

ARTICLE · AI NATIVENESS

Rebuilding the *foundation*

Why real AI adoption goes deeper than tools, and how KAIVANT® began.

Michiel R. de Boer · Founder and Chief Architect, KAIVANT® · October 2026

IN SHORT

- Most organisations add AI on top of work that has not changed, then count usage. That is automation theatre, not transformation.
- The few organisations that get real value from AI redesign their work around it.
- KAIVANT® measures the foundations: what AI delivers today, what the organisation builds in its people, and whether it can rebuild itself.

01

A game that changed my thinking

About ten years ago, Google DeepMind's AlphaGo beat Lee Sedol, one of the best Go players in the world. AlphaGo's progress fuelled my interest in data science and machine learning. I signed up for a course in machine learning, and slowly I began to understand what self-learning machines could do.

At that moment, I had no idea how fast AI would develop.

For many people, the AI journey started in November 2022, when ChatGPT was launched. By January 2023, it had an estimated 100 million monthly users. At the time, analysts said they could not remember a faster start for any consumer internet app.¹

Soon, the promise of a quick fix reached the business world. AI would make work faster, cheaper and better, almost overnight, without changing how the work is done.

That is the trap.

02

We have seen this before

When the internet arrived in the late 1990s, most companies made the same mistake. They put a website on top of the business they already had. The processes stayed the same. The structure stayed the same. The website sat on the side like a digital brochure. Success was measured in visits and clicks, not in how the business itself had changed.

The companies that got real value from the internet did something harder. They rebuilt their foundations around the technology. They let it reshape how work was organised, how decisions were made and how value reached the customer.

● THE INTERNET, LATE 1990s

A website on top of the business.

Success measured in visits and clicks.

● AI, TODAY

Chatbots and agents on top of the business.

Success measured in licences and usage.

03

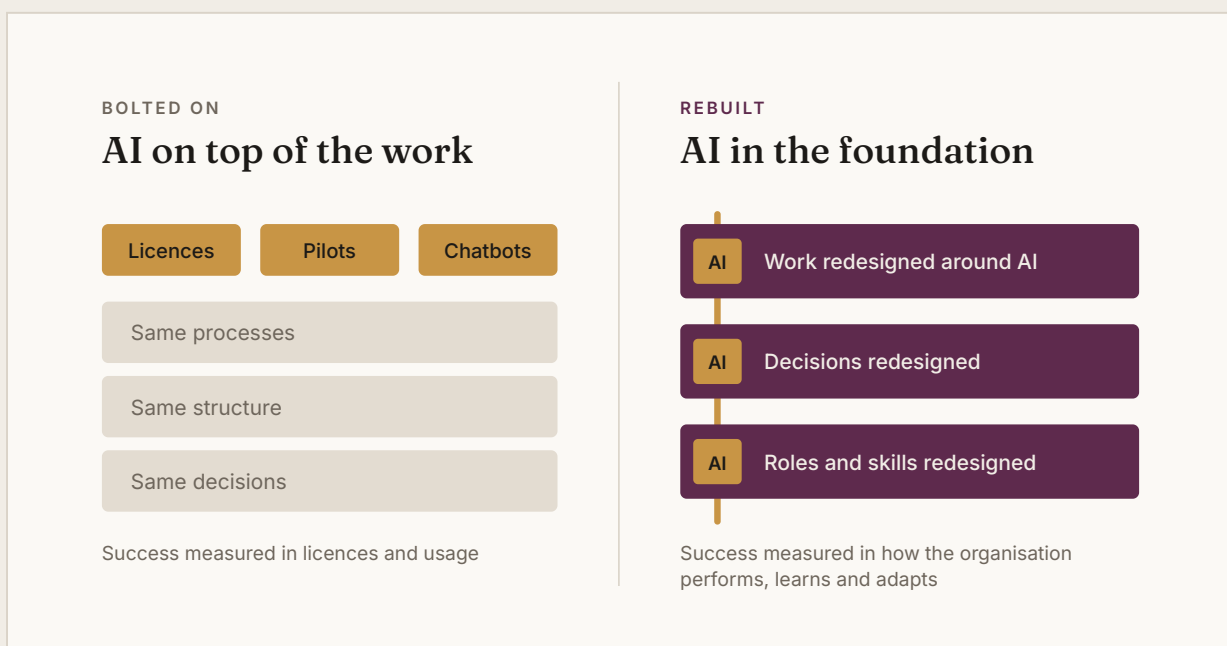
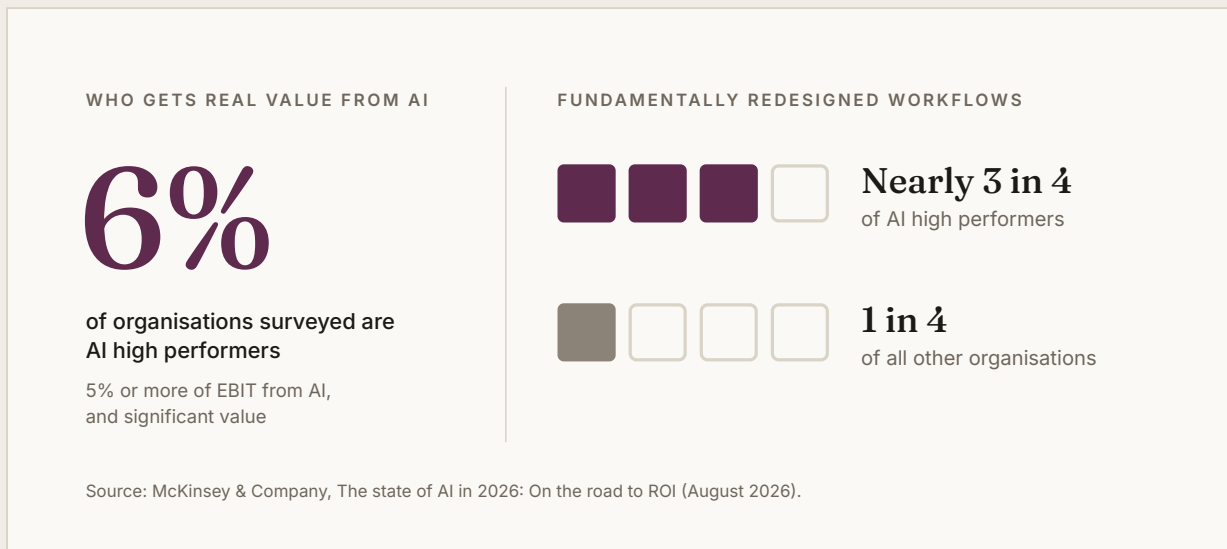
Automation theatre

The same pattern is now repeating with AI. Organisations buy licences, run pilots and add chatbots or agents on top of processes that have not changed. Then they count usage and call it adoption.

That is automation theatre, not transformation.

The numbers tell the same story. In McKinsey's State of AI survey for 2026, nearly nine in ten respondents say their organisation uses AI regularly. Yet only about 6 percent are what McKinsey calls high performers: organisations that see significant value and link 5 percent or more of their EBIT to AI.²

Nearly three in four of these high performers have fundamentally redesigned workflows because of AI. Among everyone else, it is one in four. In other words, the winners do not insert AI into the work they already do. They redesign the work around AI.



Bolting AI on top changes the dashboard. Rebuilding changes the organisation.

Real AI adoption goes deeper than tools. It changes how an organisation coordinates, decides and adapts.

You do not get there by measuring tools. You get there by rebuilding.

04

How AI-native are you today?

This realisation is why I built KAIVANT®. If rebuilding is the real work, the first question is simple:

How AI-native is your organisation today, and where do you start?

Most metrics cannot answer that. They count tools, licences and usage, and that is only the surface of adoption. KAIVANT looks at the foundations instead, from three sides.

Leverage Architecture WHAT AI DELIVERS TODAY

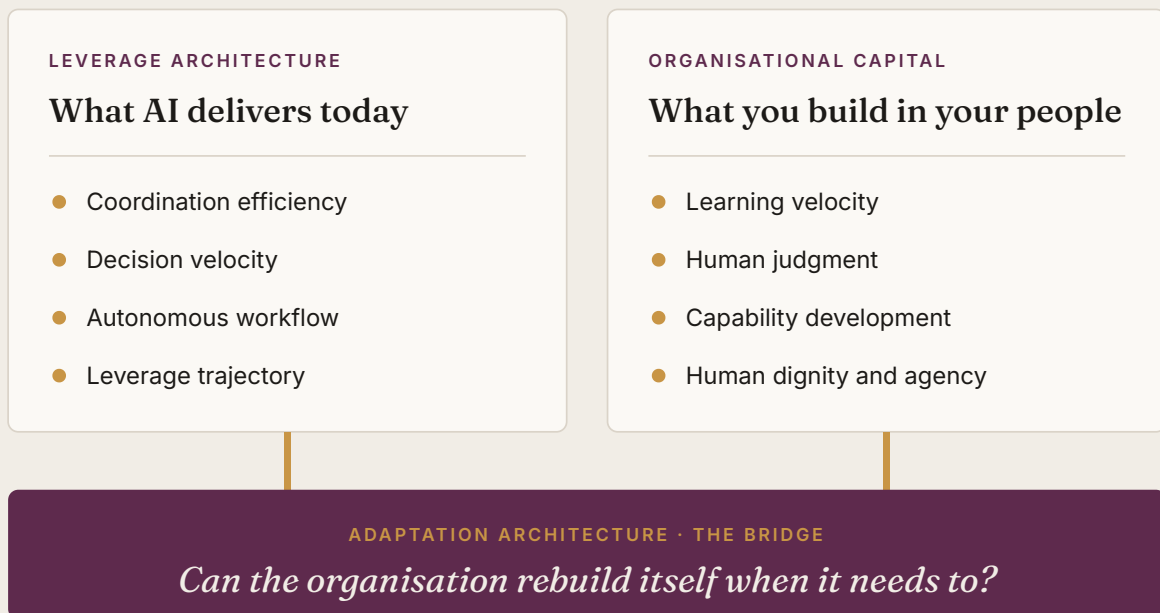
How much coordination overhead the organisation carries, how fast and how well it decides, how much work runs through AI without constant hand-holding, and whether output per person is on an upward path.

Organisational Capital WHAT YOU BUILD IN YOUR PEOPLE

How fast the organisation learns, whether people are used for real human judgment, whether human capability grows as fast as AI takes over tasks, and whether people keep a real say and the safety to challenge the AI systems that shape their work.

Adaptation Architecture THE BRIDGE

Whether the organisation can redesign and rebuild itself when it needs to.



One side cannot make up for the other. A weak side holds the whole score back.

The two sides cannot cover for each other. Strong AI output on top of fading human capability does not make an organisation AI-native. The result is not a ranking or a compliance score. It is a developmental map that shows where you stand and what to build next, for the organisation and for the people in it.

05

What's in a name

The name carries the intent. *Kai* (改) is the first character of *kaizen* and stands for continuous change. *Avant* means ahead of the curve. And AI sits in the middle of the name, where it belongs: inside the foundations, not on top of them.

What kind of organisation will you become?

A machine that learned to play Go pulled me into this field ten years ago. What I did not expect was how familiar the story would become.

The internet did not reward the companies that simply got online first. It rewarded those that rebuilt. AI will do the same, only much faster.

Five to ten years from now, nobody will ask how many licences you bought or how many pilots you ran. They will ask what kind of organisation you became.

That answer is being written today.

SOURCES

1. Time, "Why ChatGPT Is the Fastest Growing Web Platform Ever", 8 February 2023, citing Similarweb data and a UBS analysis. time.com/6253615/chatgpt-fastest-growing
2. McKinsey & Company, "The state of AI in 2026: On the road to ROI", August 2026 (survey fielded May to June 2026). mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/the-state-of-ai

YOUR NEXT STEP

How AI-native is your organisation, *really?*

Find out where you stand. Both starting points are free and need no account.

FOR LEADERS · ABOUT 25 MINUTES

What is AI doing to your organisation? Take the Leadership Pulse

kaivantscore.com/pulse

FOR INDIVIDUALS · ABOUT 10 MINUTES

Is AI making you more valuable? Take the free Kaivant-I self-test

kaivantscore.com/KI-test

GO DEEPER

Read the framework and its foundations

kaivant.org

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michiel R. de Boer is the founder and Chief Architect of KAIVANT®, and co-owner and managing director of MindMagine. For more than 30 years, he has helped organisations across Asia Pacific with the best practices of programme, project and process management, governance and leadership. Based in Kuala Lumpur, he now focuses on helping organisations become truly AI-native, without losing the human capability that makes them work.



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