

The Jonesi Consultancy | Houston, TX

AI ADOPTION · LEADER'S FIELD GUIDE

AI USE VS. AI INTEGRATION



A Practical Guide to Telling Scattered AI Use Apart From Real
AI Capability

*Nearly every team is using AI, but far fewer teams have integrated it into
how their work actually gets done.*

THE GAP THAT MAKES THE ROOM GO QUIET

Ask most leaders whether their organization uses AI and the answer is yes. Ask what changed as a result and the room gets quiet. That gap is not a measurement problem. It is the difference between people using a tool and an organization changing how work gets done. This guide sets out that difference, and gives you a way to see where your own organization actually sits.

1 Four Things That All Get Called “Using AI”

AI adoption exists on a practical continuum. These are not maturity scores; they are a way to see how value changes as AI moves from individual activity into shared, repeatable work.

INDIVIDUAL USE

A person uses AI to complete tasks faster or improve a draft.

TEAM PRACTICE

A team shares prompts, examples, and repeatable practices.

WORKFLOW INTEGRATION

AI sits inside a recurring process with human checkpoints.

CAPABILITY

Integrated practices are governed, measured, and transferable.

Why the Distinction Matters

Productivity Is Not Performance

AI use can create individual productivity without changing organizational performance.

Unstructured Value Cannot Scale

Unstructured adoption makes value difficult to measure, govern, reproduce, or scale.

Integration Makes It Visible

Integration turns isolated experimentation into a capability the organization can see, support, and improve.

Individual Use Still Counts

Individual use is real value and should not be dismissed. It is simply a different thing from integration.

CORE PRINCIPLE

Using AI is not the same as integrating AI. Integration begins when AI becomes part of a repeatable way of working, with clear ownership, appropriate human judgment, shared expectations, and measurable outcomes.

2 Four Levels, and What Survives

Read the last column first. It is the fastest way to tell whether what you have is a person's habit or an organization's practice.

LEVEL	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHO OWNS IT	IF THEY LEAVE
INDIVIDUAL USE	One person finds a tool useful and works it into their own day. Nobody assigned it, nobody reviewed it, and nobody else knows the details.	The person. Informally.	It leaves with them.
TEAM USE	A handful of people on the same team share prompts and habits. Practice is consistent inside the team and invisible outside it.	The team, by convention rather than decision.	Survives one departure, rarely two.
WORKFLOW INTEGRATION	A specific process has been redesigned around where AI genuinely helps. The steps, the review points, and the handoffs are written down and followed by whoever holds the role.	The process owner, explicitly.	It stays. The role carries it.
ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY	Integrated workflows exist in more than one function, new people are onboarded into them, quality is governed, and the results appear in numbers leadership already looks at.	Leadership, with a named owner.	It compounds.

Everything above the third row is a property of a person. Everything from the third row down is a property of the organization.

THE LINE THAT MATTERS

Most firms that describe themselves as AI-forward are operating entirely in the first two rows and reporting it as the last two. That is not dishonesty. It is a category error, and it is expensive.

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AI Use and AI Integration Comparison

DIMENSION	AI USE	AI INTEGRATION
OWNERSHIP	Whoever picked it up first.	A named process owner and a named executive sponsor.
REPEATABILITY	Depends who is doing the work that day.	The same steps produce the same quality regardless of who holds the role.
ONBOARDING	New hires reinvent it or never learn it.	It is part of how the job is taught.
GOVERNANCE	Individual judgment, applied unevenly.	Defined review points, approved tools, and known limits.
VISIBILITY	Leadership hears anecdotes.	Leadership sees it in reporting they already read.
MEASUREMENT	Self-reported time savings, uncheckable.	A before and an after on a metric that existed beforehand.
BUSINESS IMPACT	Real for the individual. Invisible in aggregate.	Shows up in cycle time, error rates, capacity, or cost.
DURABILITY	One resignation away from zero.	Survives turnover, tool changes, and reorganizations.

Neither Column Is the Villain

Individual use is where every organization starts and where genuine enthusiasm comes from. The mistake is not that people use AI on their own.

The mistake is treating widespread individual use as evidence that the organization has adopted AI, and then wondering why the financial statements look exactly the same as they did last year.

THE LEADERSHIP TEST

If AI disappeared tomorrow, could you name the recurring workflows, owners, review points, and business measures that would be affected? If not, the organization may have AI activity without true integration.

4 Six Symptoms of Fragmented Adoption

These show up long before anyone concludes there is a problem. Most leaders read them as signs of progress.

1 Prompting is a private skill

People have their own approaches and no way to see anyone else's. The best technique in the building is known to one person.

2 The same problem gets solved twice

Two departments independently build a way to summarize the same category of document. Neither knows about the other.

3 Quality varies by author, not by task

The same deliverable is excellent or embarrassing depending on who produced it and how carefully they checked it.

4 Nobody can say what is approved

Ask three people which tools are sanctioned and you get three answers, one of which is a shrug.

5 Enthusiasm concentrates in the wrong places

The heaviest users are frequently the people who were already the most capable. The work that would benefit most is untouched.

6 There is no before

Even where AI clearly helped, nobody captured what the process cost beforehand, so the improvement cannot be demonstrated.

Not one of these six is a technology problem, and not one of them is solved by buying a better tool or running another training session.

They are all consequences of AI having been adopted by people rather than designed into work. That is a design gap, and design gaps are fixable.

5 Three Traps That Look Like Progress

MORE TOOLS

More licenses can increase access without improving the work.

MORE PROMPTS

A larger prompt library can help individuals without redesigning a process.

MORE TRAINING

More training can increase knowledge without creating sustained application.

WHAT CHANGES THE PICTURE

Integration starts when leaders connect AI to a specific recurring workflow, preserve the human judgment that matters, define ownership, and agree on what improvement should be visible.

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What Integration Actually Looks Like

Three examples, deliberately ordinary. Integration is rarely dramatic. It is a process someone took the trouble to rebuild.

A finance team and the monthly close narrative

TWO DAYS → HALF A DAY

The narrative now reads the same regardless of who is covering the close.

The commentary that accompanies monthly results used to take a controller most of two days and read differently every month. Now the first draft is generated from the variance report against a fixed set of questions, the controller edits and verifies rather than composes, and the review step is written into the close checklist.

An intake process at a service organization

COMPLETENESS, NOT SPEED

The record is complete while the detail is still fresh.

Intake summaries were written from notes at the end of a long day, inconsistently and often late. The process now produces a structured summary immediately after the conversation, reviewed and corrected by the person who was there before it is filed.

A proposal process in a professional firm

CORRECT IN MONTH ONE

It stuck because a new hire can now do it correctly in their first month.

Proposals were assembled by whoever had capacity, borrowing language from whatever recent document they could find. The firm built an approved source of current language, defined which sections are drafted with assistance and which are written by the partner, and made the verification step explicit.

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The 5-Question Integration Test

For any claimed AI success, ask whether the practice is becoming organizational capability.

REPEATABLE

Does this happen often enough to be worth a shared approach?

OWNED

Is someone responsible for the workflow and its outcomes?

REVIEWABLE

Are human checkpoints clear where judgment or risk matters?

MEASURABLE

Can we see whether time, quality, capacity, or cost improved?

TRANSFERABLE

Can another qualified person follow it without starting over?

8 Four Investments, Four Returns

These four are routinely treated as one decision. They are not. Each buys something different, and only two of them change the organization.

BUYING A TOOL

GIVES PEOPLE ACCESS

It does not tell anyone what to use it for, and access alone has never changed a process.

TRAINING PEOPLE

GIVES PEOPLE SKILL

Skill decays without application. Training that is not attached to real work shows a usage spike and then a return to baseline within about a month.

REDESIGNING A WORKFLOW

CHANGES HOW WORK IS DONE

This is the first step that produces something measurable, and it is the step almost everyone skips.

BUILDING CAPABILITY

MAKES CHANGE SURVIVE PEOPLE

Onboarding, governance, reinforcement, and measurement. Without it, everything above degrades quietly over about a year.

WHERE MOST ORGANIZATIONS STOP

An organization that has bought tools and run training has completed the first two, which together produce capable individuals and very little else. The return lives in the third and the fourth.

Start With One Workflow, Not Another Tool

1

NAME THE WORK

Choose one recurring workflow with meaningful friction.

2

DEFINE THE CHANGE

State what should improve if AI is useful here.

3

KEEP JUDGMENT VISIBLE

Identify where a human must review, decide, or approve.

4

LOOK FOR EVIDENCE

Track whether the work becomes faster, better, or safer.

9 Questions Leaders Should Be Able to Answer

The goal is not to integrate AI everywhere. The goal is to integrate it deliberately where it improves work and where the organization can support responsible, sustained use. Work through these before a workflow is redesigned, not after.

STRATEGY & WORKFLOW

- What recurring business problem or workflow are we actually trying to improve?
- Where is the friction today: time, rework, quality, access to information, capacity, or decision speed?
- Are we redesigning the work, or simply adding an AI tool to the existing process?

PEOPLE & GOVERNANCE

- Who performs the work, and what judgment must remain human?
- What information can be used safely, and what requires stronger controls?
- Who owns the workflow, reviews the output, and resolves exceptions or uncertainty?

MEASUREMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

- What observable outcome should improve if integration is successful?
- What baseline do we have today, and who will review the evidence after implementation?
- Can the practice survive a staff change, tool update, or leadership transition?

CLOSING PRINCIPLE

AI integration is not measured by how many people have access to a tool. It is visible when useful AI practices become part of how work is performed, reviewed, owned, measured, and improved – while human accountability remains intact.

10 5 Questions for Your Leadership Team

- 1 Where is AI already being used here, and how do we know rather than assume?
- 2 Which of those uses would still happen correctly if the person doing it left next month?
- 3 Which of them has a defined review point, and which relies on the individual remembering?
- 4 For which of them could we produce a before and an after that predates the AI?
- 5 If we removed AI from this organization tomorrow, what would actually break?

The last question is the useful one. If the honest answer is that nothing would break, then what you have is individual use.

That is a fine place to be standing. It is a poor place to be standing while telling your board that the organization has adopted AI.

THIS WEEK

Put the five questions on your next leadership agenda and answer them out loud.

THIS MONTH

Pick one recurring workflow, name its owner, and capture what it costs today.

THIS QUARTER

Redesign that one workflow, write it down, and report the before and after.

This resource provides general organizational guidance and does not constitute legal, financial, privacy, security, compliance, or regulatory advice.

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Want to know which stage you are actually in?

We will walk through it with you and tell you honestly what the next stage requires.

