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The AI operating model for enterprise scale

Pilots are cheap; portfolios are hard. This guide is how top-quartile enterprises structure the CoE, product squads, platform team and safety function that turns AI from a series of demos into a compounding capability.

PREPARED FOR

CIO, Chief AI Officer, CEO, Head of HR/Talent

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The AI operating model for enterprise scale

Pilots are cheap; portfolios are hard. This guide is how top-quartile enterprises structure the CoE, product squads, platform team and safety function that turns AI from a series of demos into a compounding capability.

What you'll take away

- Three archetypes work — the 'let every BU figure it out' non-model does not
- Product owns outcomes, platform owns capability, safety owns policy
- Central platform funding + BU outcome funding is the durable model
- Safety is a function, not a document

Audience: CIO, Chief AI Officer, CEO, Head of HR/Talent

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SECTION 01

Three archetype org models

CoE-led, embedded product, platform-first. Each fits a different starting point. The one that fails most often is the fourth — 'let every BU figure it out' — because it produces 40 pilots and zero platforms.

In our engagements, the practical work in this section usually breaks down into three deliverables: three archetypes work — the 'let every bu figure it out' non-model does not.

Structure follows outcome. Product teams own the business result, a single platform team owns shared tools and infrastructure, and a small safety and evaluation function reports independently. This is the org shape we see in every top-quartile program regardless of industry or platform choice.

SECTION 02

Who owns what

Product owns outcomes. Platform owns tools, memory and evaluation. Safety owns policy, red-teaming and audit. Procurement, legal and risk are consulted early, not late.

In our engagements, the practical work in this section usually breaks down into three deliverables: product owns outcomes, platform owns capability, safety owns policy.

Enterprise outcomes here come from production discipline, not slideware. Named owners, shipped guardrails, evaluation harnesses in CI and instrumented unit economics turn a promising pilot into a portfolio the board is willing to fund again next year.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Product owns outcomes, platform owns capability, safety owns policy

SECTION 03

Funding the platform without starving the outcomes

Central funding for the platform, BU funding for outcomes, shared FinOps discipline across both. The formula that keeps AI from becoming another shared-services line item nobody trusts.

In our engagements, the practical work in this section usually breaks down into three deliverables: product owns outcomes, platform owns capability, safety owns policy; central platform funding + bu outcome funding is the durable model.

The finance conversation is won or lost on unit economics. Instrument cost-per-resolution, cost-per-decision or cost-per-contained-contact from day one, publish the run-rate weekly, and make trade-offs — model tier, context length, cache strategy — visible to product owners rather than buried in a platform bill.

SECTION 04

Talent bench and retention

Roles that matter: AI product manager, ML platform engineer, prompt engineer, evaluation lead, safety analyst. Career paths and retention practices for a market where every senior IC has three open offers.

In our engagements, the practical work in this section usually breaks down into three deliverables: three archetypes work — the 'let every bu figure it out' non-model does not; product owns outcomes, platform owns capability, safety owns policy.

Structure follows outcome. Product teams own the business result, a single platform team owns shared tools and infrastructure, and a small safety and evaluation function reports independently. This is the org shape we see in every top-quartile program regardless of industry or platform choice.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Safety is a function, not a document

FREQUENTLY ASKED

Questions from enterprise buyers

What is an AI operating model?

An AI operating model is the org design, funding model and governance that turns AI from a series of pilots into a compounding capability — typically a CoE or Chief AI Officer function plus embedded product squads, a platform team and a safety function.

Do we need a Chief AI Officer?

Not always a titled role, but you do need a single accountable executive for AI outcomes, platform and safety. In many enterprises this sits with the CIO or COO with a Head of AI Platform reporting in.

How should AI be funded across BUs and central?

Central funding for the shared platform (tools, memory, evaluation, safety), BU funding for outcomes, and shared FinOps discipline across both. This keeps AI from becoming another shared-services line item nobody trusts.

How many people do we need on the AI platform team?

For a mid-large enterprise, a nucleus of 8–15 covering AI product management, ML platform engineering, evaluation, safety and applied engineering — scaling with the number of live agent workloads, not the number of pilots.

TURN THIS INTO A DECISION

Book a 30-minute working session.

Bring your platform, data, seats and delivery constraints. A pronix.ai strategy or CX engineering lead will walk this document through with your team and adapt it — no slideware, no generic playbook.

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