

Delegated Authority: Where Autonomy Begins

HIGHLIGHTS

Execution authority can remain personal.
Or it can be delegated to systems.

Delegation defines **the boundary of autonomy**.

Implicit Delegation

Example

The system operates with broad objectives but undefined execution limits.

Authority

Assumed.

Consequences

- Ambiguous boundaries.
- Reactive oversight.
- Post-incident clarification.

Control

- Informal supervision.
- Case-by-case intervention.

Explicit Delegation

Example

The system operates within predefined financial and operational thresholds.

Authority

Defined in advance.

Consequences

- Predictable execution scope.
- Clear accountability locus.
- Scalable oversight.

Control

- Written mandate.
- Quantified limits.
- Defined override rights.

What Changes at Scale

Undefined delegation expands silently.
Defined delegation contains exposure.
Design determines defensibility.

ACTION: Before Delegating Authority

- What decision rights are transferred?
- What thresholds define execution?
- Who retains override power?
- How is delegation documented?

Autonomy scales. Authority contains.

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SUPPLEMENT: Authority in Personal AI vs AI Agents in Group Conversations

HIGHLIGHTS

AI can remain a **personal tool**.
Or it can become an **organisational actor**.

The difference is **where authority sits**.

When AI agents sit **inside group conversations**,
authority may be exercised **WITHOUT explicit delegation**.

No explicit delegation. Yet actions occur.

Authority becomes **AMBIENT**:
Responding to instructions that emerge from conversations rather than a defined authority.

Personal AI	AI Agents in Group Conversations
<p>Example: ChatGPT.</p> <p>Environment Private interaction between an individual and the system.</p> <p>Function</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drafting.• Research.• Reasoning support.	<p>Example: OpenClaw.</p> <p>Environment Organisational communication channels/groups: Whatsapp, Telegram, Microsoft Teams, Google Chat.</p> <p>Function</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information retrieval.• Task execution.• Workflow triggers.

Authority

- None.
- The system produces suggestions.
- The individual decides.

Consequences

- No organisational delegation.
- No operational execution.
- Contained risk.
- AI supports thinking.
- Humans retain authority.

Authority

- Participants may include internal staff, external partners, clients with different levels.
- Operational presence inside live conversations.
- Instructions may arise from **any participant**.

Consequences

- AI becomes part of organisational operations.
- Authority may shift from **formal instruction** to **conversational cues**.

Governance Exposure

AI agents embedded in group conversations introduce new governance risks.

Authority Drift

- A request appears in discussion.
- No formal command, the agent acts.
- Responsibility becomes unclear.

Role Confusion

- Participants hold different authority levels.
- The agent may treat all instructions equally.
- Authority hierarchy disappears.

Information Spillover

- Group conversations often mix:
 - Internal information.
 - External participants.
 - Operational discussion.

- An automated response may disclose information beyond its intended boundary.

ACTION: Before Adding AI Agents to Groups

- Who is allowed to direct the agent?
- What authority does the agent actually hold?
- What information must the agent never disclose?
- Who is accountable if the agent acts incorrectly?
- How can leadership immediately stop the agent if necessary?

Autonomy scales. Authority contains.

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