AI governance 101

The minimum viable model for safe innovation

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Shift from unguarded pilots to governed innovation

Unguarded pilots

- Launch experiments with no guardrails
- Paste sensitive customer data into third-party tools
- Wait for a mishap before creating rules

Result: Invite compliance headaches and brand damage

Governed innovation

- Establish minimal governance from day one
- Ensure staff have sufficient AI literacy
- Manage legal and regulatory obligations proactively

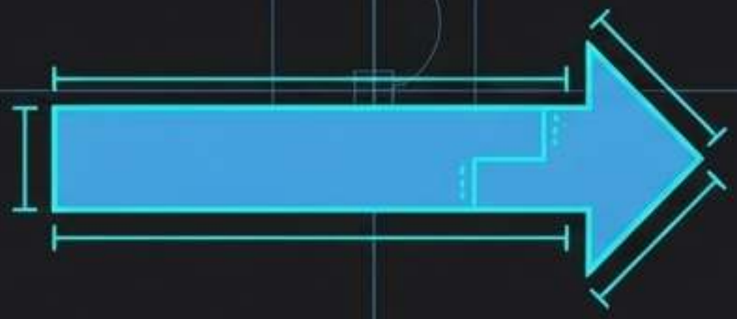
Result: Give teams the confidence to experiment freely

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Governance is your organizational insurance policy



Bureaucratic Blocker





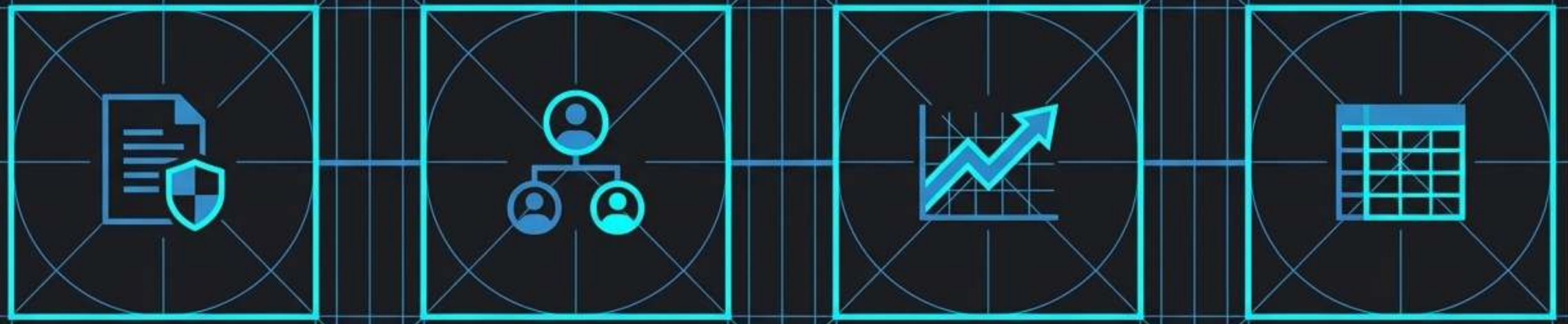
Innovation Enabler

- Minimal governance does not mean bureaucracy
- Any mid-market organization can implement this within weeks
- AI models do not retain memory or context between interactions
- Without clear standards models behave unpredictably
- The goal is balancing innovation with preventing harm

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The four building blocks of minimum viable governance

A step-by-step playbook to satisfy regulators and accelerate adoption

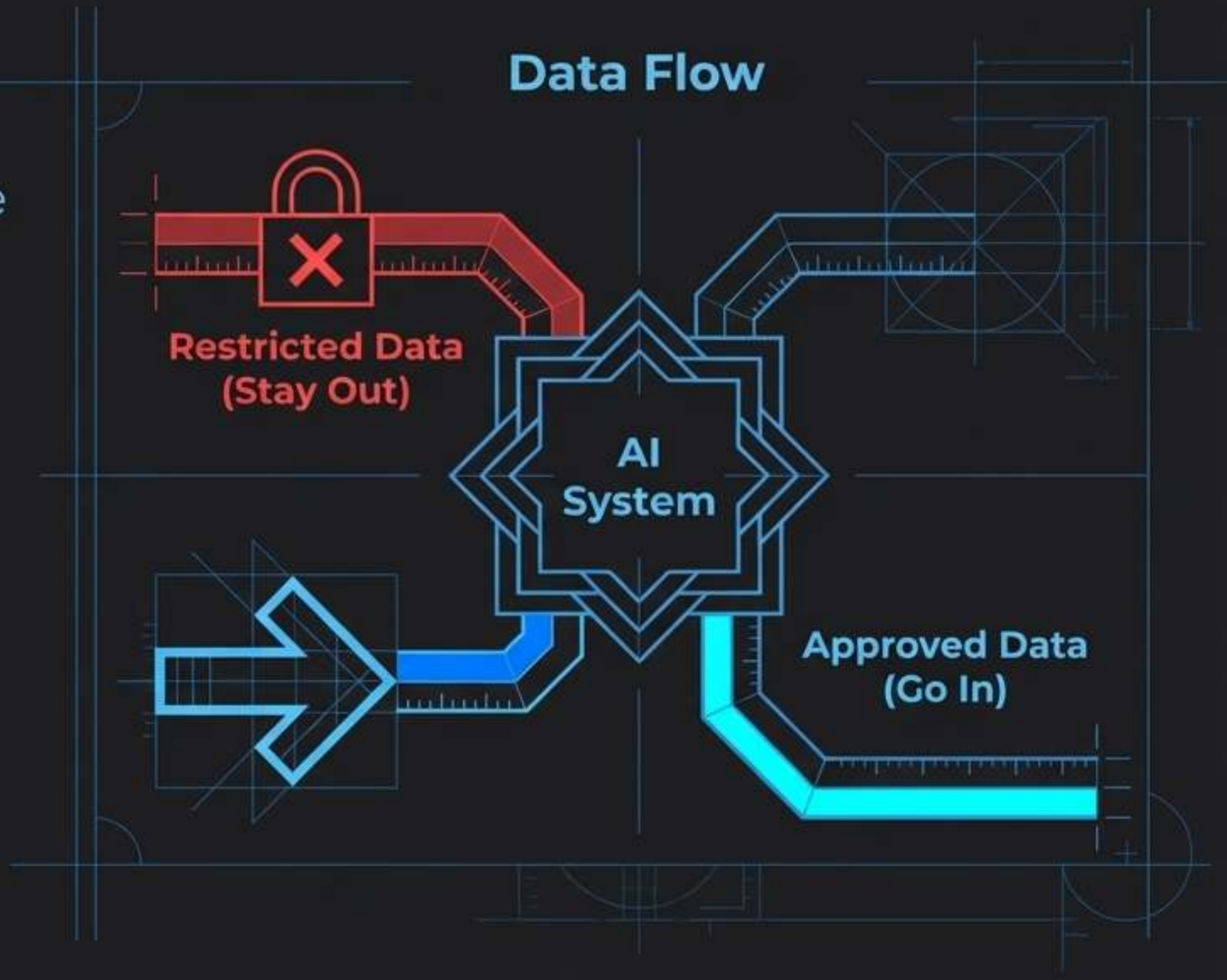


1. Policies
2. Roles
3. Training
4. Documentation

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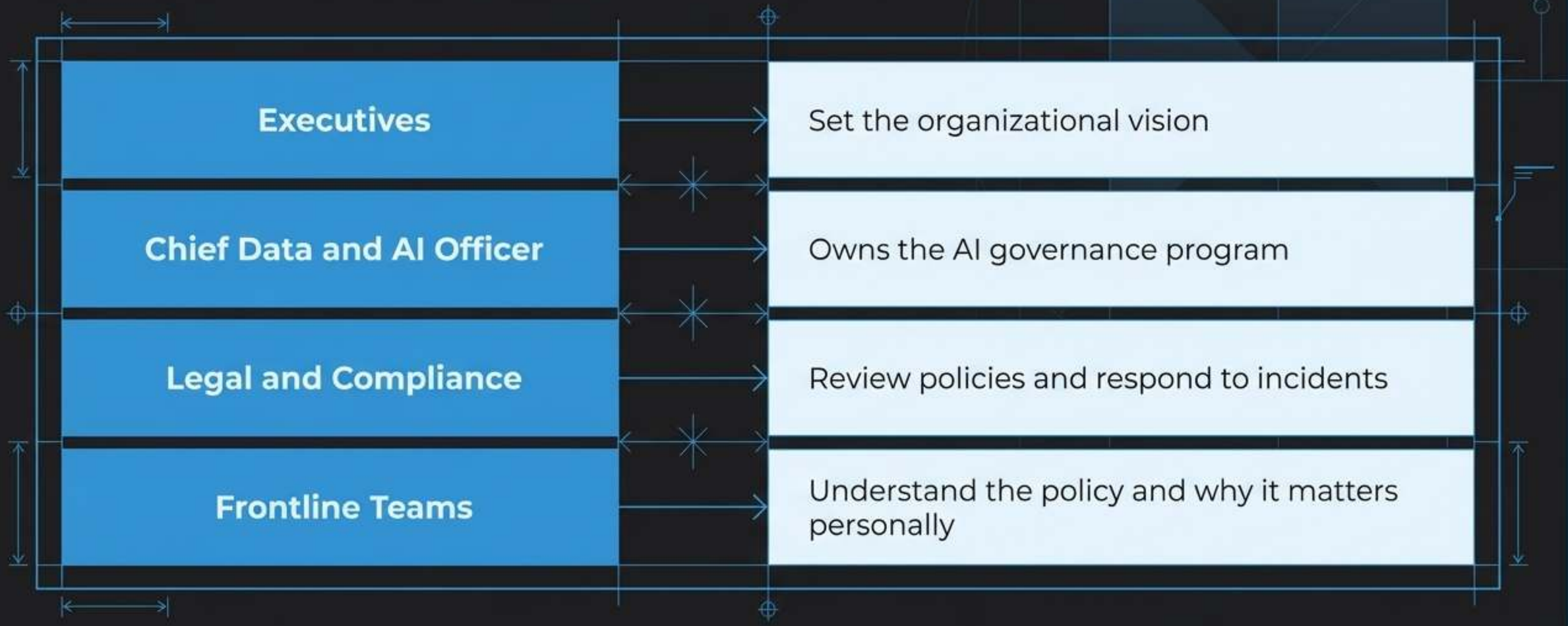
Define clear boundaries with simple policies

- Define what data can go into generative tools and what must stay out
- Provide clear guidance on prompt security and acceptable use
- Tie policies to internal risk appetite
- Align with external regulations like the EU AI Act
- Map to the NIST AI Risk Management Framework



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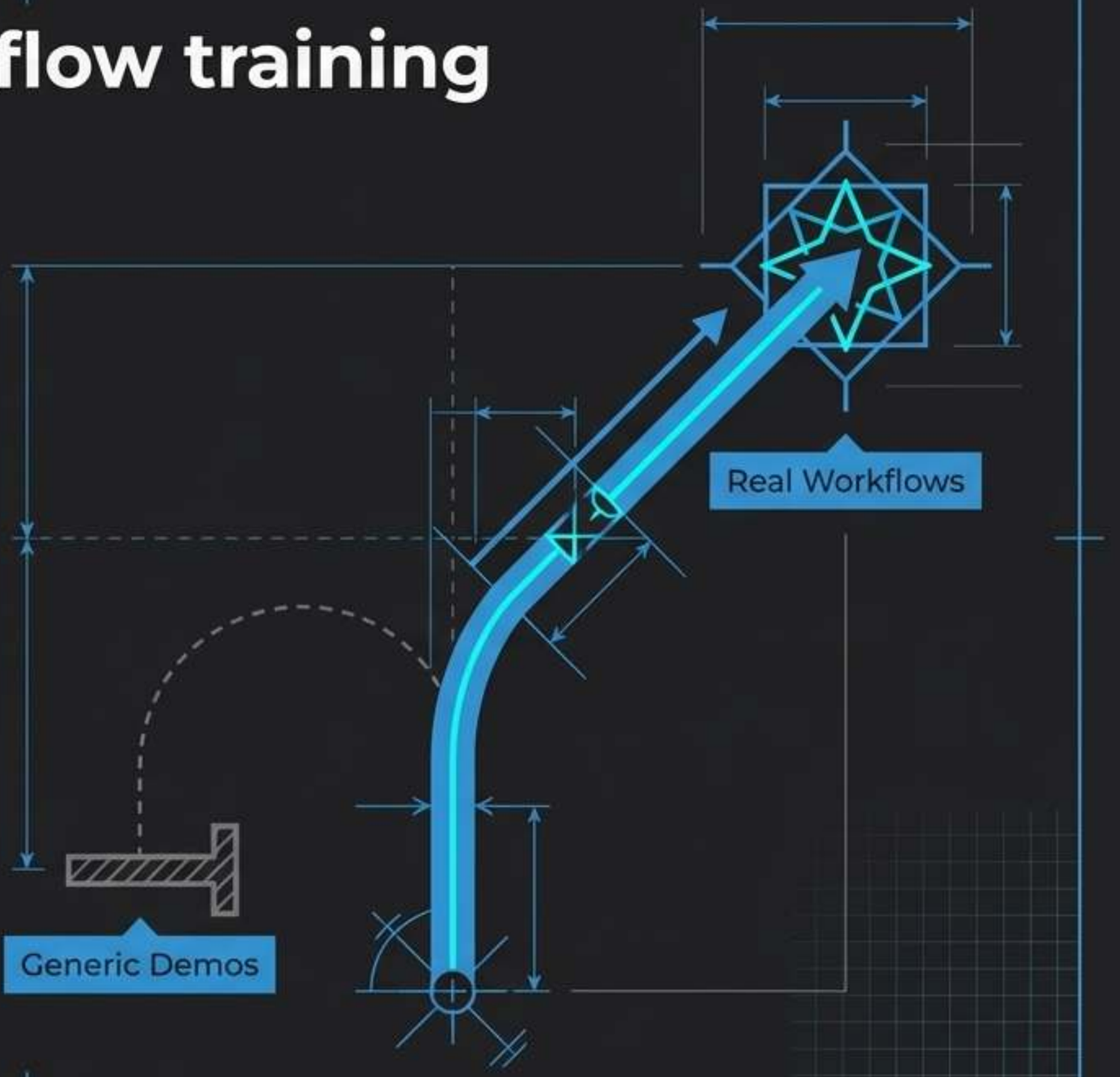
Assign ownership across multiple levels



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Invest in hands-on workflow training

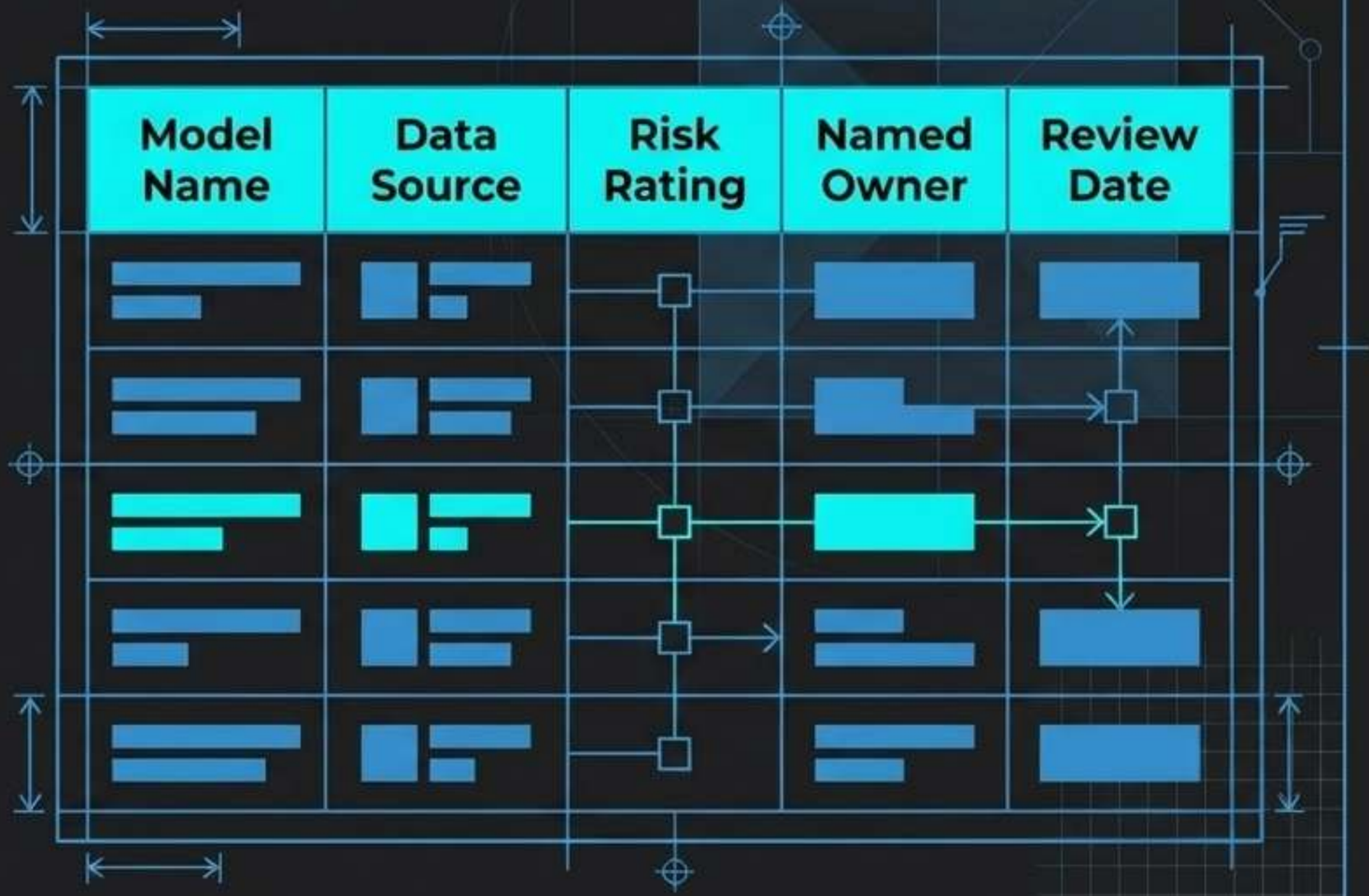
- Most AI training programs fail by relying on generic tool demos
- Real training involves employees actual daily workflows
- Permit safe experimentation within established guardrails
- Teach employees how to use AI safely and effectively
- Ensure training connects policy to personal accountability



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Maintain a dynamic AI registry

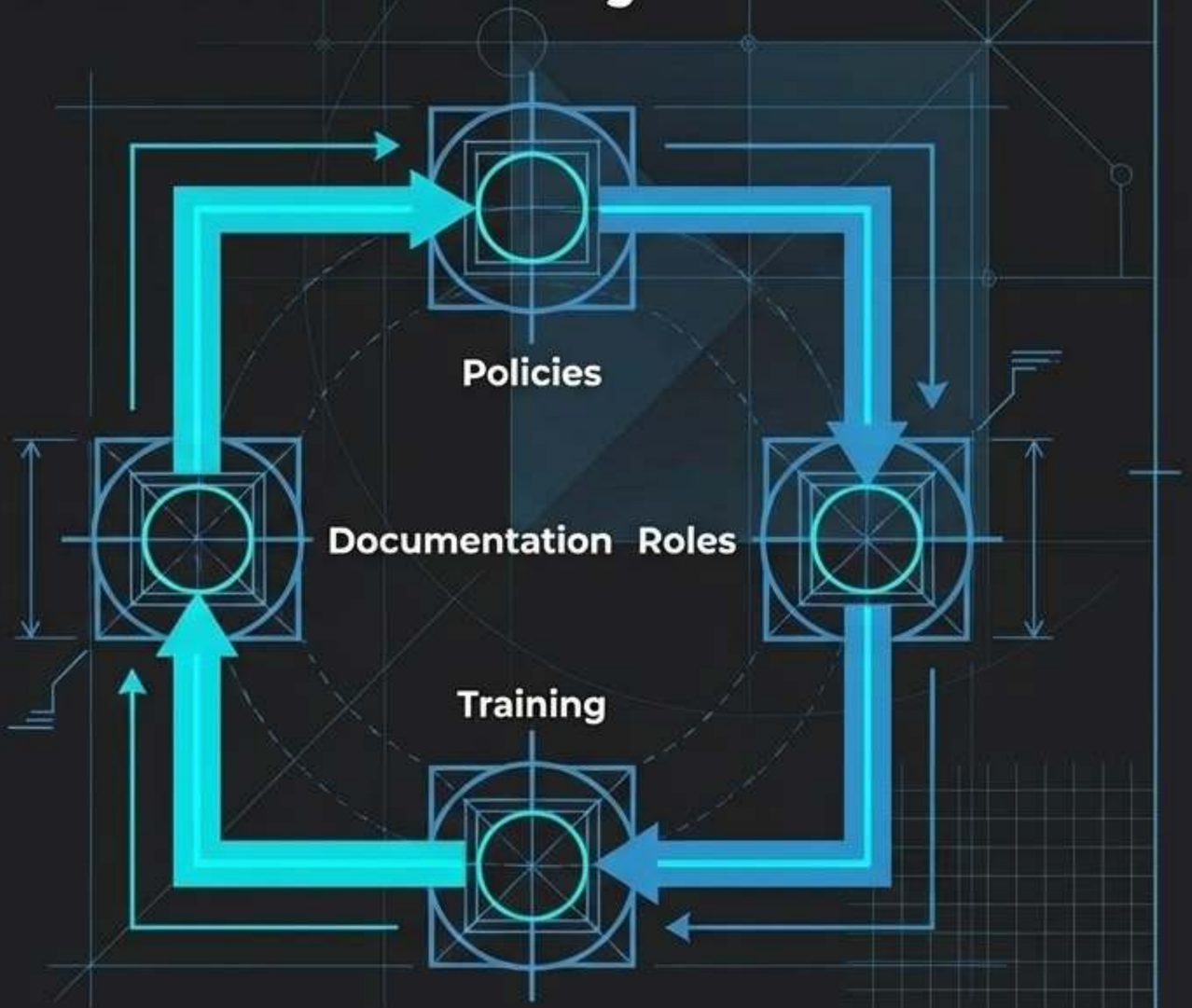
- List all active models and data sources
- Assign specific risk ratings and mitigation plans
- Ensure every entry has a named owner
- Set strict review dates to maintain accountability
- Never leave ownership ambiguous



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Connect the building blocks deliberately

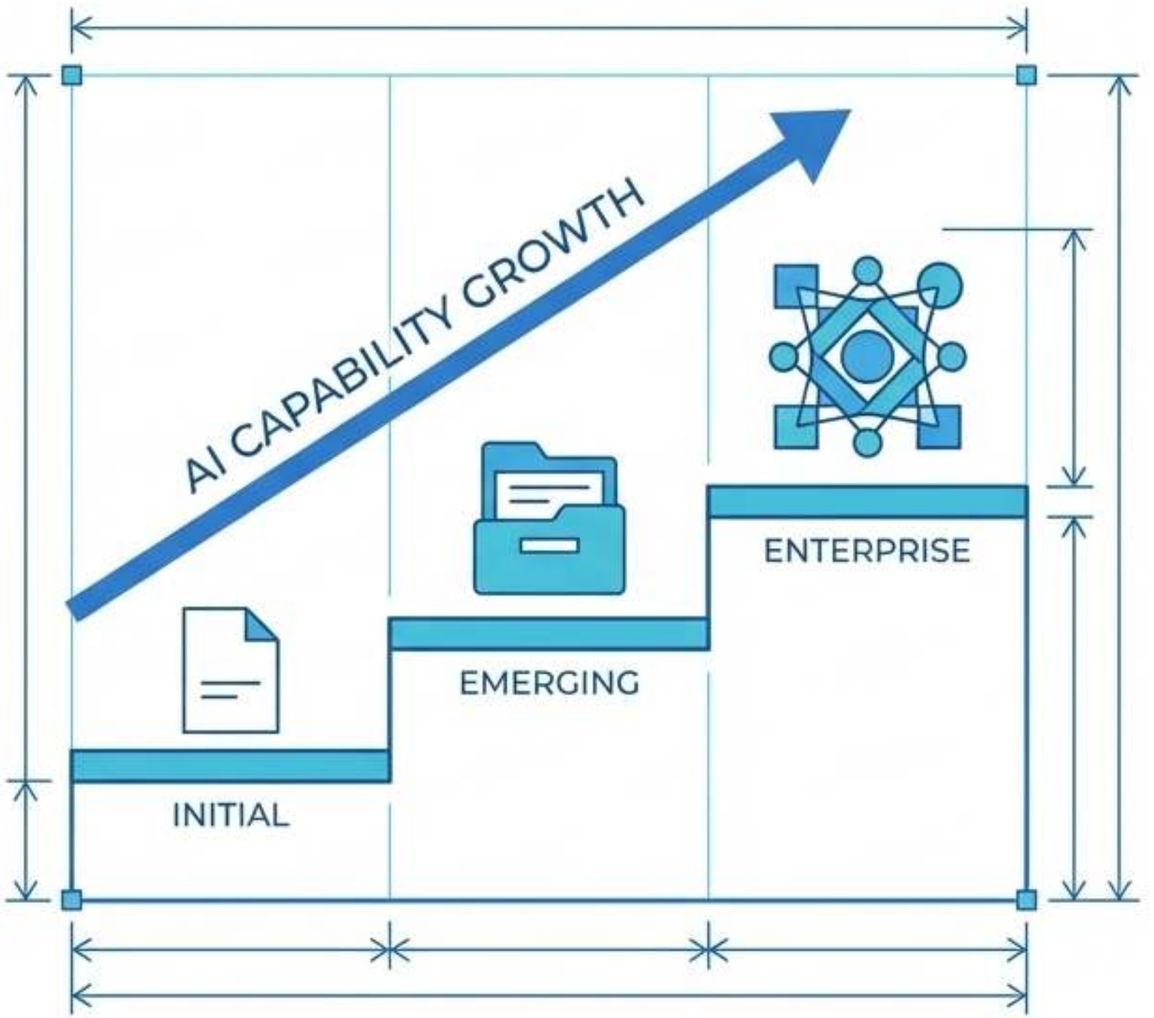
- Policies alone fail unless someone actively owns them
- Training does not stick without documentation to reinforce it
- Each building block strictly depends on the others
- This governing structure converts good intentions into consistent behavior



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Scale governance with your AI maturity

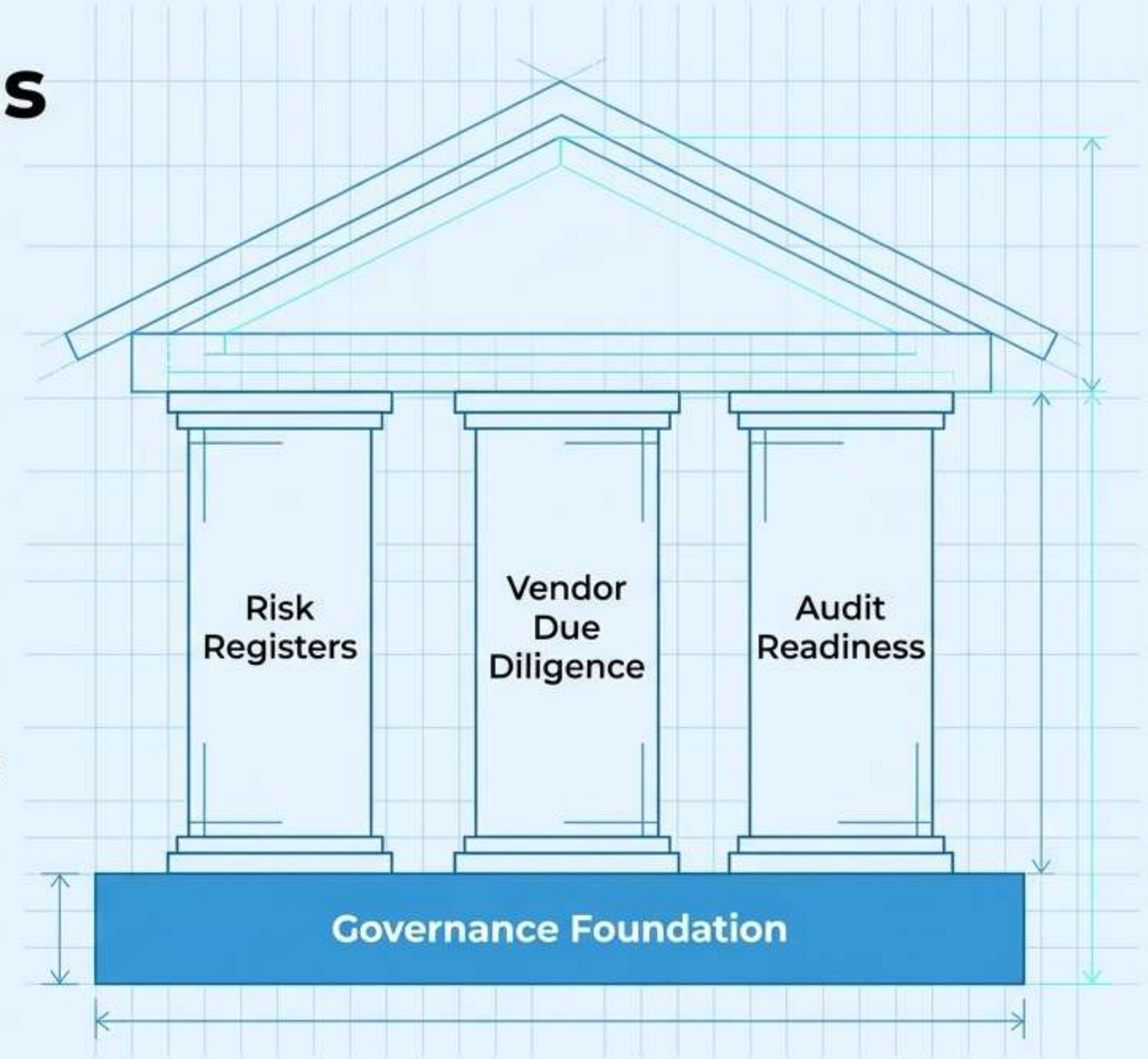
- Do not over-engineer your initial approach
- A one-page acceptable use guideline may be entirely sufficient
- A simple register of active projects is enough for small companies
- Avoid creating compliance theater that nobody respects
- Evolve the complexity only as your AI capability grows



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Create the conditions for rapid innovation

- Establish simple policies and clear roles today
- Prevent the accumulation of unnecessary risk
- Make risk registers and vendor due diligence manageable
- Ensure permanent audit readiness
- Unlock the confidence to deploy AI at scale



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Build your AI capability roadmap

Shift from unguarded experiments to measurable business impact



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