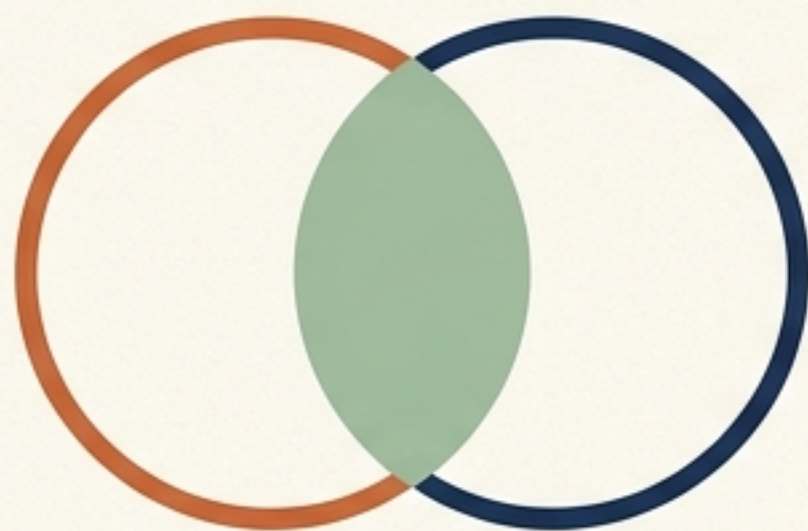




Working With The Machines

The Human Playbook for Intentional AI

A Practical Guide to
the Agentic Frontier

The Space Between

The Unmanaged Reality



The Default: Agent Sprawl

Uncounted. Implicit. Hidden. Tech-First.

Tens of thousands of agents with no named owners, creating unpriced risk and unmeasured waste.

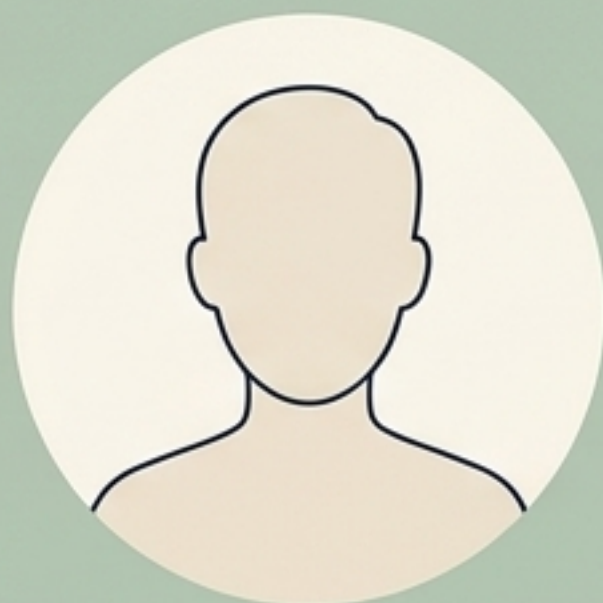
The Alternative: Intentional AI

Registered. Visible. Accountable. Human-First.

Key Insight: Both employees are doing their best. The failure isn't the people, and it isn't the policy document. The failure is the gap between them.

Meet Your Capable New Colleague

Employee Dossier



Profile Stats

- Fast, tireless, available to everyone instantly.
- Improving every few months.

The Catch

1. **No Built-In Rules:** They don't know your clients, your red lines, or your unwritten commitments.
2. **Zero Accountability:** They cannot answer to a board, a customer, or a regulator. They cannot be fired or forgiven.

The Golden Rule: The machines do the work. People answer for it.

The Collaboration Trinity



Takeaway: Answer only the first, you get a useless policy. Answer the first two, you get a surplus with no owner. All three must be answered in writing.

Delegation is a Contract, Not a Badge

You don't just hand a teenager the car keys because they have a license. You have a kitchen-counter conversation: Where are you going? Who is riding? Text when you arrive. AI requires the exact same contract.

1. The Decision: What is the exact task?

3. The Limits: How much can it spend/change in one action? In total?

5. The Check-in: How often is this reviewed?

The Grant

2. The Purpose: What does a good result look like? Where must it stop?

4. The People: Who is the one named "Sponsor of Record"?

6. The Curfew: When does this permission expire and require a fresh look?

The Delegation Ladder

Rung 5: Set the Bounds (Human Only)
Deciding what a machine is allowed to decide stays permanently with people.

Rung 4: Decide and Act (Reviewed After)
System works independently; humans review on a set schedule.

Rung 3: Decide Within Bounds
System acts inside strict human-set limits. Exceptions bounce back to humans.

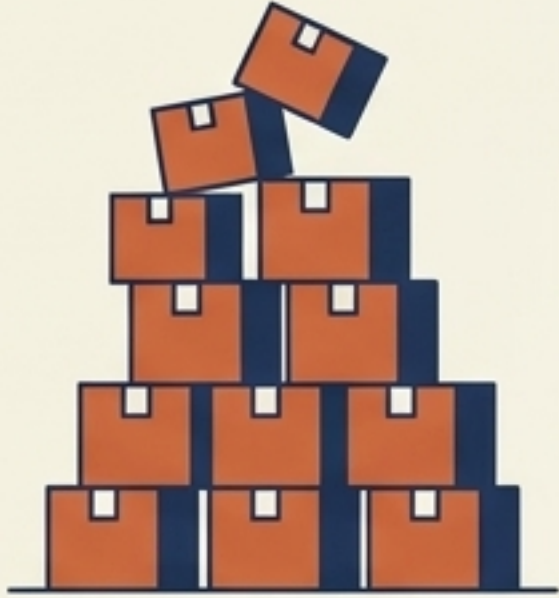
Rung 2: Recommend
System proposes; named human decides.

Rung 1: Execute
System does exactly what it is told; human checks it.

Machine Authority

Human Oversight

Four Ways Permission Leaks



1. The Pile-Up

Every action is inside the limit; the total isn't. (e.g., Knight Capital lost \$460M in 45 minutes because safety controls couldn't stop 4 million individually-approved trades).



2. The Stale Yes

An approval outlives the thing it approved. New information arrives, but the AI uses an old "Yes".



3. The Borrowed Keys

Giving your little brother the whole keyring just to grab a jacket. Helper-agents given more access than the job requires (The "Confused Deputy").



4. The Empty Chair

The human "Sponsor of Record" leaves the company, but the AI keeps running. (e.g., Colonial Pipeline ransomware via an abandoned VPN profile).

The Ticket Rail: Turning Policy Into Practice

A busy kitchen doesn't read a binder during the dinner rush.
They move fast because everyone knows the exact setup.

1. What is AI for here?

A stated purpose people can apply without asking permission.

2. Which decisions belong to people?

Clear "Red Lines" (e.g., specific human health, jobs, money).

3. How does the work stay visible?

An active Register of what's running.

4. Who answers for each use?

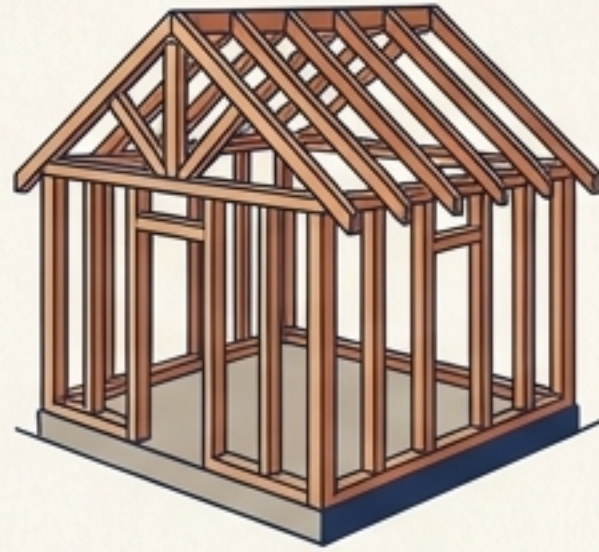
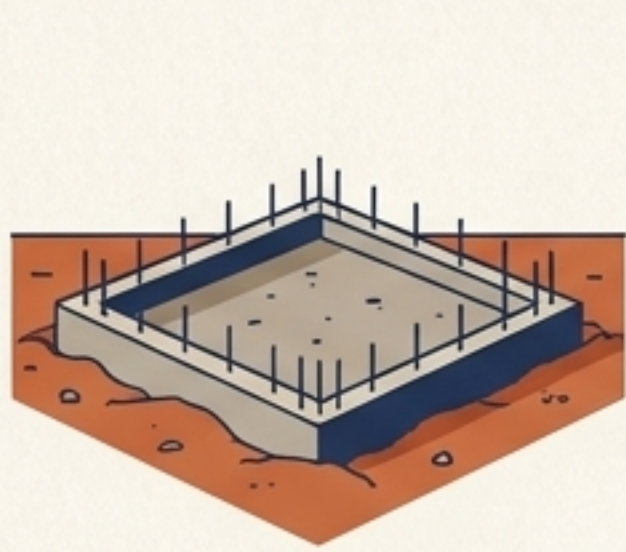
One named person. Never "the committee."

5. How does this keep working?

A routine front-door intake for new ideas.

Decisions Before Speed

You don't install a smart thermostat before pouring the foundation.



Stage 1: Foundation (Weeks 1-6)

Rules, inventory, and review processes.

Stage 2: Capability

Teaching your people a shared decision language.

Stage 3: Activation (First 90 Days)

Building the habit. Approvals close, owners act. (Research shows it takes ~66 days to form a habit).

Stage 4: Automation

Handing whole workflows to machines inside the limits already set.

Stage 5: Operations

AI governed on a schedule, like any other part of the business.

Calling the Fly Ball: A Shared Language



When two outfielders run for a ball, talent doesn't prevent a collision—a single word (“Mine!”) does.

Your team needs a shared vocabulary so everyone knows exactly who acts and when.

The Vocabulary: The Rungs

“This is Rung 3,
approved wording only.”

The Vocabulary: The Red Lines

“Stop and send it to
a human.”

The Vocabulary: The Ratchet Down

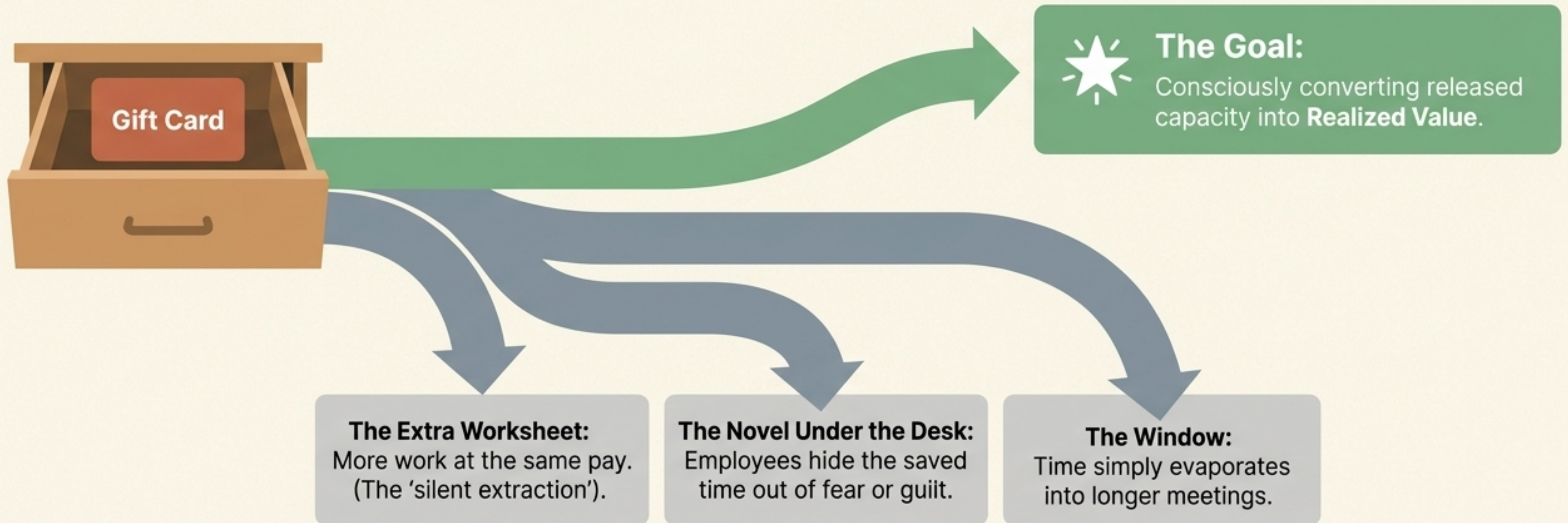
Visibly reducing a system's
authority after a misfire until
trust is rebuilt.

The Result: Clarity scales better than permission. People make safe choices instantly without bottlenecking leadership.

The Unspent Gift Card

Released Capacity $\neq$ Realized Value

AI saves your team 10,000 hours. That is a gift card in a drawer. Until someone spends it, it isn't money. By default, unclaimed time drifts into three traps:



The Dual Ledger

To know who truly benefits, we must keep the books on both sides.

The Company's Ledger (Enterprise ROI)

Converted Value: Faster output, cleared backlogs, actual cost reductions.

Avoided Hires: E.g., Shopify requiring teams to prove AI can't do the job before hiring. Counted only once.

Unconverted: Time saved but not yet utilized (listed as a risk).

The People's Ledger (Human ROI)

Time Back: e.g., The UK 4-day workweek trials.

New Roles & Training: Workers elevated to AI Owners or Builders.

Pay: Elastic compensation tracking with the new capacity (e.g., Ford's 1914 \$5 workday).

The Playbook in Action: A Single Task

The assistant is given a Grant. It operates at Rung 3 (Routine bus schedules) but hits a Red Line (Child health records) and routes immediately to the human principal.

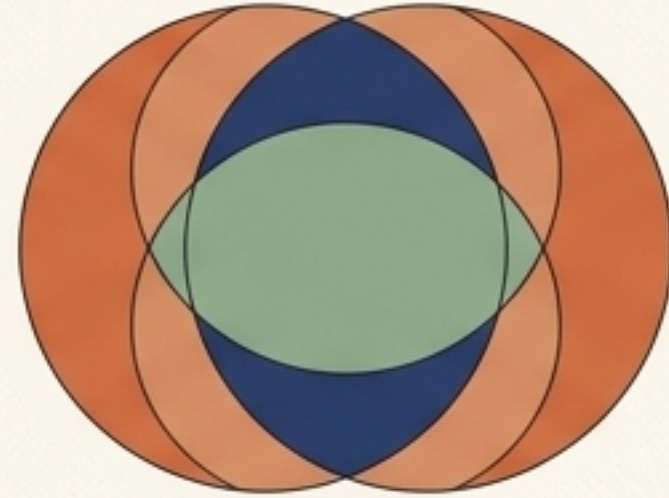
Step 1: Authorized
(Who Decides?)

Step 3: Counted
(Who Benefits?)

The hours saved answering routine emails are converted into face-to-face time with families (Company Ledger), and the office manager is upskilled into an AI Governance role (People's Ledger).

The office manager uses the Shared Language to check the work on a weekly schedule. When a misfire occurs, the team initiates a visible Ratchet Down to Rung 2.

The Enduring Constant



The future of work is not humans versus machines. It is not humans blindly handing the keys to machines. It is organizations that finally answer three questions, in writing, with evidence:
Who decides? Who can work? Who benefits?

**The machines do the work.
People answer for it.**