

Do You Need a Chief AI Officer?

The title is optional. The accountability is not.

A practical leadership scorecard

20 minutes · strategic materiality · ownership · 90-day agenda

MARTYN BOWIS

AI strategy, design and delivery · martyn.ai

START HERE

The title is optional. The function is not.

A Chief AI Officer is an accountable leadership function for turning AI ambition into governed business capability. The job is not to own every model or project. It is to ensure the organisation owns the choices, consequences and outcomes.

THE OPERATING LOOP

01

Discover

Understand strategy, current activity, workflows, readiness, value and constraints.

02

Design

Choose the portfolio, work design, build-buy boundary, controls and operating model.

03

Develop

Create working evidence that tests value, usability, feasibility and risk together.

04

Deliver

Put capability into operation with ownership, adoption, monitoring and learning.

This is a continuous evidence loop, not a four-stage handoff.

PART 1 · STRATEGIC MATERIALITY

How much does AI now matter to the business?

Tick each statement that is true or likely within the next 24 months. Count one point for every tick. This is a signal, not a maturity contest.

- ☐ **01** AI could materially affect revenue, margin, service quality or customer trust.
- ☐ **02** Multiple teams, vendors or business units are investing in AI.
- ☐ **03** AI influences decisions that affect customers, employees or regulated outcomes.
- ☐ **04** Useful AI requires sensitive, proprietary or tightly governed organisational data.
- ☐ **05** Agents or automated workflows can act across business systems, not merely draft content.
- ☐ **06** Success depends on coordinated change across product, operations, technology, data and risk.
- ☐ **07** AI investment and operating cost are becoming material enough to require portfolio choices.
- ☐ **08** The board or executive team expects a defensible account of AI value, risk and progress.

YOUR MATERIALITY SCORE

out of 8

PART 2 · OWNERSHIP SCORECARD

Is the work genuinely owned?

Score each statement from 0 to 3: **0 absent** · **1 emerging** · **2 defined** · **3 operating**. Record the evidence, not the aspiration.

DISCOVER

0	1	2	3
☐	☐	☐	☐

We have a current inventory of AI activity, owners, vendors and dependencies.

DISCOVER

0	1	2	3
☐	☐	☐	☐

Important opportunities begin with a baseline, business outcome and testable value hypothesis.

DISCOVER

0	1	2	3
☐	☐	☐	☐

Leadership understands the organisational, data, architecture and workforce constraints.

DESIGN

0	1	2	3
☐	☐	☐	☐

We have an explicit AI value thesis and a prioritised portfolio, not only a use-case list.

DESIGN

0	1	2	3
☐	☐	☐	☐

Build-buy boundaries, red lines and investment thresholds are decided and visible.

DESIGN

0	1	2	3
☐	☐	☐	☐

Human-agent work, decision rights, permissions and escalation paths are intentionally designed.

SUBTOTAL · DISCOVER + DESIGN

out of 18

PART 2 · OWNERSHIP SCORECARD

From working evidence to operating capability.

DEVELOP	0	1	2	3
Prototypes are designed to answer investment questions and have a credible route to production.	☐	☐	☐	☐
DEVELOP	0	1	2	3
Data access, integration and architecture are treated as product work, not deferred plumbing.	☐	☐	☐	☐
DEVELOP	0	1	2	3
Evaluation covers business value, usability, reliability, security and risk before scaling.	☐	☐	☐	☐
DELIVER	0	1	2	3
Production AI capabilities have named business and technical owners with operating budgets.	☐	☐	☐	☐
DELIVER	0	1	2	3
Adoption, role change, support and capability-building are planned with the people affected.	☐	☐	☐	☐
DELIVER	0	1	2	3
Outcomes, incidents, provenance and learning are monitored and feed the portfolio decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐

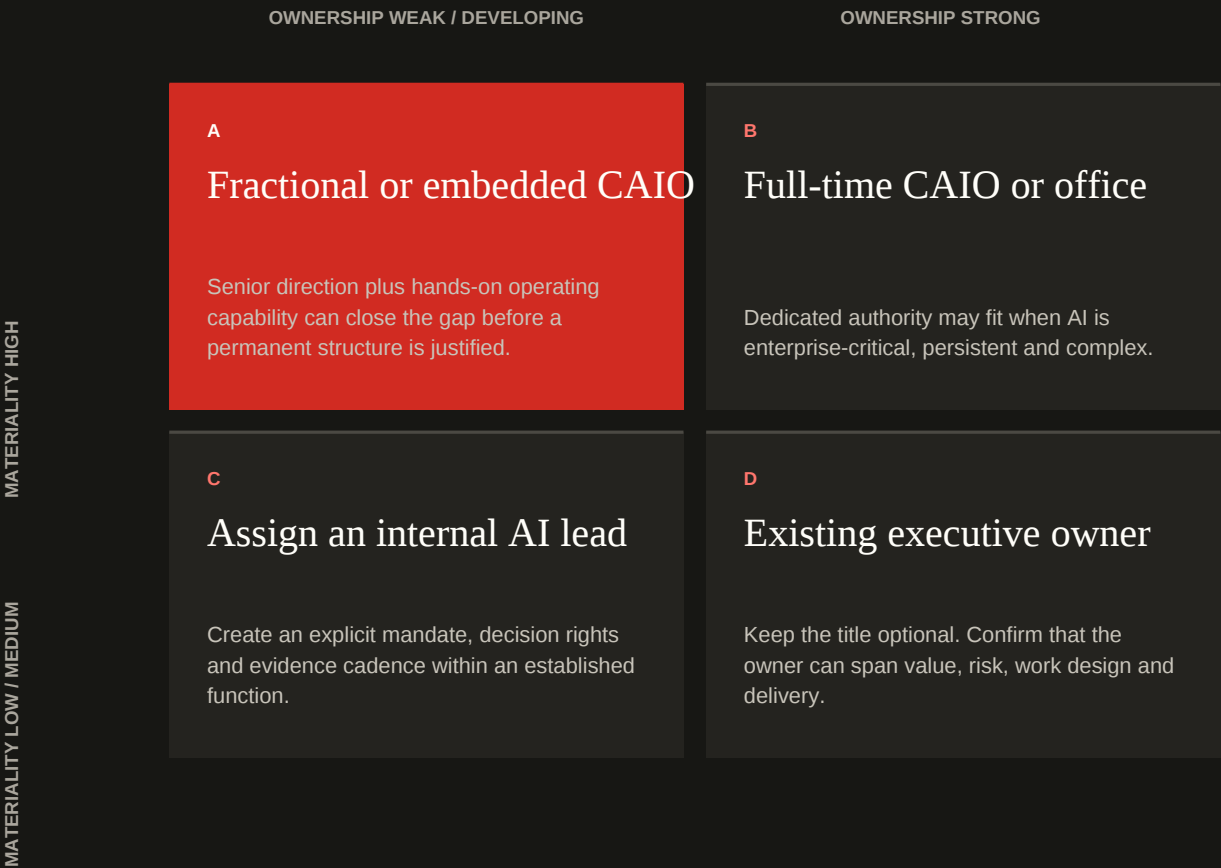
YOUR TOTAL OWNERSHIP SCORE out of 36

Weak 0-12 · Developing 13-24 · Strong 25-36

INTERPRET THE RESULT

Match the leadership model to the ownership gap.

Read materiality vertically and ownership horizontally. The recommendations are starting hypotheses. Regulatory exposure, critical decisions or high-consequence automation may justify stronger dedicated ownership regardless of score.



The most important outcome is a named, credible owner.

A PRACTICAL FIRST MOVE

The first 90 days.

Do not begin by writing a grand strategy or buying another platform. Begin by making the position visible, proving one important slice and establishing the operating rhythm.

01 Discover · Days 1-20

Map the portfolio, interview leadership and frontline teams, identify constraints, baseline one important workflow and name the decision to make.

02 Design · Days 21-40

Set an initial AI position, value thesis, red lines, portfolio logic, work design and proportionate control model.

03 Develop · Days 41-70

Build a thin working slice. Test value, usability, data, integration, reliability and security with real users and real constraints.

04 Deliver · Days 71-90

Make the fund-stop-buy-build decision. Name owners, agree adoption and operating measures, and turn learning into the next portfolio move.

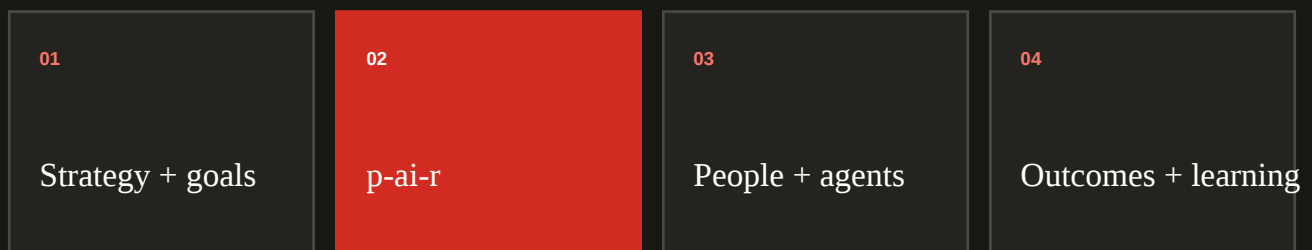
BY DAY 90 YOU SHOULD HAVE

A shared position. One evidenced decision. One working slice. Named operational ownership. A visible next horizon.

THE OPERATING SURFACE

The CAIO function needs somewhere to operate.

p-ai-r is a shared decision and work plane. It connects strategy, evidence, people, agents, automated workflows and learning so accountable leadership can be expressed in everyday work.



01 Connected context

Evidence, decisions and organisational memory where the work happens.

02 Human judgement

Visible ownership, decision points, permissions and escalation.

03 Workflow automation

Agents use governed tools for bounded work across business systems.

04 Learning loops

Outcomes, provenance and feedback improve the workflow and portfolio.

A platform does not replace leadership. It makes leadership operational.

EVIDENCE OF ACCOUNTABLE AI LEADERSHIP

What good looks like.

- ☐ Every material AI capability has a business outcome, baseline and named owner.
 - ☐ Leaders can see the portfolio, dependencies, evidence and next decisions.
 - ☐ Build-buy choices reflect differentiation, dependency and switching cost.
 - ☐ Human judgement, permissions and escalation are explicit in the workflow.
 - ☐ Governance is implemented in architecture and operations, not only policy.
 - ☐ Affected people shape the work before major investment and launch.
 - ☐ Production systems are monitored for value, reliability, security and harm.
 - ☐ Learning from one initiative changes the next portfolio decision.
-

QUESTIONS FOR A PROSPECTIVE CAIO OR PARTNER

- 01** What important AI investment would you stop, and why?
- 02** How do you connect model behaviour to workflow and business value?
- 03** Where should human judgement remain non-delegable?
- 04** Show how you have carried intent from strategy into real operation.

YOUR NEXT CONVERSATION

Where does AI currently lack an accountable owner?

Bring the portfolio, difficult decision or workflow that keeps crossing organisational boundaries. The useful question is not whether you should copy somebody else's executive structure. It is what work must be owned in your business, by whom, with what evidence and operating capability.

A USEFUL FIRST STEP

Review the score together. Find the weakest ownership link.

Then choose one decision or workflow important enough to create real evidence.

WHY MARTYN

Enterprise judgement. Human-centred design. Technical depth. Delivery.

Recent AI Strategy Lead at IAG · software-building since 1999 · TOGAF certified

martyn.ai/caio.html