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ENTERPRISE -WIDE AI

"Float Like a Butterfly, Sting Like a Bee"

FLEXIBILITY AND PRECISION EDITION

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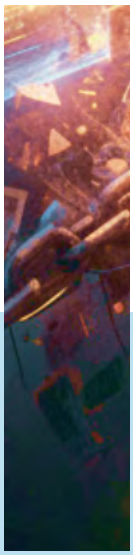

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The AI Maturity Model: 5 Steps to Operationalizing Intelligence

by David Cooper
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For years, companies have been deploying AI pilot programs in various departments and for isolated functions. The most common pilots launched first are typically low risk and easy to test, with visible results. For example, pilots help with targeted marketing programs and campaigns, automate customer service, enable sales and prospecting, fast-track talent acquisition processes, and boost productivity.

There are good reasons to start with small AI applications. Beyond little downside risk, data complexity is also minimal compared to scaling AI across core business functions. Moreover, leaders can point to quick wins and it's easy to reverse course if adoption stalls or fails.

So yes, pilots are easy. But what's important – and overlooked – is that they're supposed to be about building internal confidence in making artificial intelligence a core business function. This should be the goal of every business today – to make transformative, enterprise-wide advancements bolstered by AI a central component of the business strategy.

This article takes you through the steps in making that happen.

A growing dividing line between the haves and have-nots

Scaling AI across an enterprise has become a business imperative, and it's not just about technology. It's about operationalizing intelligence. This requires a mature AI model that is fully embraced by leadership, integrated into the company's operating model, and upheld with sustained discipline.

"The biggest question on CEOs' minds is whether they are

If you get the fundamentals right, AI deepens and compounds very quickly.

transforming fast enough to keep pace with technological change, including artificial intelligence," concluded a recent global survey conducted by PwC among 4,000+ CEOs in 95 countries.

The survey points to a growing divide between companies piloting AI and those deploying it at scale, stating that, "CEOs reporting both cost and revenue gains are two to three times more likely to say they have embedded AI extensively across products and services, demand generation, and strategic decision-making."

There is urgency to make AI operational across the enterprise

Here at The Cooper Group, we are encouraging all companies, regardless of size or industry, to escalate the use of AI in strategic ways. By providing actionable insights, we equip senior leaders and managers with the intellectual tools needed to turn market turbulence into a competitive advantage.

Here are a few of the top reasons companies must hasten the holistic approach to AI:

- **AI strategy, integration, and security gaps:** The lack of robust AI security and governance frameworks creates real risk for today's businesses. Bad actors are moving with lightning speed to find and exploit new vulnerabilities.
- **Cybersecurity and data protection threats:** Business leaders consistently flag cyberattacks as a top external threat. Strengthening defenses is simply no longer optional.
- **Regulatory complexity and compliance:** A shifting regulatory landscape, from AI and data rules to labor laws and trade controls, is forcing companies to spend more on compliance and risk management just to stay operational. Uncertainty in policy direction amplifies strategic risk.

Whether for these or countless other reasons, the journey to enterprise-wise AI must start today. Following are important steps for scaling the use of AI for your business.

Five recommended steps to scale AI across your enterprise

As mentioned, AI pilot programs are largely about building internal trust, skills, governance, and momentum – all smart precursors to moving AI into revenue, operations, and strategic decision-making.

This is where the real payoff comes into play – the use of AI tools to support core decision-making, such as pricing, supply chain optimization, financial forecasting, and compliance functions.

These AI functions require an internal data architecture, cleaner data, stronger governance, and cross-functional teams necessary to scale AI from a department tool to an enterprise platform. They also require courage and commitment from leadership and an internal culture that embraces advancement.

If you get the fundamentals right, AI deepens and compounds very quickly. Skip them, and pilots stay pilots. Here's how to move from pilots to a mature AI model that operationalizes intelligence. Every step in this process is essential, lest you end up with expensive tools that deliver zero impact and ROI.

1. ANCHOR **AI to business outcomes (not isolated tools and functions)**

It's time to stop letting departments and teams play around with limited and siloed usage of AI. You must go to the mountaintop! Specifically, define three to five enterprise-level outcomes that AI must drive, such as revenue growth, cost reduction, speed, risk mitigation, and customer experience.

Every use of AI must map directly to one of your designated business outcomes or they will not scale. This is how AI stops being a novelty tool and starts being a lever for company-wide technological advancement, security, and sustained growth.

2. BUILD **a shared AI operating model**

Pilot programs naturally die out when a company starts reinventing the AI wheel. This needs to happen – in a holistic way. It starts by creating enterprise standards for data access, security, governance, model selection, ethics, and vendor management.

This is accomplished by establishing a small, central AI enablement team that sets guardrails and accelerates adoption across departments. It is the holistic approach, and it's how you avoid meeting resistance and bottlenecks that cripple forward movement.

3. FIX **the data foundation before trying to scale**

AI can only scale as fast as the quality of your data allows. You need clean, standardized data definitions and fully integrated data silos, and high-value data needs to be accessible across teams. The bottom line here is if your leaders, teams, and employees don't trust the data, they won't trust the AI. If the data doesn't deliver real-world intelligence based on facts, nobody should trust it, anyway.

4. RESKILL **managers and frontline teams – and do it fast**

Scaling AI isn't about training data scientists; it's about training decision-makers. Managers need to know how to ask better questions, interpret AI outputs, and redesign workflows around AI. And frontline teams need clear guidance on when to rely on AI, when not to, and how to improve it through feedback loops.

5. REDESIGN **workflows, incentives, and accountability**

AI will not scale if it is forced to travel a path riddled with old processes. Workflows need to be redesigned so that AI is embedded at the point of decision – not after decisions are made. Update KPIs, performance metrics, and incentives to reward AI-enabled outcomes, and assign clear ownership for results so that improvements can be made and recognition can be properly attributed.

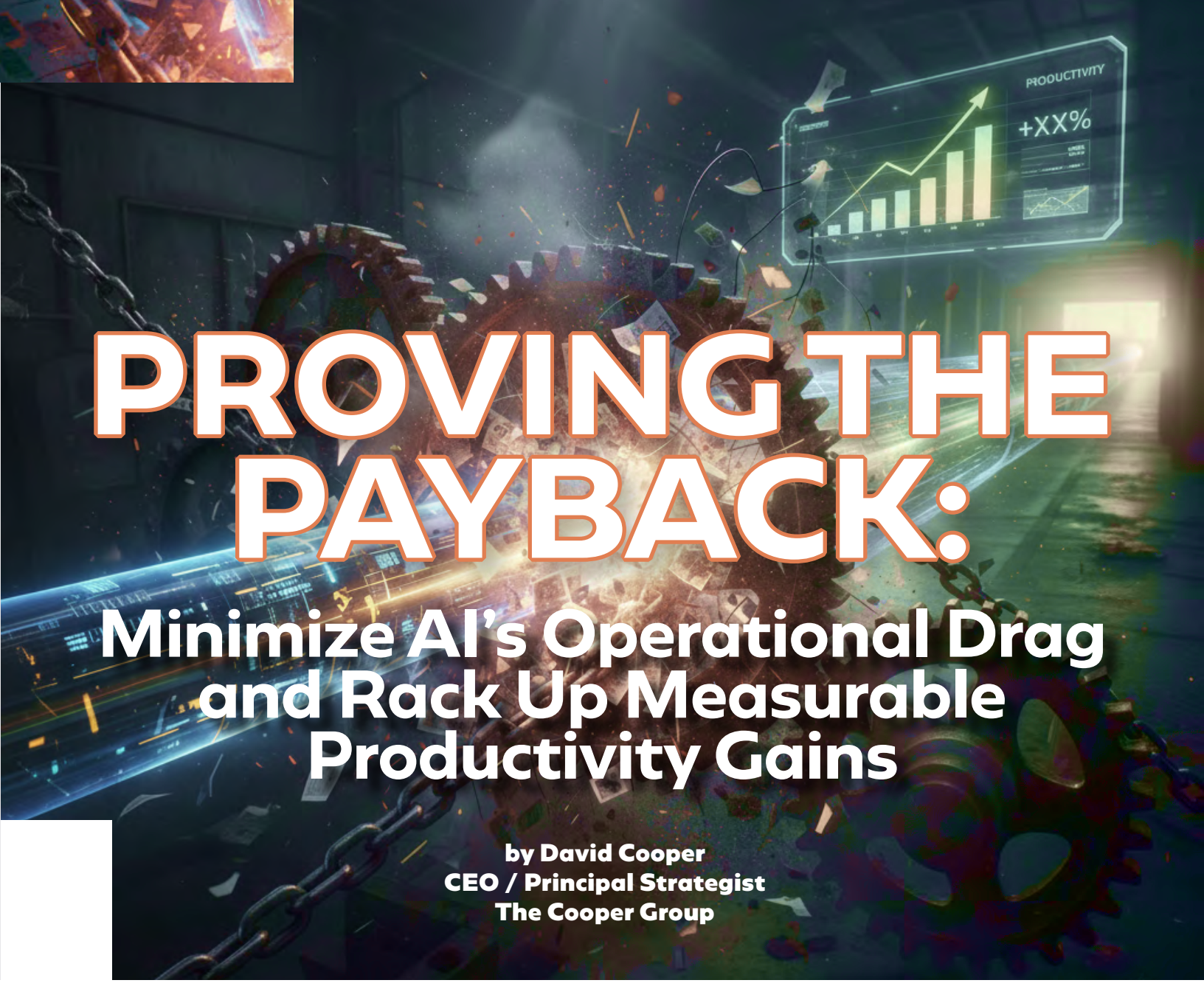
"Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee"

This famous phrase by the late heavyweight champ Muhammad Ali conveys exactly how companies score knockouts with AI. Navigating disruption is a full-contact initiative and AI is the competitive edge.

- Enterprise-wide AI lets a business float by moving faster, lighter, and more efficiently, automating routine work, sensing market shifts early, and adapting to change in real time. That's agility.
- When it's time to act, AI lets a business sting – with precision. Targeted offers instead of broad campaigns. Smart pricing instead of gut feel. Fast decisions based on facts instead of drawn-out debates (laggards!). Focused day-to-day impact where it matters most. That's targeted precision.

Winners that scale AI across the enterprise are flexible enough to pivot and sharp enough to outperform competitors. Treat it like a core business function, not just a side project for IT or innovation teams.

Reach out to The Cooper Group (TCG) for more insights on how to scale your use of AI, create a winning model, and operationalize intelligence to protect and grow your business. We specialize in developing sound, agile strategies that guide companies through turbulence to profit.



PROVING THE PAYBACK:

Minimize AI's Operational Drag and Rack Up Measurable Productivity Gains

by David Cooper
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The Cooper Group

The biggest AI challenge for today's business leaders is making AI investments pay off – by making them work. In most cases, failure to scale, transform, and achieve ROI does not happen because AI doesn't work. It's because businesses do not remove the roadblocks. Let this be a lightbulb moment!

This article explains how to quantify the value of AI, but I'm going to start with why cultural and workflow friction (known as operational drag) created by new intelligent systems must first be addressed. As you'll see, this is what clears the way for productivity gains to be achieved and measured.

Here's what operational drag looks like in practice

Operational drag is the friction inside a business that slows or dilutes the very value that AI is supposed to deliver. Following are six of the biggest culprits.

1 AI IS BOLTED ONTO OLD OR BROKEN PROCESSES

When companies layer AI on top of outdated workflows instead of fixing (redesigning) the workflows first, the result is faster execution of bad processes. People and teams end up working around the system, approval processes pile up, and AI outputs sit unused. This is a road to nowhere.

2 FRAGMENTED TOOLS AND PILOTS CUT AI OFF AT THE KNEES

When different departments use different models, vendors, prompts, and data sets, nothing is connected. There's no shared intelligence or collaboration. Basically, the organization as a whole spends time trying to reconcile disparate outputs

instead of acting on clear indicators to move the business forward.

3 POOR OR INACCESSIBLE DATA IS A NON-STARTER

AI depends on clean, connected data pipelines. Operational drag rears its head when teams spend more time hunting down, cleaning, or validating data than using AI insights and outputs to make decisions.

4 HUMAN HESITATION AND TRUST GAPS KILL MOMENTUM

When employees and teams don't trust AI outputs, they don't know when to rely on them, and many fear making the wrong call. So, they are forced to spend valuable time double-checking everything. AI is meant to deliver speed, but in reality, humans slow it way down. One step forward and two steps back.

5 GOVERNANCE BOTTLENECKS ARE ANOTHER NON-STARTER

Overly cautious approval processes, unclear legal guidance, and slow security reviews turn every AI improvement into a months-long debate. Risk avoidance also kills momentum.

6 MISALIGNED INCENTIVES AND KPIs ARE MORALE BUSTERS

If employees and teams aren't rewarded for using AI, or worse, if they're reprimanded when their AI-enabled improvements disrupt old metrics, they revert to familiar manual methods. This is the fastest way to slam the brakes on AI adoption, create disgruntled employees, and derail ROI.

Operational drag is quiet – but dangerous

- It erodes ROI.
- It kills adoption.
- It turns AI into extra work instead of operational and competitive leverage.

Meanwhile, competitors with less drag are moving forward fast with fewer tools and accessible data.

Goal number one for scaling AI across a business is to reduce operational drag with:

- Modern processes and simpler workflows
- Clean, trusted, and accessible data
- Clear and unencumbered decision-making authority
- Aligned incentives and KPIs

Measuring productivity gains proves the payoff

If you can't point to fewer hours per task, faster cycles, higher throughput, or better outcomes per employee, then you don't have productivity gains (yet) from using AI. What you have is almost certainly dreaded operational drag dressed up as innovation.

Here's another lightbulb moment: Recognize the difference between saying, "We're using AI" and "AI is moving our business forward – and here are the metrics to prove it."

And so, answers to these questions not only need to be yes, but also by how much:

- Are employees and teams actually saving time?
- Is productivity better than before we deployed AI?
- Is our business getting more output per dollar or per employee?

If you're using AI tools the right way, you should be experiencing productivity gains; however, measuring outcomes is the only way to confirm it. Companies that don't measure productivity gains end up funding the technology, and all that does is add cost with no business value.

Make it count. And make it easy.

5 steps to making measuring simple

1 DECIDE WHAT "BETTER" MEANS BEFORE YOU DEPLOY AI: If you don't define

success up front, you'll never know if AI helped you get there. Pick one or two desired outcomes for a particular aspect of operations, such as faster work, lower costs, fewer errors, or greater output. Keep it concrete and owned by the designated business unit.

How to measure it: To keep it simple, compare the before AI and after AI results for one clear metric, such as hours per task, days per cycle, cost per transaction, or revenue per employee. This is the type of clarity required to measure productivity gains.

2 MEASURE TIME SAVED – NOT THE PERFORMANCE OF YOUR AI TECH: While most AI tools claim to deliver gains in accuracy, productivity gains show up in the time employees get back in using those tools. The goal is to track whether employees are spending less time on routine work and more time on higher-value work.

How to measure it: Compare how long a task took before AI vs. after AI. Track average time spent per task on key tasks – per employee, per team, per week.

3 FOCUS ON REAL USAGE – NOT THE LICENSES YOU PURCHASE: Buying AI tools does not equate to productivity gains. Adoption and consistent usage by your people and teams are the indicators and drivers of ROI.

How to measure usage: Look at active users in a designated department or team on a weekly basis. Track the percentage of tasks completed with AI assistance, as well as usage by people in each role or team. If usage is flat, productivity will be, too. Again, knowing what 'better' means will help you propel higher usage to prove the payoff.

4 MEASURE BOTH QUALITY AND SPEED – IN TANDEM: Faster work that's wrong or substandard increases rework rates and risks. Productivity gains only count if quality stays steady or improves alongside faster outcomes.

How to measure and keep both steady: Track error rates, rework rates, customer satisfaction, or other metrics – before and after the use of AI. If error rates go up, any gains in speed need to be tempered until processes around quality are made stronger.

5 TRANSLATE TIME SAVED INTO COST REDUCTION OR GROWTH CAPACITY: The impact of AI on the business matters, but so does efficiency.

How to reconcile AI productivity gains with revenue gains: Turn hours saved into costs that are avoided (fewer overtime hours), capacity that is gained (more customers served per employee), and positive impact on revenue (faster sales cycles or more deals closed per sales rep).

Lead, grow, and last in an environment defined by rapid AI maturation

The fundamentals of successful AI use in this article are a solid roadmap for achieving sustainable growth while dealing with growing economic pressures. Put AI to work in the right ways and you'll get the enterprise-wise payback you need from your investments.

Contact The Cooper Group for a free consultation on these and other ways to make your AI investments count. We help companies solve challenges and grow with custom strategies for successful transformation.

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