Leading the Transformation with AI

WALK'S PERSPECTIVE

MANAGEMENT CONSULTING | LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT | EXECUTIVE COACHING

WALK

Meaningful Business Transformation

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Introduction

The opportunity is to build an organization able to continuously understand what AI makes possible and turn it into performance.

AI will transform the business and the organization, but **no one knows the end state today.**

The challenge is to **learn fast, align around a living vision and mobilize in waves** without compromising current performance.

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The problem (1/2)

01 AI is not a technology rollout

It is a leadership-driven transformation, triggered by technology. No one knows the destination.

02 A movie, not a snapshot

What is impossible today may be simple within months. Vision and strategy are refreshed continuously, not annually.

03 Systemic impact

It will change the operating model: E2E processes, organization, decision rights and roles.

04 It touches professional identity

It challenges tasks, knowledge, status and future relevance. It requires conversations about value, accountability and professional futures.

05 Two agendas at once

We must keep delivering today while building tomorrow's capabilities.

06 Traditional change management doesn't apply

“Design > communicate > implement” assumes a known destination. The organization must transform while discovering what the transformation is.

We don't need to be the first to deploy AI, but we can't afford to be late in learning.

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The problem (2/2)

Typical pain points

Senior Leadership

Apparent alignment

Everyone says AI is strategic, but with different ideas about disruption, investment, risk, pace and impact. The misalignment surfaces later as conflicting priorities and messages.

Intellectual understanding

It is hard to make AI decisions from presentations prepared by others. Senior leadership needs enough first-hand experience.

Conventional decision framework

The classic business case penalizes experiments whose main value is learning and optionality.

Middle Managers

They are the translation layer

They must translate an evolving vision while sustaining day-to-day results.

They are the real priority filter

What a manager uses, asks about, tolerates or rewards carries more weight than any corporate communication.

Their own role is in question

We ask them to lead a transformation that redefines part of their own value.

Incentives pull the other way

Experimenting may slow work down at first, which doesn't fit if only immediate results are rewarded.

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WALK's Perspective

Understand & Align

Understand first, starting at the top

Leadership fluency on its own problems vs. knowledge from others' presentations.

Build a living vision

Aligned and reviewed on a fixed cadence.

Value learning and optionality

The classic business case is not enough

Learn & Mobilize

Advance in waves

Different speeds by area: some accelerate, others explore, others observe and others remain human-led.

Middle managers at the center

Give them exposure, trust, room to experiment and tools.

Align incentives

Stop rewarding the old way of working.

Redesign & Protect

Learning Organization

Systematic "experiment > evidence > redesign" cycles.

Less hierarchy, more leadership

Which layers still add value?

Amplify the human

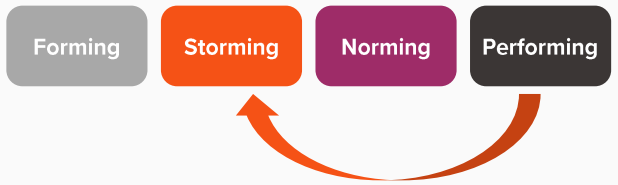
Optimize the human–AI mix (delegated, augmented or AI-free work) and human capabilities such as critical thinking, empathy, curiosity...

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High-Performance Teams with AI (1/3)

The AI agenda and the team high-performance agenda converge to become one operating system through which the company will learn and execute.

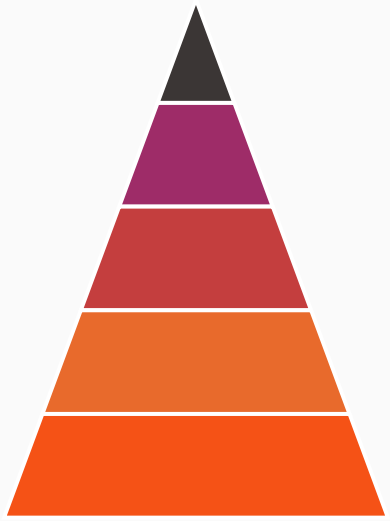
AI requires forming and reopens storming



Teams of people and agents need their own forming: explicit roles, rules and trust thresholds.

AI sets back teams that were already working well: **each wave can reopen storming.**

Trust, the first step



Collective results

Mutual accountability

Commitment

Productive conflict

Trust

Being able to say "I don't know" without losing authority is the first step.

Conversation as leadership infrastructure

Putting the hard issues on the table —impact on jobs, fear of obsolescence, loss of status— to ensure alignment.

What isn't discussed openly becomes rumor across the organization.

Sources: Tockman, Wheelan, Lencioni, WALK analysis.

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High-Performance Teams with AI (2/3)

Agents are a new kind of teammate. Leaders must learn to build, supervise, correct and orchestrate agent work.

From tool to teammate

LLM · thinking partner
Drafts, summarizes and explains. A human reviews every output.

→

Agent · doer
Memory, tools and autonomy to pursue multi-step goals. Reviewed at defined checkpoints.

What changes	Working with people		Working with agents
Delegation	Instructing a person	→	Designing a workflow with guardrails and escalation paths
Trust	Relationship and track record	→	Transparency, testing and checkpoints
Feedback	Coaching conversations	→	Redesigning prompts, policies and workflows
Accountability	Owned by whoever does the work	→	Agents execute; humans still own the outcome. Decision rights must be explicit

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High-Performance Teams with AI (3/3)

Governance: where judgment stays human. Decision rights follow stakes and reversibility, not technology possibilities.

Routine - Reversible → **High-stakes - Irreversible**

Agent-led

Agents execute autonomously within guardrails.

e.g., data retrieval, formatting, scheduling, first drafts

Human-supervised

Agents act; humans review at defined checkpoints.

e.g., standard approvals, customer responses, budget-bound resourcing

Human decides

Agents may draft or analyze, but never decide alone.

e.g., pricing, workforce actions, regulatory filings, client commitments

Failure modes to get ahead of

Shadow AI

Informal, unmonitored use spreads.

→ Offer sanctioned tools and clear channels early.

Over-automating judgment

Human review is removed where context still matters.

→ Map each decision to its risk tier.

Skill erosion

Reliance on agents erodes supervisory expertise.

→ Pair automation with deliberate practice.

Trust erosion from opacity

Unexplained decisions hurt trust more than human errors.

→ Invest in explainability and audit trails.

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Leadership with AI

Self-leadership as the starting point

No one can lead others through a change they have not processed themselves.

AI raises personal questions: how much of my value rested on knowing more than others, what I need to unlearn and how I manage my own unease.

- **The expert paradox.** The more expert the executive, the more they must unlearn and the harder it is to be a beginner in public.
- **Authority changes its basis.** When a junior team member masters the tool better, knowledge-based authority erodes and shifts toward judgment.
- **Leading oneself** includes using AI visibly and reflecting on one's own role transition, focusing one's own attention and energy.

Implications for leadership development

Leadership development includes building capabilities such as:

- Framing problems well and exercising judgment
- Leading through uncertainty without faking certainty
- Holding difficult, productive conversations
- Orchestrating mixed teams of people and AI: build, supervise, correct agent work
- Learning —and helping others learn— faster

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Initial Approach

Diagnosis

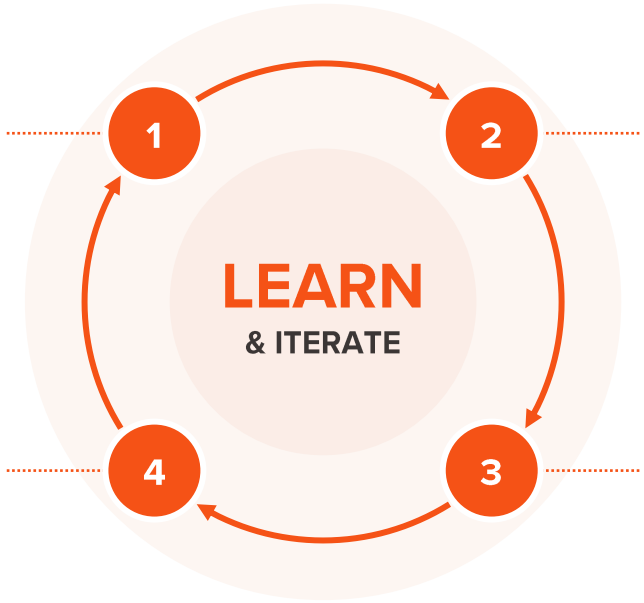
Where are we really?

- Senior leadership interviews: understanding, alignment, ambition and risk appetite.
- Leadership team assessment and trust level.
- Organizational assessment: energy, fears, initiatives, barriers and middle-manager readiness. Plus, current and shadow AI use.
- Outcome: an honest mirror for senior leadership.

Alignment

Leadership goes first

- Hands-on immersion of the leadership team in its own challenges.
- Exploration of business and operating-model scenarios.
- Shared ambition, priorities, speed map and personal commitments.
- Agreements & Alignment cadence (e.g., quarterly).
- 2-week use-case prioritization (value, risk, metrics, owners) with IT.



Each cycle feeds the next: learn, adjust and go again, faster.

Deployment

Sustain execution and learning

- Human–AI map: what is delegated, what is augmented and what remains human-critical.
- Scale what works, stop what doesn't and refresh the vision with what has been learned.
- Reallocate freed-up capacity to higher-value work.
- Review of metrics*, incentives, rituals, decision rights and barriers.

Mobilization

Advance in waves

- Selection of areas with value and capacity to experiment.
- Mixed business, technology and people teams.
- Accelerator program for middle managers, pioneer networks, peer learning and visible role-modeling.
- Leadership development on the real challenges of each wave.
- 8-week Test Lab with key users: quality, time saved, UX.

* Metrics: Usage (access and utilization) · Behavior (real change in ways of working) · Performance (improved quality, speed, cost, decisions and results) · Team health (trust and quality of conversation) · Learning velocity (learning, spreading and deciding faster in each cycle). · Agent management (volume completed with agents, output quality, oversight effectiveness). Technology, governance and capability tracks run in parallel, not in sequence.

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Our AI Transformation Offer

Align the Top

01 AI Readiness Diagnostic
An honest mirror of leadership alignment, capabilities, trust and adoption barriers.

02 AI Executive Immersion
Hands-on labs where the CEO and leadership team experiment with AI on their own business challenges.

03 AI Leadership Alignment
A shared, living vision (ambition, bets, pace, risk limits and commitments), refreshed periodically.

Leaders & Teams

04 Middle Manager Accelerator
Managers who turn ambition into concrete changes in work, support their teams and handle difficult conversations.

05 Leading Human–Agent Teams
Delegating to and supervising agents, with trust thresholds, checkpoints and human judgment where it matters.

06 High-Performing Teams in the AI Era
Trust, cross-functional collaboration, debate and shared accountability as roles and status shift.

Mobilize & Learn

07 Lighthouse Waves
Mobilization in waves, adapted to groups and speeds, with an experiment portfolio judged by business, learning and option value.

08 AI Learning Network
Pioneer networks, rituals and peer learning that turn experiments into institutional learning, with “AI-off” zones that protect human judgment.

Scale & Sustain

09 From Pilot to Impact
A review rhythm to decide what to scale, adjust or stop, measuring business value, behavior change and learning.

10 MOMENTUM AI
Our Execution Booster for AI: a senior-led rhythm that sustains execution and learning, adapting incentives, decision rights and rituals.

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Why WALK

Leadership team alignment is our home ground

Much of the transformation happens before the rest of the organization gets involved.

We don't compete on AI expertise: we complement it

Our value lies where technical expertise doesn't reach: teams, conversations, leadership and culture.

We connect the what with the how

Which process do we automate? What happens to the executive whose expertise was built on it? How much capacity is freed up?

We understand the psychology of transformation

AI touches identity, competence and future relevance.

We develop leadership on real challenges

The transformation itself is where leaders grow.

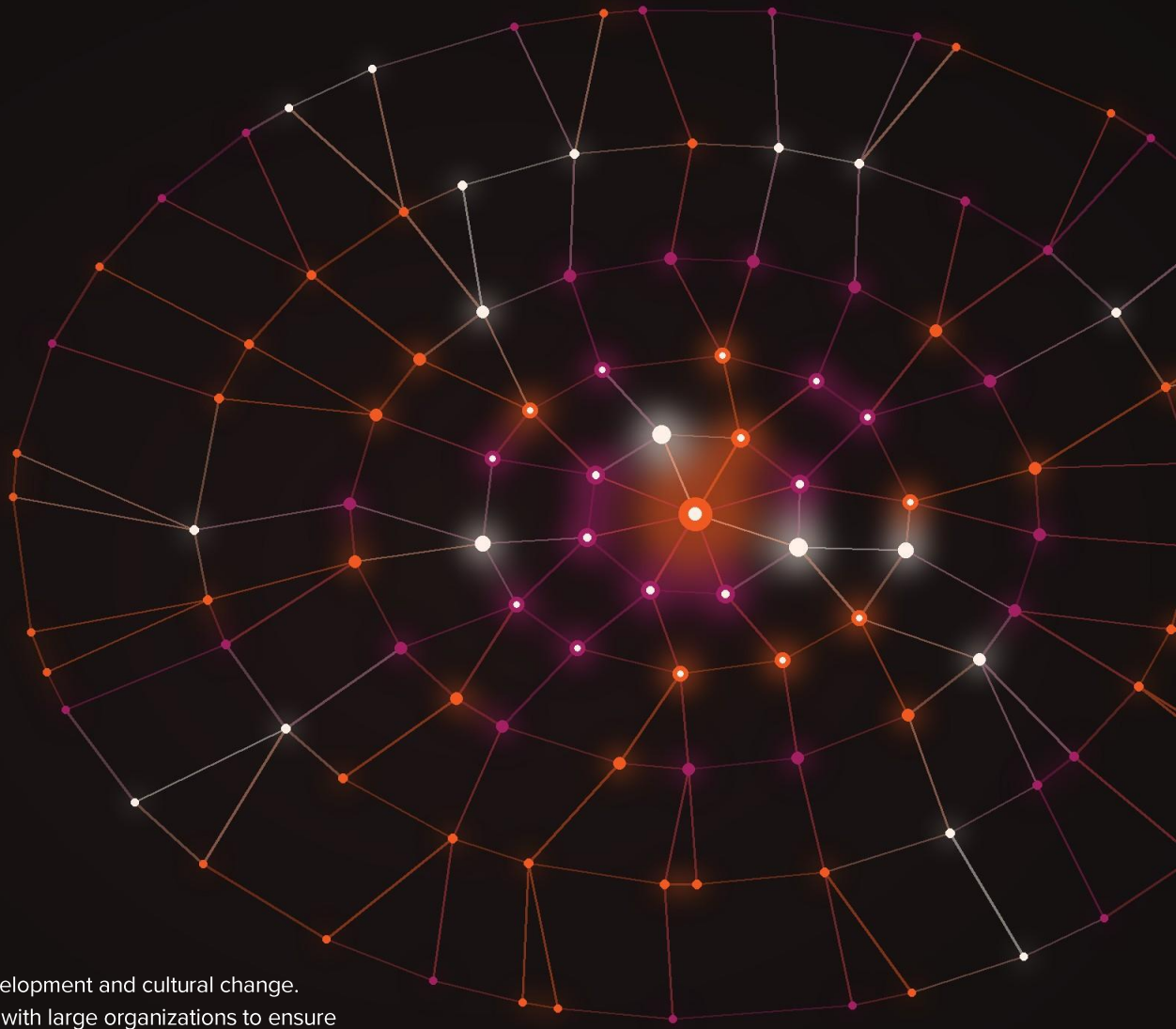
We know the Group in depth

Its culture and its idiosyncrasies.

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WALK | Meaningful Business Transformation

WALK WITH US!



www.walkleadership.com

WALK is a global consultancy focused on producing meaningful business transformation through leadership development and cultural change. Combining a team of strategy consultants, organizational psychologists, and leadership facilitators, WALK works with large organizations to ensure effective execution of their business initiatives. We do so by aligning people with strategy and empowering them to embrace a new leadership paradigm for the digital age. WALK's solutions include leadership development programs, alignment of executive teams, organizational engagement at scale, design and deployment of a digital culture, and implementation of new ways of working.

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