

N VISIONARIES SUMMIT 2026



ENTERPRISE ORCHESTRATION

Maximizing Your AI Advantage

Chris Courneen · SVP & Global Head of HR (CHRO), MSI

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When I was 10...



WHAT YOU JUST SPENT

TRUST



THE SECRET IS THE ONLY THING THAT CHANGED

You now know I am a magician. So there are things you will no longer let me do.

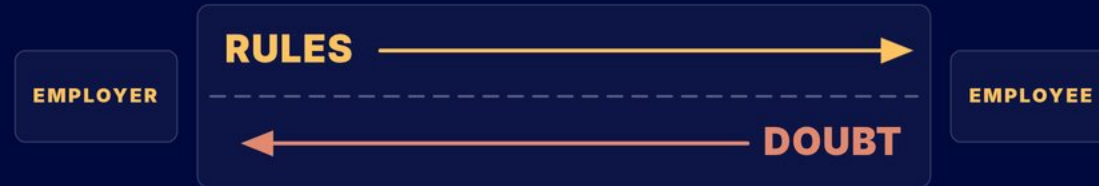
Nothing about me changed. Not my intent. Not what I am going to do next. What changed is that there is something I know, and you know there is something I know.

The effect is real, at least to you. It is visible and it is countable.

The method stays hidden. And the hidden method is what moved your trust, not anything I actually did.



TRUST RUNS BOTH WAYS



THEY READ THESE TOO

ORACLE · JUNE 2026

21,000

"Adoption and deployment of AI technologies across our operations have resulted in reductions to our workforce."

AMAZON · JANUARY 2026

16,000

Corporate roles. The CEO had already said AI "should change the way our work is done. We will need fewer people."

PAYPAL · MAY 2026

4,500+

Twenty percent over two to three years, alongside a plan to "aggressively adopt AI."

SNAP · APRIL 2026

1,000

"Rapid advancements in artificial intelligence enable our teams to reduce repetitive work."

#1 most cited reason for US job cuts, March through July

116,175 cuts attributed to AI, year to date

#4 where it ranked in August

CHALLENGER, GRAY &
CHRISTMAS
JOB CUT REPORTS, 2026



WHERE THIS COMES FROM

NOBODY IS AN EXPERT AT THIS YET

Including me. What I have is reps.

Thirteen years of them, the wins and the losses both. Everything after this slide is something we actually shipped, not something that could work.



WHY ME: THIRTEEN YEARS OF REPS

Two companies. One through-line.

2013



In sales

A different company. On a project with IT to make our website search actually find things, so customers could get to what they wanted. That was machine learning. Nobody called it AI.

2019



Went looking

New company, and this time on purpose. We found the technology, then built our own internally.

2021



First release

It eliminated an entire job level and reshaped roles inside HR and well beyond it.

TODAY



At the table

AI developers report to me on company projects. I sit with our CEO and the heads of every IT department, every week.

WHAT THAT WEEKLY COVERS, FOR A GLOBAL BUSINESS

Strategy

Progress

Hardware & infrastructure

Data architecture

Work prioritization

My team isn't fooled by the method, because we built it.



WHAT THAT HAS BEEN WORTH AT MSI

\$15M+

in savings directly tied to our AI initiatives.

~\$10M

LABOR-HOUR VALUE

more, on top of the hard savings

0

LAYOFFS, EVER

Six recessions, no furloughs, and AI has not changed it

In-house

OUR OWN BUILD

AI developers reporting to me, down to the hardware layer

The savings did not come from cutting. They came from redeploying.



TRUST IS THE FIRST ORCHESTRATION DECISION

01

Know its limits

What the tool actually does, and just as importantly what it does not. You cannot build trust in a black box, and you cannot orchestrate what you do not understand.

02

Declare it

Say what you are doing with it, and what you are not. Ours is one sentence: **we save the work, not the heads. Your job is safe, your job description is not.**

03

Bind yourself



YOUR JOB IS SAFE.
YOUR JOB DESCRIPTION
IS NOT.



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Count the lines in your AI policy that protect the employee rather than protect the company from the employee. Most policies have zero.

Only the third one costs you anything. That is why it is the only one they believe.



TWO ASSUMPTIONS THAT GO UNTESTED

Too many organizations in 2026 are running on two assumptions, stacked, and too few have tested either.

01 The gain

That AI is a productivity gain for the employer in the first place.

02 The conversion

That a realized productivity gain converts into a headcount reduction.

We questioned both. That is where the untested tradeoff lives.



THE SENTENCE YOU KEEP HEARING

"The team got faster, so we can run it with fewer people."

The gain is immediate, countable, board-ready. The cost of cutting is deferred and invisible: capacity you need when demand returns, knowledge that walks out, rework two quarters later, trust you spend.

So you weigh a number against a feeling, and the number wins by default.

That's not a tradeoff. It's a measurement failure wearing a tradeoff's clothes.



HOW YOU TEST IT

THE FOUR-QUESTION TEST

How you turn an assumed tradeoff
into a tested one.



THE FOUR-QUESTION TEST

You owe your organization all four before the verdict.

Q 1

Name both numbers.

Both sides, at equal specificity. A savings figure to the decimal against "some morale risk" is half a spreadsheet, not a tradeoff.

Q 2

Test the link.

Productivity shows up at the task level. Layoffs happen at the role level. You cannot subtract a task from a headcount line.

Q 3

Search for the other door.

Someone must describe where else the freed capacity could go, and why that was rejected. If no one can describe that conversation, it did not happen.

Q 4

Forced now, or forced-sounding?

Cutting is fast and nearly irreversible. Holding capacity has option value. Most of these cuts ride on a six-week pilot.

Usually, the other door is standing wide open.



THE ATM PRECEDENT

Jevons paradox: make a task cheaper, and organizations do more of it.

ATMs INSTALLED IN THE US

1990  100,000

2015  400,000+

Four times the machines, doing the exact task tellers were paid to do.

BANK TELLER JOBS

Did not fall.

Teller employment held steady, and even rose slightly, across the entire rollout. What changed was the job: it took fewer tellers to run a branch, so branches got cheaper, so banks opened more of them.

The work moved. It did not evaporate.

Freed capacity is not a savings that banks itself. It's a decision about where it goes.

James Bessen, "Toil and Technology," IMF Finance & Development, March 2015.



WHY THE TIMING IS WRONG

ADOPTION IS NOT ABSORPTION

PHASE ONE

Adoption

Rolling the tool out. Fast, visible, and easy to put a number on. The ROI case that justifies the licence gets built here. So does the headcount math.

Nobody fully understands what the new work looks like until they have lived it. That is the case against converting the saving into FTE at the end of phase one.

**Conditions, culture and leadership decide whether AI produces measurable value.
Not the quality of the technology.**

PHASE TWO, WHERE WE ARE NOW

Absorption

Redesigning the workflows, the incentives, the quality standards, the governance and the management practice around it. Slow, and it runs on your SMEs and the people already doing the work.



SLOW DOWN.



MEASURE COST AVOIDANCE.



WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

The leaders who already made this call, asked about it afterward.

1,163 C-suite and senior business leaders surveyed

39%

made employees redundant as a result of deploying AI

55%

of those 39% admit they made the wrong decisions about those redundancies

Klarna cut ~700 service roles for an AI assistant, then rehired. · Forrester expects about half of AI-attributed layoffs to reverse.

Orgvue survey of 1,163 C-suite and senior business leaders, February to March 2025.



THREE VERDICTS

Run the four questions and you land in one of three places.

REAL AND FORCED

Savings real, cost real, the other door closed, and the timing truly cannot wait. It happens, and when it does you defend it with evidence.

FALSE CHOICE

The savings shrink under scrutiny, the cost grows, or a third door was standing open the whole time.

UNEXAMINED

Nobody can produce the numbers or the search. For AI-justified layoffs, this is nearly the default.

Unexamined is not a rare failure. It is the base rate.



THE PRINCIPLE

YOU DO NOT MAKE LONG-TERM DECISIONS FOR SHORT-TERM PROBLEMS

A headcount line is permanent. The capability that justified it is a few months old and will move again before the year is out.

Everything about AI is a short-term problem right now. The technology changes every few months, and the future past that is opaque.

An opaque future is an argument for moves you can walk back. It is never an argument for permanent ones.



WHAT YOU DO ABOUT IT

THE REAL WORK

What actually makes the
productivity pay off.



THE REAL WORK

Three things we actually did.

01

Understand the technology.

No black box. The people who make this work are mostly outside IT. You cannot build trust in something you treat as a black box, and you cannot orchestrate what you do not understand.

02

Build trust, both directions.

Remember the poker question. Nothing about me had changed and you still would not let me deal. Enough of your people are running that calculation on you when a project lands.

03

Redeploy with measurement.

Quantify the savings in one area, move the freed capacity into another, measure the impact. That discipline is what turned "AI made us faster" into dollars without a single layoff.

In that order. Most organizations start at the third one and wonder why the savings never bank.



REDEPLOY: WHERE THE CAPACITY GOES

- 01 Growth and margin**

Before anything internal. If you had spare capacity, how would you use it to drive growth? To improve margin? Point it at answering that first.
- 02 The AI build**

IT cannot rearchitect your data or build a working data lake without your SMEs, at the architecture level and the testing level both. **Deeper AI needs more of your best people, not fewer.**
- 03 The backlog**

R&D and the projects that never clear the capacity bar. They clear it now.
- 04 Process rebuild**

Map what you actually do, then redesign it. You never had the hours.

What you do not do is run fat. An overstaffed department loses the muscle.



THE LEADER'S JOB: ENTERPRISE ORCHESTRATION

Build trust, in both directions. **Do not treat AI like a magic black box and then ask your people to trust you with it.**

Most of what gets called resistance to AI is the absence of a credible story about the future. That story is a leadership deliverable, not a communications one.

Orchestrate across the organization: what moves together, what stays separate on purpose, who owns the tradeoffs.

Measure value beyond productivity. Make good long-term decisions on short-term information.

Freed capacity is not a savings that banks itself. It's a decision about where the capacity goes, and directing it rather than deleting it is the whole job.



YOUR TURN

Take one cut, pause, or redeployment on your own roadmap right now.

Run it through the four questions. Land on a verdict.

Real and Forced · False Choice · Unexamined

Then take it further: **The Orchestration Test** walks you through all four questions and helps you build the argument to take back to the business.



The Orchestration Test

chriscourneen.com/tradeoff-test.html





THE GREEN ROOM

01

Ask and share

Questions and ideas, yours and each other's. **I answer every question posted.**

02

Today, kept

These slides, the four questions and the Orchestration Test.

03

Tools and examples

Custom GPTs and artifacts I use, a few from friends here, and how other EN members are really using AI.

An HR leader built this, not a vendor. **That distance used to be a budget cycle.**



chriscourneen.com/thegreenroom

Add it to your home screen.
It opens like an app, and my LinkedIn is in there.

