Introduction

Navigating Intelligence with Intent

AI is no longer reserved for R&D labs or tech giants. It now shapes everyday tools, customer experiences, and enterprise workflows. Yet for many business leaders, AI still feels elusive and powerful. At the same time there is a perception that it is opaque and difficult to manage. Too often, organizations pursue AI initiatives without clear goals, foundational readiness, or the strategic leadership needed to convert potential into performance.

This book was written to change that.

AI Leadership Compass is designed to help business decision-makers navigate the complexity of AI adoption with confidence and clarity. It draws on years of hands-on experience helping organizations define data strategies, develop governance frameworks, build AI capabilities, and, most importantly, align them to real business value.

The leaders I work with do not need another technical deep dive. They need tools for thinking, frameworks for alignment, and a shared language to guide teams through uncertainty. They need to understand not just what AI can do, but how to decide what it *should* do and why.

Over the years, I have led analytics teams by steadily cultivating a data-driven culture by building awareness of both its potential and its pitfalls across legal, product, and technology functions. One lesson stands out: without a community of AI-aware and AI-fluent leaders, even the most well-intentioned guidance often slips through the cracks.

To streamline build, enable, and deliver AI projects in a successful manner, we need to "train the trainer", that is our AI leadership teams. Whether you're just getting started or navigating the next wave of scale, this guide gives you the tools to think strategically, act intentionally, and lead with clarity.

This book is written in a conversational, tactical style, designed to give you just enough grounding to begin your deeper exploration of:

- Strategic frameworks that connect AI design to business outcomes

- Use cases that reflect real-world complexity, not idealized pilot projects

- Reflective prompts to help you evaluate your organization's readiness

- Lessons from failures and insights from leaders who've scaled AI responsibly

The chapters follow the lifecycle of AI readiness: beginning with foundational data strategy, progressing through governance, training, and capability building, and concluding with enterprise enablement and measurement. You do not need to read it cover-to-cover to benefit. Each chapter can serve as a guidepost, wherever you are in your AI journey.

This leadership journey is grounded in seven key moves. Practical behaviours and mindset shift that help organizations lead with clarity, not chaos. Each move is anchored to one or more of three essential leadership levers: **Strategic Vision, Culture & Capability, and Delivery & Governance**. These are not standalone actions; they complement and reinforce one another as the foundation for responsible and impactful AI leadership. Multiple chapters discuss and illustrate the dimensions of each move.

These moves are how modern leaders guide AI adoption. Not through command-and-control, but through alignment, adaptability, and shared understanding. The chapters address each of these moves as connected narratives. At the end of each chapter, we reference the key move as a specific takeaway to help build better understanding of the moves.
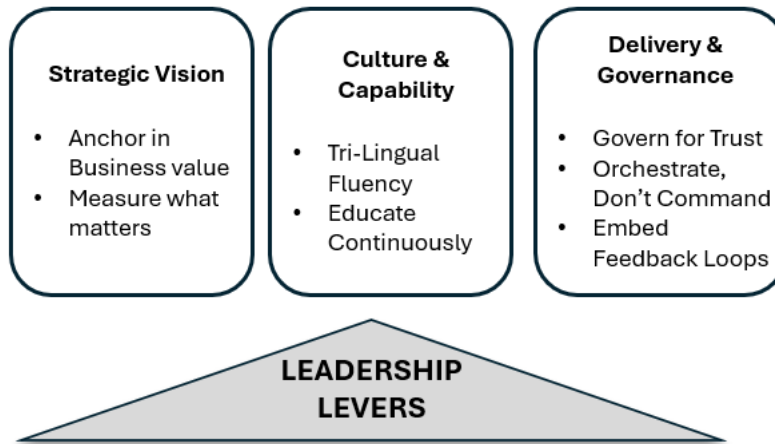
Figure 1: AI Leadership moves that matter

Analogies and case studies are provided to link the moves to real applications. These are just to get you started on recognizing the solutions AI are driving. Explore some of the keywords to discover additional use cases.

If you are a leader navigating AI for the first time, this book is your compass.

If you are scaling from early pilots to enterprise-wide transformation, this is your map.

If you are somewhere in between balancing risk, pressure, and opportunity, this book offers direction, clarity, and reassurance.

You do not have to lead with all the answers- just the right questions, the right mindset, and the intention to lead with purpose.

Let's get started.

— Priya Sarathy

Use this compass to trace how each of the 7 Moves shows up across the chapters—and the leadership decisions they influence.

Leadership Move	Chapters Aligned	Description
Anchor in Business Value	Ch. 1, Ch. 5, Ch. 9, Ch. 13	Aligning AI with strategic goals, data value, and enterprise capability.
Tri-Lingual Fluency	Ch. 7, Ch. 15	Promote fluency across data, tech, and domain to improve collaboration.
Measure What Matters	Ch. 5, Ch. 16	Emphasize outcome-based metrics linking AI to business value.
Govern for Trust, Not Control	Ch. 3, Ch. 4, Ch. 14	Govern AI inputs/outputs, risk, and responsible design.
Orchestrate, Do not Command	Ch. 6, Ch. 10, Ch. 15	Encourage coordination, human oversight, and distributed innovation.
Educate Continuously	Ch. 7, Ch. 8, Ch. 12	Build role-based fluency and risk-aware AI training at scale.
Embed Feedback Loops	Ch. 2, Ch. 6, Ch. 11	Support iterative learning, platform observability, and continuous improvement.

Figure 2: Mapping the 7 AI Leadership Moves Across the Book