# THE QUARTERMARK

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## AI, And Only AI, This Quarter, Because… Arguably, Nothing Else Matters Right Now



### Where Are We?

**Alarmingly, Still Searching for a Lighthouse in a Storm.**

We have talked about how employees are adopting AI faster than Canadian organizations are institutionalizing it, and about how competitive advantage in business will come less from discovering AI and more from scaling, governing, and integrating it. After another quarter of work with industrials based here, with little progress and the same questions asked ad nauseum, it's clear we are missing a framework. Or at least a leadership framework.

## The 8 AI Leadership Choices

AI presents a set of connected leadership choices. A coherent approach requires explicit decisions about value, people, principles, control and accountability. This frame provides a structure for making those decisions. This is not another technology deployment scenario. This is a restructuring on steroids, and it requires thoughtful leadership decisions.

### 1 Posture What stance will we take toward AI?

An organization's posture should reflect its ambition, circumstances and appetite for change. *Where do we want to lead vs. follow, or will we hold back? • How much experimentation are we prepared to encourage and fund? • How will our posture support our broader strategy?*

### 2 Value What do we want AI to accomplish, and what will we do with the gains?

AI can improve productivity, reduce errors and friction, lower costs, strengthen customer outcomes, and enable new offerings/ revenue sources. Leaders must establish the benefits which matter most and how to use the resulting capacity. *What are we prioritizing? • Where could AI change what we offer, how we compete or how we create value? • What is our position on workforce reductions, reduced hiring and not backfilling vacancies?*

### 3 Principles What commitments will guide our use of AI?

Orgs need to decide which values and obligations will shape adoption. These commitments should influence everyday decisions about tools, providers, and applications. *What uses of AI are consistent with our values, and which would we decline? • Who are we helping to fund? • What are our expectations regarding accuracy, fairness, transparency and intellectual property? • What information or work are we willing to contribute to providers' training data?*

### 4 Sovereignty Where do we need control, independence or domestic capability?

The importance of sovereignty will vary by org. For some, national obligations or domestic capability will be central. *Does our mandate, ownership, funding or customer base create particular sovereignty obligations? • Where do we need control over our data, systems and critical capabilities? • Should domestic providers receive preference, and on what basis?*

### 5 Protection What must we protect, and under what conditions can AI access it?

AI adoption has to be connected to the organization's approach to cybersecurity, privacy, confidentiality and intellectual property. Safeguards should reflect misuse or failure. *What information can AI access, retain or share? • Which activities require additional safeguards? • How will we assess providers' security? • How will we detect/ respond to AI incidents?*

### 6 Architecture What will we build on, and how will we manage it?

Platform and tool choices create both capabilities and dependencies. Organizations need an approach that supports useful adoption today while preserving room to adapt. *Which platforms and tools will we support, and how will we select them? • Where will AI operate, and how will it connect to existing systems and workflows? • How will we manage licences, tokens/ usage costs, integration and ongoing maintenance? • Who will own the roadmap?*

### 7 Responsibility What do we owe our people, and what will we expect of them?

AI will affect how people work and how their careers develop. Organizations need to establish their responsibilities to employees (and other stakeholders). *What baseline should everyone receive? • What additional development will leaders and specialist roles need? • How will we help people adapt their roles and build relevant career skills? • What support will we provide? • What will we expect employees to learn, adopt and remain accountable for?*

### 8 Authority Who or what can decide and act, under whose oversight?

Authority translates the preceding choices into decision rights, accountability and oversight. It requires separate consideration of employee discretion and AI autonomy. *What are the roles of the board, senior leadership, functional leaders and any AI oversight body? • What may employees use, experiment with or build on their own? • When may AI produce, decide or act on its own? • Where is human review required, and who is accountable?*

"The future's not set. There's no fate but what we make for ourselves."

- John Connor, in Terminator 2: Judgment Day