tools competently.	Answers "how?" Necessary and badly overrated on its own. Skill without application decays within about a month.
 CAPABILITY	Skill that survives turnover, embedded in how the job is taught.	Answers "will this still be here next year?" This is where training becomes an asset rather than an expense.
 WORKFLOW INTEGRATION	The work itself redesigned around where AI actually helps.	Answers "what changed?" The first layer that produces something measurable, and the one almost everybody skips.
 MEASUREMENT	Evidence that any of it worked.	Answers "was it worth it?" Without a baseline captured beforehand, this layer cannot be built retroactively at any price.

THE EQUATION WORTH REMEMBERING

Boundaries plus capability plus reinforcement plus measurement equals sustainable adoption. Remove any one term and the result is not a smaller version of adoption. It is a different outcome entirely, and usually a worse one than doing nothing, because the money has been spent.

2

What a Policy Can and Cannot Accomplish

A strong policy reduces uncertainty. It should not be expected to create competence. Treating policy as an adoption strategy creates a predictable gap between what leadership believes has been addressed and what your people experience in practice.

A POLICY CAN	A POLICY CANNOT
› Tell people which tools are sanctioned and which are not.	› Teach anyone to write a useful prompt or recognize a bad answer.
› Define what information must never be entered into a tool.	› Change how a single process is actually performed.
› Establish that the person who sends the work owns the work.	› Make a manager raise the subject in a one-to-one.
› Give a cautious employee the permission they were waiting for.	› Protect the time it takes for people to become competent.
› Give a reckless employee a boundary they can be held to.	› Teach the judgment of when AI is appropriate and when human review must stay primary.
› Demonstrate to a client, funder, regulator, or insurer that the question was taken seriously.	› Overcome the belief that using AI marks you as replaceable.
› Create a route for reporting when something goes wrong.	› Produce a baseline, a measurement, or a return.
› Identify who owns decisions, approvals, review, and escalation.	› Survive contact with a tool that did not exist when it was written.

READ THE RIGHT-HAND COLUMN AS A WORK LIST

It is not criticism of the policy. Every item on it is somebody's job. The question worth settling in the room is whose.

These appear in roughly this order, and each one is the predictable consequence of completing the previous step and stopping there.

1 POLICY WITHOUT TRAINING

The rules exist and nobody has the skill to work well inside them.

Cautious staff avoid the tools entirely to stay compliant. Confident staff proceed on instinct and interpret the ambiguous parts generously. Both groups are technically following the policy.

ASK: Can an employee explain both what is prohibited and what responsible use looks like in a real task?

2 TRAINING WITHOUT APPROVED TOOLS

People were taught a capability and then given no sanctioned way to practice it.

The enthusiasm generated in the session has nowhere to go, so it goes to personal accounts and personal devices, which is precisely the exposure the policy was written to prevent.

ASK: Did we give people a safe, approved place to apply what they learned?

3 APPROVED TOOLS WITHOUT WORKFLOW RELEVANCE

Licenses were purchased and no process was redesigned to use them.

Usage peaks in week two and settles near zero by week six. At renewal, somebody discovers the seat count and cannot name anyone who logs in.

ASK: Which specific workflows should become easier, faster, better, or less risky?

4 GOVERNANCE WITHOUT FEEDBACK FROM THE FLOOR

Rules are set by people who do not do the work being governed.

The rules turn out to be unworkable in a way that was obvious to staff and invisible upward. Workarounds appear quietly, and the governance body is the last to hear about them.

ASK: How do our people surface friction, uncertainty, and legitimate exceptions without being treated as noncompliant?

5 EVERYTHING EXCEPT MEASUREMENT

Real capability, real change, no evidence.

The program is genuinely working and cannot be defended. The first budget pressure removes it, and the organization loses capability it had actually built.

ASK: If this were cut next quarter, could we show a board what it produced?

THE PATTERN BEHIND THE PATTERNS

Each of these is what happens when an organization completes one layer properly and treats the completion as the finish line. The layers are not optional stages. They are components of a single thing, and the value appears only when the last one is in place.

The goal is not more bureaucracy. It is to make responsible AI use easier to understand, easier to practice, and easier to sustain. Boundaries create safety, capability creates competence, reinforcement creates consistency, and measurement shows whether the change is producing value.



The four elements work together to create sustainable adoption.

WHAT EACH ELEMENT LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

BOUNDARIES

Your people know which tools are approved, what data is restricted, when disclosure is expected, and when a task should be escalated.

Clarity reduces guesswork.

CAPABILITY

They can frame useful requests, provide context, evaluate output, protect sensitive information, and recognize when AI is the wrong tool.

Skill reduces both avoidance and overconfidence.

REINFORCEMENT

Managers model responsible use, teams share lessons, people have time to practice, and useful behaviors are recognized rather than left to chance.

Repetition turns learning into habit.

MEASUREMENT

Leaders look for workflow change, quality, time, risk, and sustained behavior rather than relying only on logins or attendance.

Evidence separates adoption from activity.

A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Suppose an organization approves generative AI for drafting internal communications. The policy names the tool and prohibits confidential client data. That is necessary, and adoption still requires more: examples of appropriate tasks, practice writing useful requests, guidance on reviewing tone and factual claims, manager reinforcement, and a way to tell whether the workflow actually saves time without reducing quality. The policy defines the lane. Capability and workflow design determine whether anyone can drive in it well.

5

Questions That Test Whether Your Policy Connects to Practice

Ask these of your own organization. Each has a right answer and most organizations have four or five wrong ones, which is normal and worth knowing.

1

Can three people from different departments name the tools that are approved?

If not, the policy exists as a document rather than as knowledge.

2

When was the policy last updated, and has your tool landscape changed since?

A policy written before the current generation of tools is describing a world that no longer exists.

3

Has anyone reported a mistake under it?

A reporting route nobody has used is either evidence of a flawless organization or evidence that people do not believe reporting is safe. It is the second one.

4

Do managers reference it in ordinary conversation, or only when something goes wrong?

A policy that surfaces only at the point of failure is experienced as a disciplinary instrument, and people manage their exposure to it accordingly.

5

Do your people have protected time and safe opportunities to practice?

Skill does not emerge from access alone.

6

Has any process been redesigned since the policy was issued?

If nothing about the work has changed, nothing about the results will have either.

7

Could you show a board what changed as a result?

If the honest answer is a description of the policy itself, the policy is currently the whole program.

6

A Leadership Self-Check

- ☐ Our AI policy identifies approved tools and restricted data in language our people can understand.
- ☐ Our people have received practical, role-relevant guidance on how to operate within the policy.
- ☐ Managers can explain what good AI use looks like, not only what is prohibited.
- ☐ Our people know when human review is required and who remains accountable for the final work.
- ☐ We have identified repeatable workflows where AI use should create measurable value.
- ☐ There is a channel for questions, edge cases, and feedback about policy friction.
- ☐ Leadership reviews adoption evidence and updates guidance as tools, risks, and workflows change.

7

When a Policy Needs More Than a Rewrite

Sometimes the policy is not unclear. The organization has simply reached the limit of what a policy can solve. Match the symptom to the layer that is missing.

IF THE ISSUE IS	STRENGTHEN NEXT
CONFUSION	Strengthen communication, examples, and role-specific guidance.
HESITATION	Strengthen psychological safety, manager modeling, and low-risk practice.
WEAK SKILL	Strengthen practical training, verification habits, and applied use cases.
SCATTERED USE	Strengthen workflow integration, shared standards, and ownership.
WEAK ACCOUNTABILITY	Strengthen governance, review points, escalation, and measurement.

Permission and Competence Are Both Required

Responsible AI use needs two things that are usually owned by different people. Permission comes from leadership, legal, and governance, and it arrives as a document. Competence comes from training, management practice, and redesigned work, and it arrives slowly and unevenly.

An organization with permission and no competence has staff who are allowed to do something they cannot do well. An organization with competence and no permission has staff doing it anyway, privately, where nobody can see it.

WHY THE FIRST ONE IS MORE COMMON

Neither position is safe, and permission without competence is more common precisely because it is cheaper and faster to reach. Writing a policy takes a few weeks. Building capability takes a year and involves managers, which is why it gets deferred.

POLICY

Tells people where the boundaries are.

CAPABILITY

Teaches them what to do inside those boundaries.

REINFORCEMENT

Helps the behavior hold once attention moves on.

MEASUREMENT

Tells leadership whether the organization is actually better because of it.

THE USEFUL NEXT QUESTION

If your organization has a good AI policy, you have done real work and you are further along than many. The useful next question is not whether the policy is sound. It is what has changed about the work since you published it.

AI does not replace people. It elevates them.

This resource provides general organizational guidance and is not legal, compliance, or regulatory advice.

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You have the policy. What comes next is the harder half.

We help organizations turn written boundaries into capability people actually use.

