

10

**QUESTIONS
EVERY
BUSINESS
LEADER
NEEDS TO
ANSWER**



HEY THERE

Thanks for downloading this.

The last couple of years have shown that most businesses are struggling to get real value out of AI tools. In fact, McKinsey's State of AI Report states that only 6% of companies are seeing any real return on their investments.

That's what we aim to change with our clients.

We want to help them be prepared for the opportunities AI offers.

And make sure they use it in the right way.

This booklet will help you make sure you're on the right path.

In here, you'll find 10 questions we believe every business leader should be able to answer. From your ambitions for the technology, to the roles you want your people to play.

Now, I know how downloads work. There's a decent chance this ends up in a folder next to a webinar deck you never opened. So let me suggest something instead. Give it twenty minutes. Answer the questions honestly rather than the way you'd answer them in a board meeting. Then send it to someone who'd give you a different answer.

That's when it gets useful.

And whenever you're ready, we're here to help you on your journey.

Top regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dave', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dave Birss, co-founder of The Gen AI Academy

1

**WHY ARE
YOU REALLY
DOING THIS?**

Most AI adoptions don't start with a problem to solve - they start with an answer looking for a solution. And often with a little twinge of panic.

A rival drops it into conversation, someone on LinkedIn declares you'll be extinct by Christmas, and suddenly there's a line in the budget and a nagging sense you ought to be Doing Something.

So, in the absence of anything better, efficiency becomes the goal. It feels like the responsible mission for anyone in business, doesn't it? Fair enough. But focusing AI on trimming overheads causes most organisations to miss out on the actual potential. The businesses getting real value out of the technology aren't the ones asking "how do we do the same for less?" - they're asking "what can we do now that was impossible last year?"

Trimming the fat is not the same as building muscle.

**ONLY 6% OF
ORGANISATIONS
REPORT
SIGNIFICANT
FINANCIAL VALUE
FROM AI - AND THEY
CHASE
TRANSFORMATION,
NOT COST-CUTTING.**

McKinsey, "The State of AI" global survey, November 2025

2

**WOULD TEN
OF YOUR
PEOPLE GIVE
THE SAME
ANSWER
ABOUT YOUR
AI STRATEGY?**

Maybe run this as an experiment this week. Ask ten people, separately, what the company is actually trying to achieve with AI. If you get ten different stories - or ten polite shrugs and a swift change of subject - then what you've got isn't a strategy, it's more like a vibe. And vibes don't scale.

A good AI strategy should be a simple statement that helps people make decisions about if and how they use AI in their role. It should be aligned with your business strategy to ensure it's moving you in the right direction. And it should be regularly reinforced so the team knows it won't go away if they try to ignore it.

It doesn't need to be a forty-slide PowerPoint deck and an awayday. Just one sentence everyone can repeat without wincing.

Most companies never bother to write it, then act surprised when no one complies.

**78% OF EXECUTIVES
BELIEVE THEY'VE
FIGURED OUT AI.
JUST 39% OF THEIR
STAFF AGREE.**

3

**WHO OWNS
THIS, AND
WHY IS IT
THEM?**

There's a pattern we see again and again. The minute AI lands on the agenda, it drifts towards whoever seems most at ease with technology - the person who set up the CRM, the one who "gets computers".

It feels sensible. But it's usually a misfire. Because this isn't a technology problem that gets fixed with a new software license - it's a question of judgement, priorities and people. And none of those live in the IT corner.

Handing your AI strategy to someone picked for their competence with techy tools is a bit like choosing your head chef because they know how to sharpen a knife. Yes, the technology side matters. But it's not what makes the real impact on business. That would be getting the staff on-board and understanding how to get the most value out of the tools.

The person who's best placed to do that may well be you.

**HANDING AI TO THE
TECH TEAM ALONE IS
LINKED TO WEAKER
RETURNS.
CROSS-FUNCTIONAL
OWNERSHIP WINS.**

4

**WHAT
THINKING
WILL YOU
KEEP HUMAN?**

This one tends to produce a long pause, because most people haven't thought about it.

Somewhere in your business is thinking that *IS* the business - the judgement a client is really paying for, the taste that makes the work yours rather than anyone else's, the relationships that would crumble without a human nurturing them.

That's the stuff to guard with both hands.

And the threat isn't a machine marching in to seize it. It's more embarrassing than that. It's you giving it away by accident, one small convenience at a time, until you glance up in two years and realise your own efficiency drive has made you totally replaceable.

So draw the line now, on purpose. It's a great deal easier to protect a boundary you've actually decided on than one you only notice once it's been crossed.

**HEAVY AI USERS
SCORE MEASURABLY
LOWER ON CRITICAL
THINKING.
AND THE YOUNG
LEAN ON IT
HARDEST.**

**WHAT
BROKEN
PROCESSES
NEED FIXED
BEFORE YOU
START?**

AI is a turbo booster. And turbo boosters don't really care where they're pointed. Bolt one onto a process that works and you'll fly. Bolt one onto a shambles and you'll produce a bigger, faster, more confident shambles - along with a monthly chatbot subscription.

Every business has a few processes held together by goodwill and sticky tape, the ones everyone grumbles about and nobody ever fixes. If you try to automate those, you don't solve the problem, you multiply it.

The unglamorous truth is that you need to fix the dysfunctions before you start applying AI. It can be painful, hard work and - let's be honest - a bit tedious. But it's how you get results.

And as a bonus, you make things more efficient and enjoyable before you even bring in the bots.

**AI'S TOP
PERFORMERS ARE
2.8 TIMES MORE
LIKELY TO REDESIGN
THE WORKFLOW
BEFORE
AUTOMATING IT.**

McKinsey "The State of AI in 2025" report,

**DO YOU WANT
YOUR PEOPLE
TO GET
BETTER, OR
JUST
FASTER?**

Speed is seductive because you can see it. The report comes back in an hour instead of a day, the inbox is clear, everyone looks busy and capable and pleased with themselves.

And speed means more gets done in the same amount of time. Which equals profit, doesn't it?

But a team that produces perfectly adequate work twice as fast hasn't improved - they've just speeded up a conveyor belt of meh.

Of course, if perfunctory averageness is what you've always done, go for it. But if you aspire to something more, you need to protect your people's judgement and skills.

Because if the tools are doing the thinking for them, your team will get weaker while you celebrate the wrong metrics.

**RESEARCHERS HAVE
A NAME FOR IT:
"COGNITIVE DEBT" -
EFFORT SAVED NOW,
PAID BACK LATER IN
SHALLOWER
THINKING.**

**DO YOU WANT
YOUR PEOPLE
TO GET
BETTER, OR
JUST
FASTER?**

Speed is seductive because you can see it. The report comes back in an hour instead of a day, the inbox is clear, everyone looks busy and capable and pleased with themselves.

And speed means more gets done in the same amount of time. Which equals profit, doesn't it?

But a team that produces perfectly adequate work twice as fast hasn't improved - they've just speeded up a conveyor belt of meh.

Of course, if perfunctory averageness is what you've always done, go for it. But if you aspire to something more, you need to protect your people's judgement and skills.

Because if the tools are doing the thinking for them, your team will get weaker while you celebrate the wrong metrics.

**RESEARCHERS HAVE
A NAME FOR IT:
"COGNITIVE DEBT" -
EFFORT SAVED NOW,
PAID BACK LATER IN
SHALLOWER
THINKING.**

7

**WHERE DO
YOUR NEXT
SENIOR
PEOPLE COME
FROM?**

Think about how anyone in your business actually got good at their job. Almost certainly by grinding through the dull stuff - the rough first drafts, the basic analysis, the fiddly tasks that, without anyone announcing it, taught them how the work fits together.

Their progression was hidden inside the grunt work. And the grunt work is precisely what everyone is now cheerfully handing to a machine.

If you slow down your hiring while you ramp up your AI, you'll get a pleasing productivity bump today and a hole where your future experts were meant to grow.

This is a slow problem. You'll barely notice the difference now but you won't be able to ignore it by year five.

Investing in junior talent now is what will help you pull ahead of the competition later.

**UK ENTRY ROLES
REQUIRING A
DEGREE HAVE
DROPPED BY
AROUND
TWO-THIRDS
SINCE CHATGPT
LAUNCHED IN 2022.**

Financial Times, 2025

WHO CATCHES IT WHEN THE MACHINE IS WRONG?

AI doesn't break the way software breaks. There's no error message, no red light, no reassuring crash. It fails like a human masking their ineptitude behind confident bravado. Because AI tools are trained to be fluent rather than correct.

It would be so much better if it failed like a cartoon robot that goes haywire and starts smoking. Instead it gives you a plausible answer that looks perfectly fine on the surface.

So if we can't trust the AI to tell us it's messed up, that leaves humans as the last line of defence. If they don't know that's their responsibility, the polished mistake sails through, precisely because everybody assumed somebody else had looked.

So the question isn't "could it get things wrong?" (it definitely can), it's whether you know exactly where in your business a confidently incorrect answer could do genuine damage, and whether there's a human standing at that spot whose actual job is to catch it before it walks out the door.

**66% OF EMPLOYEES
TRUST AI OUTPUT
WITHOUT
CHECKING IT.
OVER HALF HAVE
MADE WORK
MISTAKES
BECAUSE OF IT.**

**WHEN YOUR
COMPETITORS
HAVE THE
SAME TOOLS,
WHAT'S YOUR
EDGE?**

This is the bit the hype-merchants skip past. These tools are not a secret. Your competitors can access the same models, sign up to the same services, and watch the same training videos.

So whatever advantage the technology hands out, it hands out to everyone - which means it isn't really an advantage by itself.

AI is terrific at getting you to "good enough", which means good enough is now the floor rather than the target. Your actual advantage lies in the part the machine doesn't offer: the taste, the care, the human judgement, the human touch. What makes you different is exactly what makes you worth choosing.

Most people are so pleased to have automated the easy 80% that they forget the value was always sitting in the awkward 20%.

**ACROSS 2,200
ADMISSIONS
ESSAYS, HUMANS
KEPT ADDING
FRESH IDEAS.
THE AI KEPT
REPEATING ITSELF.**

10

**HOW WILL YOU
KNOW IF ANY
OF THIS
WORKED?**

Obviously, you need to track this to see if it's making a positive dent on the business.

But the metrics you choose don't just measure the outcome, they shape it.

If you're only interested in time saved, people will game the system to do things quicker, taking their eye off quality and accuracy. If you tell people you want 50% of their work to be done by AI, they use it for the sake of using it, not because it genuinely helps.

We've witnessed both of these things.

Don't start with numbers, start with what you need to know. Make sure you include quality as well as quantity, the human impact as well as the financial impact, the opportunities opened as well as the time saved.

This defines the future of your business. Think twice before you build that spreadsheet.

**MOST FIRMS
MEASURE AI BY TIME
SAVED AND COST
AVOIDED, NOT BY
ACTUAL MARGIN OR
GROWTH - THEN
WONDER WHY
NOTHING
TRANSFORMED.**

McKinsey, "The State of AI" global survey, 2025

We're here to help

You don't need to do this alone. We help organisations all over the world get more value out of AI. We do that by providing support and working with you to upskill everyone across the organisation.

We can:

- Assess your organisation
- Develop a playbook
- Create a bespoke training programme
- Offer leadership support

Let's start with a chat and we can work out what's right for you.

Arrange a virtual meeting by contacting:

helen@thegenaiacademy.com

And take a look at our website for more information on how we can help you turn AI into a business advantage.

thegenaiacademy.com

As trusted by



BOOKER



...and lots more

Thanks!

TheGenAIacademy.com



**THE GEN AI
ACADEMY**