The Executive Mandate under AI Execution

HIGHLIGHTS

In VOL. 2026.02 we examined a central principle: **explicit authority**.

When AI systems execute actions, authority must be clearly defined before systems act.

Historically, organisations ensured this through **instruction formalisation**.

Conversation did not trigger execution.
Specific structures conveyed in language did.

Instruction Formalisation

Human organisations developed bureaucratic artefacts to convert language into authority.

Examples include: Memo, Document, Email, Slides, Spreadsheet.

These artefacts perform three functions:

- Identify authority.
- Formalise instruction.
- Record accountability.

The sequence is deliberate: **Discussion → Instruction → Approval → Execution**

Authority becomes explicit through **structured artefacts**.

The Structural Disruption

AI systems now operate directly through language and can execute tasks across multiple systems.

Conversation may trigger execution.

The sequence can collapse: **Conversation → Execution**

When this occurs, organisations risk creating action **without explicit authority**.

Discussion becomes execution. Accountability becomes unclear.

The Executive Mandate

To operationalise authority, **instruction formalisation must be redesigned**.

Executives must bring three questions to the Board and their C-level peers:

- Where may AI systems execute autonomously?
- What specific instruction must precede system execution?
- Who remains accountable for system actions?

Executives work together with:

- The Board to define the **authority architecture**.
- COO to define **operational boundaries** for system execution.
- CTO/CIO to design systems that **enforce instruction formalisation**.
- CHRO Define how authority is expressed in a **hybrid human-machine workforce**.

While AI may perform work, **accountability remains human**.

ACTION: Before AI starts to execute

- What language constitutes instruction?
- What artefact formalises authority?
- Who is authorised to issue operational commands?
- Who owns the outcome when systems act?

Autonomy scales. Authority contains.

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