



THE INVISIBLE LAYER.

Why AI adoption fails on the surface, and how to build the foundation that makes it last.

By **Maxime Lubbers & Vincent McLeese**
Founders, Untangle Lab

untangle lab

▲ PUBLICATION

The Invisible Layer.

A white paper by Untangle Lab.

AUTHORS

Maxime Lubbers
Founder & CEO

Vincent McLeese
Co-founder & CTO

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WITH GRATITUDE

To the clients who let us study their adoption work in honesty, to the REED partners across five European universities, and to the colleagues who pushed back on the early drafts.

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 untangle lab

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▲ FOREWORD

A paper for the leaders we keep meeting in boardrooms across the Netherlands.

You are not new to technology. You have been through digital transformations before. Some worked. Some did not. You can read a roadmap and a budget, and you know how to ask a hard question.

What sets AI apart is not that it is faster, larger, or more capable than what came before. It is that the people in your organisation already have feelings about it *before you have decided anything*. Feelings they often cannot articulate, feelings that shape what gets built, what gets shelved, and what quietly stops moving.

A quick word on the scope of this paper. Untangle Lab is not just about AI. We work with leaders on how they engage emerging technology at large. Our mission is to strengthen responsible technology leadership by making mindset visible, enabling organisations to adopt emerging technologies consciously, confidently, and with a positive impact on the world. AI is the latest technological revolution making a new kind of leadership urgent, and therefore it is the focus of this paper.

We founded Untangle Lab because of a key question that repeatedly went unasked. We were good at deciding what a technology could *do*. We were not asking what it *should* do, what it should not, or who decides. This paper is a synthesis of what asking the right question has surfaced: a clear-eyed look at the layer underneath your strategy, your pilots, and your tooling, the layer where mindset lives, where it is currently invisible, and where most of the durability of your adoption is actually decided.

OUR VISION

A world where technology serves human values, where organisations don't just adopt AI, but shape it with intention, ethics, and a deep understanding of its impact on people and the world we live in.

Maxime Lubbers

FOUNDER & CEO

Vincent McLeese

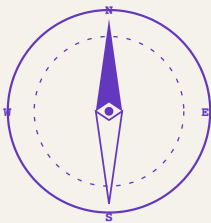
CO-FOUNDER & CTO

▲ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THIS SUMMARY
~2 MIN

FULL PAPER
~25 MIN

FOR
C-LEVEL & BOARDS



Adoption keeps stalling. Not for the reasons in your slide deck.

Most AI adoption work today happens at a layer that is *visible*: strategy decks, pilots, training programmes, governance frameworks, compliance roadmaps. This is the layer where time, budget, and consultancy hours are spent. It is also where adoption keeps stalling, often without anyone being able to say why.

The reason, in our research and in our practice, is consistent. **The visible layer rests on an invisible one.** How leaders and their teams actually think about AI, what they believe, fear, assume, hope for, shapes what they end up building, implementing, and choosing not to do.

When the invisible layer is not addressed, the visible layer becomes brittle. Manifestos get written and shelved. Pilots run and fade. Training is completed but brings little lasting change.

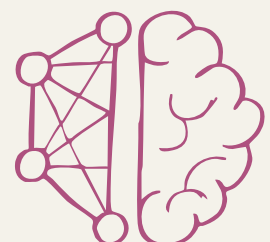
Untangle Lab guides the human transition to productive, responsible AI adoption. We make technology mindset visible, measurable, and actionable, grounded in EU-backed research and organisational psychology. We help teams use different perspectives and hold tensions productively, so speed and responsibility reinforce one another.

PART I	The pattern of stalled adoption.	PART II	The invisible layer beneath your work.
PART III	The AI Mindset model: four lenses.	PART IV	Methodology from insight to durable action.
PART V	The two-to-three-year leadership opportunity.		

PART I

Across every credible source of data from the past eighteen months, the picture is the same. The technology has arrived. The leadership has not.

The Pattern.



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▲ 1.1 · WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS

The same headline has been quoted in every boardroom we visit.

95%

of generative AI pilots produce zero P&L impact, despite \$30–40 billion in enterprise spending.

MIT NANDA · STATE OF AI IN BUSINESS 2025

In July 2025, MIT's NANDA research initiative published its *State of AI in Business 2025* report. The methodology was substantive: an analysis of 300 enterprise AI deployments, 150 interviews with leaders, and 350 employee surveys, across organisations representing thirty to forty billion dollars of enterprise AI investment.

That statistic does not need a story to be *alarming*. It needs a story to be *useful*. The story underneath the headline is consistent across every credible source of data published in the past eighteen months.

88%

of organisations now use AI in at least one function (McKinsey)

6%

qualify as high performers seeing significant bottom-line impact

75%

of knowledge workers use generative AI in their daily work (Microsoft & LinkedIn)

“What is failing is not the technology. It is the organisational layer underneath it.”

UNTANGLE LAB · IN THE FIELD

▲ 1.1 · CONTINUED

What the corridor conversation keeps surfacing.

By every visible measure, the organisation is doing AI adoption. And the conversation in the corridor is still: it is not landing.

Across the organisations we have worked with, in financial services, retail, public sector, energy, healthcare, and creative industries, this pattern is recognisable and alive. The strategy is there. The budget is approved. The pilot has run, or the pilot is about to run. And the right consultancy has been engaged.

The pilots end and the practice does not continue. The training was good and a month later you cannot tell who attended. Teams use the tools nobody bought and ignore the tools that were procured. The strategy was launched and the directors are not sure where the document lives anymore. Decisions about what to use AI for, and what to never use it for, keep being deferred to a meeting that does not happen.

How people think about AI shapes what they do with it. Not how they *should* think, but how they actually *do* think. And this thinking is not formed in a vacuum.

By the time a colleague walks into a meeting about AI in your organisation, they have absorbed months of media coverage potentially carrying highly polarised positions and tangible concerns. AI will take their job. AI will destroy humanity. AI will deliver unprecedented efficiency. These messages, often in absolutes, are shaping how people think about AI *before any internal conversation has begun*.

For knowledge workers in particular, a substantial personal transition is required to engage AI productively rather than defensively. When that transition is not guided well, the sustainable and responsible impact you are aiming for simply does not arrive.

BCG · THE CIO'S ROLE IN AI TRANSFORMATION AND PRODUCTIVITY · 2025

BCG's 10–20–70 rule allocates 70% of AI effort to people, processes and change management, with the remaining 30% devoted to algorithms and the technology stack.

▲ 1.2 · A CAUTIONARY PRECEDENT

We are not the first generation to deploy a powerful, fast-moving, society-shaping technology.

The most recent example is two decades old and still unfolding in our daily lives. We took social media to be a means of connection. What we ended up with is a polarisation engine, an attention-extraction industry, and a documented mental-health emergency in young people that the platforms themselves now acknowledge.

None of this was the plan. It happened because the technology was built and deployed with a narrow set of objectives in mind at the time, mostly technical and commercial. Perspectives that would have asked *what should we do here, what should we never do, and who is most exposed to the consequences*, were either absent from the rooms where decisions were made or not heard at all.

The concerns that some of your colleagues carry into AI conversations are rarely irrational. They often reflect recognition of a real pattern, and a reasonable response to it.

After all, there is a measurable shift in expectations about the workplace and our roles in it. The STARA awareness scale, developed by Brougham and Haar in 2018, captures the extent to which employees expect smart technology, AI, robotics, and algorithms to change their work in the coming decade.

STARA AWARENESS · BROUGHAM & HAAR · 2018



Organisational
commitment



Career satisfaction



Turnover intentions



Cynicism & depression

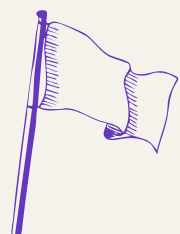
The question is whether AI, in your organisation, is going to repeat the social media pattern or interrupt it. Underneath that question is what scholars call *responsible innovation*: the discipline of preventing risks, leveraging opportunities, and engaging stakeholders simultaneously, rather than treating these as competing demands.

**“Have we learned anything from social media?
Are we going to bring enough lenses to the table
to actually see what we are doing this time?”**

PART II

The visible layer (strategy, pilots, implementation) stands or falls with an invisible layer underneath: how people think about technology.

The invisible layer.

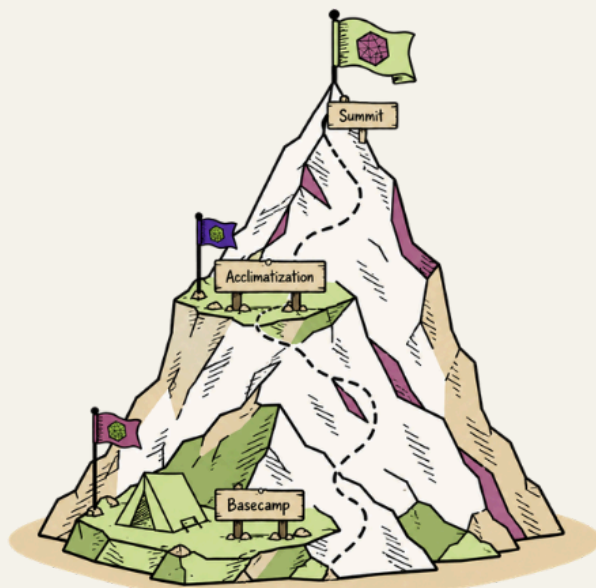


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▲ THE UNTANGLE CLIMB

If you don't prepare at base camp, you won't reach the top.

Most organisations head straight for the summit, pushing for the top (strategy, POCs, pilots) without first going to base camp or taking the time to acclimatise. This lack of preparation is exactly what hinders responsible and durable adoption of AI. The climb rarely fails at the summit. It fails at the skipped foundation.



SUMMIT · WHAT YOU DO

Where everyone starts.

STRATEGY · POCs · PILOTS · ROADMAPS



ACCLIMATISATION · WHAT YOU THINK

The layer underneath.

MINDSET · BASIC UNDERSTANDING ·
KNOWLEDGE

BASE CAMP · WHAT YOU WANT

The foundation it rests on.

FEARS · ASSUMPTIONS · AMBITIONS ·
DRIVERS

When you focus only on the summit, the “what are we doing” of planning, POCs and pilots, without the layer underneath (mindset, including a basic understanding of the technology and awareness of fears, assumptions and ambitions), it is hard to become successful with AI in your organisation. **This is exactly where Untangle Lab starts and supports:** we establish base camp and acclimatise the team first, so the summit push becomes a durable success to build on.

ONE VOCABULARY

The **invisible layer**, the **foundation**, and our expedition terms describe the same thing: mindset. Everything below the summit, base camp and acclimatisation, is the invisible layer, and that layer is the foundation the visible work rests on.

▲ 2.2 · WHAT OUR EU-BACKED RESEARCH REVEALED

We do not struggle because we lack intelligence. We struggle because we lack lenses.



Between 2023 and 2025, we worked on REED, Redesigning Education for Ethical Digitalization, under Erasmus+, with partners across five European universities.

The project asked a deceptively simple question. *Why do our institutions keep struggling to engage responsibly with new technology, even when they know they should?*

REED's principal finding is the insight that led us to found Untangle Lab. Most of our institutions,

businesses, schools, and governments look at technology through *one lens at a time*. Usually, a technical or commercial one. That single lens is competent at what it sees and blind to what it does not.

FOUR RECURRING BLIND SPOTS · REED · 2023–2025

01 The ethical blind spot

Ethical questions treated as soft, optional, or out of scope of the technical conversation.

02 The sustainability deficit

Environmental and resource costs of digital technology rendered invisible by design.

03 The social responsibility gap

Human consequences noted in passing, then forgotten in the next decision.

04 The reflexivity gap

“What assumptions am I making, whose interests does this serve, who is missing?”, rarely asked.

Each blind spot has the same root cause: *a single dominant lens*. Ethics, responsibility, and sustainability cannot be added on as separate modules. They have to be present *simultaneously* as embedded lenses in every conversation about technology.

The four AI mindsets we work with at Untangle Lab are the operational answer to that gap. The expedition methodology is the structure in which those lenses meet. The AI Manifesto is the written, organisation-specific output that turns the encounter into something durable.

▲ 2.3 · THE SCIENCE OF MINDSET

The argument that mindset shapes action is not new. It is one of the most studied claims in organisational psychology.

We draw on three established traditions, explaining why the invisible layer is consequential rather than merely interesting.

01

Carol S. Dweck

IMPLICIT THEORIES OF COMPETENCE

Distinguishes a fixed view of ability (capability as innate) from a growth view (capability as developable). In AI: someone with a growth view engages by experimentation. Someone with a fixed view quietly avoids the same opportunities.

Dweck (2006) · Mindset

WHAT IT EXPLAINS

Why willingness to engage moves.

02

Karl E. Weick

ORGANISATIONAL SENSEMAKING

People do not act on the basis of complete understanding. They act under ambiguity; the meaning becomes clear retrospectively. Teams stuck on AI rarely need more information, they need a small, structured first move.

Weick (1995) · Sensemaking in organizations

WHAT IT EXPLAINS

Why capability runs through enacted experience.

03

Smith & Lewis

PARADOX THEORY

Sustainable performance requires the active holding of competing demands rather than their resolution. Speed and caution. Exploration and exploitation. Innovation and ethics. The aim is not to choose. It is to keep both alive.

Smith & Lewis (2011) · Toward a theory of paradox

WHAT IT EXPLAINS

Why a team needs more than one kind of person.

“C. S. Dweck explains willingness. K. E. Weick explains learning through experience. Smith and Lewis explain why responsible AI adoption needs more than one kind of person.”

PART III

The AI Mindset Assessment is the instrument we use to make the invisible layer visible. Two axes; four characteristic lenses.

AI mindset, specifically.



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▲ 3.1 · TWO AXES

Two axes that shape how people relate to AI.

In our research and practice, two axes most reliably predict whether a person will move on AI and whether their movement will land well.

01

OPTIMISM · SELF-BELIEF · THE DWECK AXIS

Attitude & willingness

Broader than appetite for experiments alone. It captures how a person feels about AI *and* about their own ability to work with it, optimism or pessimism toward the technology, and confidence or doubt in their own capability. It ranges from a fixed view (capability is innate) to a growth view (capability is developable). A high score doesn't mean *reckless*. It means they treat their relationship with AI as developable, willing to learn by trying and to let a first attempt produce information rather than a verdict on their identity.

02

TECHNICAL & CONCEPTUAL

Understanding of AI

Not the same as being able to build a model. It is whether a person can have a clear-headed conversation about what is happening under the hood, what is hype, and what is real. We combine self-reported familiarity with conceptual checks to mitigate the well-known problem that confidence in a domain and competence in it are often poorly correlated.

WHEN PLOTTED TOGETHER

These two axes generate four characteristic ways of relating to AI in a leadership context. We refer to them as *lenses*, because each is a way of seeing the situation rather than a fixed personality.

▲ 3.2 · FOUR LENSES ON AI

Four ways of relating to AI in a leadership context.

These lenses make a person's current relationship with AI visible. They are the starting point, not a fixed category of person. With the right teammates, structure, and next step, every one of them can move.



▲ 3.2 · LENS PORTRAITS · 1 OF 2

The portraits below are deliberately recognisable rather than exhaustive.

Nº01

HIGH UNDERSTANDING ·
HIGH WILLINGNESS

The Trailblazer

The Trailblazer is usually the first in the room to try a new tool, demo something to colleagues, or suggest a project that uses AI. They have technical confidence and they have momentum.

Their gift to a team is that they make things happen; without them, no one starts.

Their risk is the speed itself. A Trailblazer left alone, with no one to slow them down, can ship something fast and clever. Yet they can miss the question that actually matters: who does this affect, who has not been considered, and what happens when it touches the real world.

The most expensive AI missteps are usually Trailblazer missteps without enough Guide alongside them.

Nº02

LOWER UNDERSTANDING ·
HIGH WILLINGNESS

The Adventurer

The Adventurer brings the openness. They are the colleague who in a meeting full of confident statements says “wait, can I just try this on Tuesday?” and then actually acts on it. They learn by doing. They bring others into the doing.

They make AI feel possible, casual, and normal in teams struggling to translate vision into action. Their gift is energy.

Their risk is going further than their knowledge supports. An Adventurer alone, without someone to ground them, can lead a small group of colleagues confidently in the wrong direction. They can be swayed by sales pitches. They believe the hype and actively feed it.

Pair them with a Guide before they launch and the same energy lands very differently.

▲ 3.2 · LENS PORTRAITS · 2 OF 2

Each lens sees something the others miss. Each one alone is incomplete.

Nº03 HIGH UNDERSTANDING · LOWER WILLINGNESS

The Guide

The Guide carries the depth and the memory. They have watched a few technology waves before this one, and they recognise the patterns: the breathless promises, the missing details, the projects that ship with everyone smiling and then quietly fall apart.

Their gift is clarity. They see the system, not just the tool. They translate between the engineer and the boardroom. They notice the risk before it becomes a headline.

Their risk is isolation. Many Guides talk only to other Guides, while the rest of the organisation makes decisions without their lens.

Many creative organisations are missing Guides altogether, which is why their visible AI missteps have a recognisable shape.

Nº04 LOWER UNDERSTANDING · LOWER WILLINGNESS

The Observer

The Observer is the quietest one in the room. Often the most thoughtful. They are paying close attention. They are noticing what nobody else is saying: the colleague who has gone quiet, the customer impact that has been glossed over, the human consequence sitting just outside the spotlight.

Their gift is attentiveness. They hold the long view. They ask the human questions.

Their risk is becoming invisible. When the technical conversation feels too dense to enter, the easiest thing is to stay quiet and hope it resolves itself. It will not.

The cost of disengagement is not paid now; it is paid later, when the gap has widened and catching up has become harder.

▲ 3.3 · WHY EVERY TEAM NEEDS ALL FOUR

Friction between the lenses is where the work actually happens.

When the four disagree, the team is usually doing exactly what it should be doing.

Paradox theory, developed by Smith and Lewis, argues that organisations sustain performance by holding competing demands *simultaneously* rather than resolving them. In a 2018 study published in the *Academy of Management Journal*, Miron-Spektor and colleagues tested this empirically across 434 individuals.

Their empirical finding was clear. When a person with a high paradox mindset experienced tension

at work, that tension *increased* their in-role performance and their innovation. When a person with a low paradox mindset experienced the same tension, it *decreased* both.

Tension itself is not the problem. The team's collective capacity to hold tension is what determines whether tension becomes a source of innovation or a source of decline.

TENSIONS AI ADOPTION CANNOT RESOLVE AWAY

Speed ↔ Caution

TRAILBLAZER ↔ GUIDE

Exploration ↔ Exploitation

ADVENTURER ↔ GUIDE

Innovation ↔ Ethics

TRAILBLAZER ↔ OBSERVER

When all four lenses are present, and the friction between them is allowed to be productive rather than smoothed over, the team holds dynamic equilibrium and the adoption is durable.

When one or two of these lenses are missing or unheard, the system tips into a failure mode shaped by the dominant lens. *Teams of Trailblazers and Adventurers without Guides ship fast and become the next public cautionary tale. Teams of Guides and Observers without Trailblazers and Adventurers produce excellent slides about potential decisions that are never made.*

A note on what balance means in practice. Balance is not always equal representation across the four quadrants. A pharmaceutical company on the cusp of a regulated AI deployment probably needs a heavier weighting of Guides than a creative agency does. The right question is not “do you have a quarter of each.” It is “do you have enough of the quadrant your situation actually demands, and are the other quadrants still present enough to keep the team honest.”

PART IV

Insight without movement is interesting at best. The methodology that follows is what turns visibility of the invisible layer into durability of the layer above it.

From insight to action.



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▲ 4.1, 4.3 · METHODOLOGY

Three movements: assessment, exploration, manifesto.

A mirror, then a structured encounter, then a written, durable position the team can carry.

4.1



Assessment

Making the invisible visible.

Individuals on your leadership team and, where relevant, in the wider workforce take a structured assessment placing them on the two axes. The output is both individual (lens, strengths, blind spots, first move) and collective (distribution, concentration, over- and under-represented quadrants).

The mirror tells you what is there. It does not yet tell you what to do.

4.2



Exploration

Four lenses, one room.

A structured series of sessions designed to bring the four lenses into productive contact. These sessions facilitate asking the right questions. What should we do with AI? What should we never do? Where would we genuinely add value? Who are the people whose lives will be shaped by what we choose?

Different sessions have different work to do, technical landscape, risks & opportunities, constructive conflict.

4.3



The Manifesto

A written, durable position.

The expedition ends in writing, a short, organisation-specific document that names what you will and will not do with AI, why, and on what basis. Less a values statement or a compliance addendum, and more a decision-rule the team can actually carry.

The strategy deck tells you what you intend to do. The manifesto tells you what you have agreed not to do.

EXAMPLE MANIFESTO PRINCIPLES

- “We use AI only for process optimisation, never for hiring decisions.”
- “We will not deploy AI in customer-facing communications without a named human reviewer.”
- “We will pause and consult our works council before any AI deployment that meaningfully changes a team's work.”

Each principle is the kind of statement that once written down can be referred to in the next meeting, audited against in the next deployment, and revised in the next quarter when the team has more enacted experience to draw on.

 4.4 · HOW WE KNOW IT WORKS

Measured across three levels.

This is the question every prospective client and every supervisor of a research programme should ask.

01 Mindset distribution & movement

We run the assessment again at six and twelve months. With the same instrument, we can show how the distribution has shifted, who has moved between lenses, where the team is more or less balanced than at baseline.

02 Decision behaviour, the manifesto in action

We track recall of the manifesto across the workforce; the diversity of perspectives consulted in actual AI decisions; the count of risks surfaced during exploration that were then addressed in deployments; the time from “should we?” to a first structured experimental action.

03 Outcomes

The proportion of forecasted productivity gains actually realised; the proportion of that freed capacity redeployed against stated priorities; adherence of shipped AI work to the manifesto; avoided incidents, the AI initiatives stopped or sharpened because exploration surfaced something that would otherwise have been missed; employee confidence and retention; stakeholder satisfaction.

RESEARCH FEEDBACK LOOP

With participant consent and under university-approved research methods, anonymised client data contributes to the PhD on technology mindset and responsible leadership that Maxime began at the University of Southampton in September 2026. The academic work and the client work are designed to reinforce one another: the client work generates the evidence base; the academic work strengthens the instruments and interpretations on which the client work depends.

▲ CASE STUDY · 01 / 03

SECTOR · GLOBAL MEDIA GROUP

Three lenses, no alignment.

Our client at a global media organisation was the CTO. They came to us with what looked like a leadership disagreement about AI strategy. They had built a detailed, technically rigorous AI roadmap, and true to a Guide, their plan covered the risks of AI deployment carefully and took them seriously.

The CIO was running fast in the innovation room, prototyping use cases the CTO regarded as marketing rather than core. The CEO wanted to use AI to cut thirty percent of costs and was finding it difficult to invest meaningfully in the CTO's plan.

From the outside it looked like a disagreement about AI. From the assessment it became visibly more specific. Three valuable lenses, in the same leadership team, speaking past one another.

Our work was not to take the CTO's plan and execute it. It was to help them present the plan in a way the other two lenses could engage with. Smaller in initial scope. Communicated through impact rather than architecture. Structured around concrete decisions the CEO and the CIO could make and feel ownership of.

LENS DIAGNOSIS**CTO (our client)**

Guide

CIO / Chief Innovation Officer

Trailblazer

CEO

Adventurer

OUTCOME

The work produced one shared AI adoption roadmap across the organisation's eight departments. The plan retained its technical rigour while becoming understandable to leadership perspectives beyond the one that had built it.

▲ CASE STUDY · 02 / 03

SECTOR · FOUNDATION

Bottom-up adoption through identified ambassadors.

A foundation we worked with had an innovation director who saw clearly that AI would reshape how the organisation worked. The workforce did not yet share that clarity. Most staff had no technical or AI background. The dominant posture was a mix of resistance and hesitation.

A top-down adoption push would have produced the predictable outcome: visible activity, no real movement.

The innovation director made a different choice. Rather than push AI down through the organisation, they made the mindset distribution visible from the bottom up. The full workforce took the AI Mindset Assessment. The output identified the colleagues whose willingness to experiment was already high, regardless of role or seniority.

These became the AI ambassadors: a small, distributed group of people who were genuinely curious, willing to try, and embedded across the foundation's functions. In parallel, the assessment, the expedition sessions, and the structure of decisions those produced gave the CIO a way to lead forward.

LENS DIAGNOSIS

Innovation director

Used the assessment to find ambassadors across the workforce.

CIO

Supported in turning a board mandate into a first move.

OUTCOME

AI adoption became a peer-to-peer activity rather than a directive, and more approachable for everyone else as a result. The board-level mandate found a way forward.

▲ CASE STUDY · 03 / 03

SECTOR · MARKETING COMPANY

A missing lens, diagnosed before the damage.

A marketing company asked us a question more organisations will ask in the next two years: how do we move beyond using AI as a tool inside the algorithm, and start using it for sustainable growth?

The assessment answered something the leadership team had not asked directly. The Guide mindset was almost entirely absent from the organisation. The team was rich in Trailblazers and Adventurers, exactly what a marketing company would predict, but no one was reliably carrying the deliberation pole.

The consequence of that absence is specific. When AI-generated work is designed and approved only by Trailblazers and Adventurers, the question of how a campaign actually lands with loyal customers, whether it confuses them, distances them, or quietly breaks the trust they extend to the brand, is rarely surfaced as a risk worth addressing before launch.

The team named Coca-Cola's Christmas 2024 campaign as exactly what they wanted to avoid: an AI-generated piece of brand work that triggered widespread backlash. Large brands have the cushion to recover. Smaller brands do not.

LENS DIAGNOSIS**Trailblazers**

Throughout the leadership team

Adventurers

Throughout the leadership team

Guides

Almost entirely absent

OUTCOME

Naming the missing lens turned out to be the answer to the sustainable-growth question. The central question moved from “what is our AI strategy” to “what kind of leadership team do we need to make that strategy responsible?”

PART V

The decisions you make about AI in the next two to three years will compound.
The opportunity is to move quickly and rightly at once.

The leadership opportunity.



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▲ 5.1 · QUICKLY, AND RIGHTLY

“The leaders shaping AI now have an immense opportunity, and an immense responsibility. To move quickly, and to move rightly. Both. Not either.”

UNTANGLE LAB · FOUNDING CONVICTION

We are not anti-speed. AI is moving fast. The geopolitics are moving fast. Your competitors are moving fast. Slowing down for its own sake is its own kind of irresponsibility, particularly in Europe, where we cannot afford to be slow.

But somewhere in the last few years, “quickly” became the only verb that mattered. “Rightly” was treated as a brake on speed rather than a partner to it. Our conviction is that the two belong together.

The leaders who get this right in the next two to three years will not necessarily be the ones with the largest AI budgets. They will be the ones who **built the foundation underneath** the budgets.

▲ 5.2 · WHERE TO START

Three honest entry points.

01

Take the Assessment

If you would like to know what your team's current mindset distribution looks like, the AI Mindset Assessment is where to begin. The smallest investment with the most return, because it makes visible what is currently invisible.

MAXIME@UNTANGLELAB.COM

02

Have a conversation

If you would like to talk about whether and how an expedition would fit your organisation, we are available. Not as a sales call. As a meeting between people who care about how AI lands.

MAXIME@UNTANGLELAB.COM

03

Read further

If you would like to read further before doing either, the references at the back of this paper are an honest set of starting points. We list the foundations we build on to help you understand our mindset.

[SEE FOUNDATIONS →](#)

NEXT

Start your expedition.

untanglelab.com/expeditions



▲ ABOUT UNTANGLE LAB

A research-grounded practice for organisations engaging emerging technology.

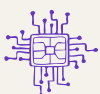
Untangle Lab works at the intersection of organisational psychology, sensemaking research, paradox theory, and responsible innovation. We translate the insights from those traditions into operational tools and structured engagements that leadership teams can use.

Our methodology rests on a multi-year programme of work that includes our founders' prior experience as technology strategy consultants at Accenture, the EU-backed REED research project on responsible engagement with digital technology, and Maxime's PhD on technology mindset and responsible leadership at the University of Southampton, which began in September 2026, in an environment specialised in responsible and sustainable leadership.

We are deliberately small, deeply specialised, and uninterested in being a generalist consultancy. We work primarily with C-level leadership teams and the senior teams reporting to them, in sectors where AI adoption decisions carry meaningful consequences for the people they touch.

Headquartered in the Netherlands. Working across Europe.

FOUR ANCHORS · OUR PRACTICE



Untangle Technology

We help leaders untangle how they want to use AI and quantum technology. And where not to.



Responsible

Conscious adoption is only possible when space is made for research, reflection, and dialogue.



Together

Together with the client, we untangle what the technology means, what the opportunities and risks are, and which mindset helps you move forward.



Research-backed

Interdisciplinary scientific research with practical experience, ensuring insights are both grounded and actionable.

Responsible innovation is not optional. It's the arc toward lasting success.

▲ OUR MINDS

The team behind Untangle Lab.

A deliberately small, deeply specialised team. We work shoulder-to-shoulder with our clients on the layer underneath their AI strategy.



Maxime Lubbers

FOUNDER & CEO

Leads the business and strategy of Untangle Lab with a research mindset at its core, owning the commercial and client side. Since September 2026, she has been pursuing a PhD on technology mindset and responsible leadership at the University of Southampton.



Vincent McLeese

CO-FOUNDER & CTO

Leads the technical and analytical side of the practice. Background in technology strategy consulting at Accenture, with a focus on emerging-technology adoption inside complex organisations.



Eline de Jong

HEAD OF RESEARCH

Leads the research programme behind the AI Mindset Assessment and the expedition methodology. Anchors the academic foundations and instrument validation work that the client engagements depend on.



Herman-Jan

ADVISOR

Senior advisor. Brings decades of experience working with C-level leadership teams through technology and organisational transitions. Holds the long view.

[UNTANGLELAB.COM/TEAM](https://untanglelab.com/team)

[MEET THE MINDS →](#)

▲ FOUNDATIONS & REFERENCES

The work this paper rests on.

Key works are cited beside the relevant discussion and listed here in full, in keeping with the form of a white paper rather than an academic article.

ON AI ADOPTION AND THE VALUE GAP

- 01 **BCG (2025).** AI at Work 2025: Momentum Builds, but Gaps Remain.
- 02 **BCG (2025).** The CIO's Role in AI Transformation and Productivity.
- 03 **McKinsey & Company (2025).** The State of AI 2025.
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- 01 **Blume, B. D., Ford, J. K., Baldwin, T. T., & Huang, J. L. (2010).** Transfer of training: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Management*, 36(4), 1065–1105.
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- 04 **Miron-Spektor, E., Ingram, A., Keller, J., Smith, W. K., & Lewis, M. W. (2018).** Microfoundations of organizational paradox: The problem is how we think about the problem. *Academy of Management Journal*, 61(1), 26–45.
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- 01 **Kop, M., et al. (2023).** *Towards Responsible Quantum Technology: Principles, Policies and Resources.* Stanford Law School.
- 02 **Lubbers, M. (2024).** *The Responsible AI Expedition: A practical guide for leaders in business.*
- 03 **REED (2024).** *Redesigning Education for Ethical Digitalization.* Erasmus+ project 2023-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000159510.



Quickly, and rightly. Both. Not either.

We make technology mindset visible, measurable, and actionable for leadership teams. If you would like to bring the AI Mindset Assessment, or a full expedition, into your organisation, write to us.

WEB

untanglelab.com

EMAIL

maxime@untanglelab.com **Start your expedition**

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