C8 Collabor8™

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP | AI AT WORK

AI positioning: Collabor8™

Technology rarely fails.
What fails is how the work changes around it.

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DATE

November 2026

CLASSIFICATION

Public

01

SECTION 1

Opening stage statement

OPENING STATEMENT

Technology rarely fails. What fails is how the work changes around it. Everyone's buying AI; few are changing how work gets done. We sit in that gap: agents that take real tasks, and people who can run them as creators, not passengers on someone else's stack.

Technology rarely fails

- What fails: how the work changes around it
- Everyone's buying AI; few are changing how work gets done
- Our gap: agents on real tasks + people who can run them as creators (not passengers)

National backdrop: UAE National AI Strategy 2031. Aim to be a world leader / most prepared for AI by 2031. Official Cabinet policy (2019). Talent and upskilling are an explicit objective, not an afterthought. (3)

Core claim: Technology rarely fails. What fails is how the work changes around it: process, roles, handoffs, and the people who have to run the new way of working day to day.

Market reality: Most buyers have "done AI" at the chatbot layer. Fewer have changed operating model, roles, or who owns the handoff to an agent.

Where we sit: Agents that take real tasks and people who can brief, check, and extend them. Creators and change agents inside the firm, not passengers on someone else's stack.

Why this lands: Agentic AI widens the gap. You're not only installing a tool; you're handing off pieces of real work. That only sticks if someone in the business knows how to get the best out of those agents.

02 SECTION 2

Where companies really are

The facts on this page come from McKinsey's *The state of AI in 2026: On the road to ROI* (August 2026), a global survey of 1,719 respondents in 97 countries. We have picked five headline findings and set out what each one really means for a large, regulated business.

High performers: the roughly 6% of firms where AI accounts for 5% or more of EBIT (earnings before interest and taxes) and delivers significant value. Everyone else is "other firms".

Five facts, and what they really mean

The fact	What it really means
~9 in 10 use AI regularly in at least one business function. One team can meet that bar	A single team using a chatbot counts. This measures access, not adoption across the business. 56% use AI in three or more functions.
47% are scaling chatbots, the most widely scaled AI tool	The most widely scaled AI is still basic chat: people asking questions in a chat window.
40% of large firms are scaling agents in at least one function. One function can be one team	Real momentum, up from 27% in a year. But one function can be one small team in a firm of 50,000. In 2025, no more than 1 in 10 firms were scaling agents in any given function. Across all firms, it is about 2 in 10.
37% see any profit impact from AI (EBIT: earnings before interest and taxes), no better than last year	"Any" includes very small gains. Only about 6% of firms are high performers, where AI accounts for 5% or more of EBIT. That share has not moved.
~1 in 4 of other firms have fundamentally redesigned workflows. Among high performers it is nearly 3 in 4	This is the real gap. Nearly 3 in 4 high performers have redesigned how work gets done. Among other firms, about 3 in 4 have not.

Source (1): McKinsey, The state of AI in 2026: On the road to ROI (Aug 2026), survey of 1,719 respondents in 97 countries, May to June 2026. The 1 in 10 single-function figure is from McKinsey, The state of AI in 2025 (Nov 2025), source (2). All figures are self-reported. Full report: mckinsey.com, The state of AI in 2026.

Firms have bought the technology. Few have changed the work, and the few who have are the ones getting the value.

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SECTION 3

What's possible today

Between a chat window and a virtual team there are three more steps. So far, only about 2 in 10 firms are scaling agents. (1)

STEP 1

Chat

You ask, it answers

STEP 2

Automation

Fixed workflows run without you

STEP 3

Workspace access

AI works in your email, files and systems

STEP 4

Agent

You brief it, it does the job end to end

STEP 5

Multi-agent

A team of agents, each with a role

The virtual team

You
brief, check, own the result

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Coordinating agent
plans, routes, chases, reports back

Research
finds, checks

Operations
runs routines

Drafting
writes, edits

Monitoring
watches, alerts

Specialist agents, working in the background

How the work flows

- **Brief:** you set the job, the standard and the deadline.
- **Hand off:** the agent takes it and you move on to something else.
- **Work in the background:** on a schedule, a trigger or on request.
- **Result comes back:** to one place where you talk, steer and check.
- **Refine:** you sharpen the brief and the agent gets better. Trust builds from checking.

Agents built and orchestrated as different layers inside a business (research, ops, drafting, monitoring, specialist roles).

Individuals manage those agents the way they would manage people: brief, check, redirect, raise the bar.

That collaboration muscle (brief › check › improve › trust) is the skill most firms have not built yet.

Not a chatbot. A virtual team, managed like a real one.

04 SECTION 4

Who owns the agents?

The split	Agent as software	Agent as worker
Owner	Technology	The business
What it covers	Infrastructure, integration, data, security, access	Role, brief, quality standard, handoffs, accountability for output
Like a new hire	The laptop, system access and security rules	The line manager who sets the job, checks the work and owns the result
Success looks like	It runs, it is secure, it is used	The work has actually changed

Two roles, two kinds of people

An agent is two things at once: software and a worker. Tech owns the platform; the business owns the work. Nobody yet owns how people and agents work together.

The blur: agents look like software, so by default they land with tech. But they do work: they have roles, briefs, output and handoffs.

Two roles, not one: the CTO builds and runs the platform. The chief AI officer drives new ways of working from inside the business, fluent in the technology. Different people, different experience, and both are needed.

Not a platform roll-out: tech is great at delivery. Changing how work gets done needs authority in the business and credibility with the people who run P&Ls.

Lived proof: I design agent roles, write their job descriptions, set handoffs and review their output. That is workforce design, not a technology project.

Areas for debate

- The chief AI officer should come from the business and be fluent in the technology, not come from technology and be fluent in the business.
- If AI reports into the CTO, it gets measured as a tool, by deployment and usage, not by whether the work changed.
- Every agent needs a named business owner, just as every employee has a line manager.
- Building an agent team is workforce design. So where are HR and operations in the conversation?
- Who decides when an agent is retrained, replaced or retired, and who answers for its mistakes?
- Where it breaks: when AI is the product, the chief AI officer should probably be technical.

Tech builds the platform. We help the business build and run the agent workforce on top of it.

05

SECTION 5

How we work: two experts, one team

How we fit

Technical AI lead

What you have, what's needed, how it fits your platform and controls

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ONE TEAM, CO-DESIGN INTO THE WORK

Your business

Teams, processes, people

Your tech team

Platform, data, security, integration

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Lee Purcell, Founder

Where agents change the work, who owns them, how people are upskilled

Symbiotic: we sit alongside your tech team and inside your business

Who we are

Who	Background	Focus on the engagement
Our technical AI lead **Technology lead**	Founder of DigiCube and FoundationFlow. Former Global Chief Strategy Officer at Accubits, leading AI and digital transformation for enterprises and governments.	Works with your tech team: architecture, platform choices, build, governance and controls.
Lee Purcell **Business lead**	20+ years advising complex multinationals at leading global consulting firms. Former Regional Director at Towers Watson, where he built the Middle East operation.	Works inside your business: where agents change the work, ownership, roles and adoption.

Where we focus: highly regulated, slower-moving industries

Health insurance	Banking	Investment management	Government

- **Why regulated industries:** regulation, legacy systems and risk make them slower to move. The gap between the platform and how work gets done is widest there.
- **Not instead of your tech team:** we add strategic technology depth alongside them, then push the change all the way down into the business.
- **Brought in for big problems:** shaping what you have, what's needed, and how it lands with the people who do the work.

We work with your tech team on the platform, and inside your business on the work.

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SECTION 6

Agents at three levels

Three levels, three owners

The level	What it looks like
Company-wide **Agents everyone can use**	**Examples:** Policy and HR questions, knowledge search, IT help desk. **Owned by:** Your tech team, with a business sponsor **What we bring:** Platform choice, governance and guardrails
Department **Specialist agents for teams**	**Examples:** Claims or case triage, finance close, compliance checks, customer service, procurement. **Owned by:** The department head **What we bring:** Work redesign, agent roles and handoffs
Individual **People who design and run their own agents**	**Examples:** Briefings, research, drafting, managing projects, working with the agents above. **Owned by:** The individual **What we bring:** Upskilling, so people build and manage agents well

UPSKILLING

Runs through every level. It starts from our existing programme for senior leaders and extends into training modules for teams, tailored to each client's work.

- Each level needs a different owner and a different skill. That is why the ownership question in section 4 matters.
- The levels connect: individual agents draw on department and company-wide agents, just as people draw on shared teams.

The individual level is my own story: the virtual team in section 3, made available to everyone who is upskilled.

Company-wide agents give everyone access. Department agents change how teams work. Upskilled people make it stick.

07

SECTION 7

Measuring what AI is worth

Spend is rising and people feel faster. Only 37% see any of it in profit. (1)

The evidence

Feeling faster is not the same as making money

80%

Say AI has improved their own productivity

37%

See any impact on profit (EBIT)

High performers: the ~6% of firms where AI accounts for 5% or more of EBIT.

2x

High performers are twice as likely as other firms to have a defined process for measuring AI's impact.

60%

expect to increase their AI investment next year.

The productivity people feel is not yet profit a firm can show.

How we measure value

- **Before you spend:** score each AI project for the value it should deliver, what it will cost and the risk it carries. Fund the ones worth doing.
- **While it runs:** track a small set of agreed measures against a starting baseline, so progress shows early.
- **After it lands:** report the result in the terms the CFO and the board use.

What we count as value

Cost	Revenue
Speed and quality	Risk and control

Built on evaluation tools developed by our technical AI lead for scoring the value of AI projects.

Source (1): McKinsey, The state of AI in 2026: On the road to ROI (Aug 2026). Survey of 1,719 respondents in 97 countries, May to June 2026. Self-reported. High performers are the roughly 6% of firms where AI accounts for 5% or more of EBIT and delivers significant value.

We don't promise a return figure. We give you a way to prove one, before you spend and after.

08 SECTION 8

My AI journey

Layer	How it works	What I did
Chat (LLM)	You ask; it answers (ChatGPT and the like). Best for thinking, drafting, Q&A. You stay in the seat for every step.	ChatGPT and Claude for thinking and drafting.
Automation	Fixed workflows: Microsoft Power Automate and RPA tools such as UiPath in large firms; Zapier / Make and similar in smaller ones. AI (or rules) wired into a process so a defined task runs without you sitting in the chat. Great for repeatable, predictable steps; brittle when the work is messy or judgment-heavy.	
Desktop / workspace access	Tools get into your real email, calendar, shared drives and desktop files. Work happens where the business already works. Context becomes live (docs, threads, folders), not only what you paste into a chat. Bridge between "chat about work" and "act on work."	An AI assistant working directly in my email, calendar, shared drives and desktop folders.
Agent	You brief it; it owns the job end to end (research, draft, iterate) and comes back with an outcome, or keeps going. Different contract from chat: delegation, not conversation. Needs a human who can brief well, check output, and own exceptions.	Single-job agents, such as a daily briefing every weekday at 08:00 and due diligence on new contacts.
Multi-agent	A team of agents, each with a role, sharing context toward one outcome. Closer to how real work is organised (specialists + handoffs). Still needs people who design the roles and own the result.	A virtual team of about 25 agents, plus about 8 skills (reusable specialist playbooks the agents draw on). A chief of staff agent coordinates, and a live map shows who does what and how work passes between them.

Personal experience: Collabor8™ company data, October 2026. The agent and skills counts describe the source account, not an independently verified performance benchmark. Briefing time: Dubai (UTC+4).

THE LADDER

Chat › Automation › Desktop access › Agent › Multi-agent

Same couple of years. Five different ways of working. Most firms have chat everywhere and agents in pockets, and think they've arrived. The opportunity is Layers 4-5. The risk is getting there without changing process, roles, and skills.

COLLABOR8™ | AI POSITIONING

Technology rarely fails. What fails is how the work changes around it.

Agents that take real tasks and people who can brief, check, and extend them.

How Collabor8™ can help

Platform, governance and guardrails

Architecture, platform choices, build, governance and controls.

Work redesign, agent roles and handoffs

Where agents change the work, ownership, roles and adoption.

Upskilling

People who design and run their own agents.

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Sources

Market and company data

(1) McKinsey, The state of AI in 2026: On the road to ROI, August 2026. Published 25 August 2026. Global survey of 1,719 respondents in 97 nations, May to June 2026. Self-reported findings. Figures in sections 2, 3 and 7.

mckinsey.com: The state of AI in 2026

Collabor8™ company data, October 2026. Personal journey and team experience from the source document dated 27 October 2026. Not independently verified.

Research and commentary

(2) McKinsey, The state of AI in 2025: Agents, innovation, and transformation, November 2025. Published 5 November 2025. Source for the historical single-function agent-scaling figure.

mckinsey.com: The state of AI in 2025

Source clarification: The 2026 report describes about two in ten respondents scaling agents across their organisation. This is not the same scope as scaling agents in at least one function. The original wording is retained in sections 2 and 3.

Regulation and policy

(3) UAE Cabinet, UAE Cabinet adopts National Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2031, April 2019. Published 21 April 2019. Source for the policy context on talent, infrastructure and governance.

uaecabinet.ae: National AI Strategy 2031

Source clarification: McKinsey describes enterprise EBIT impact as essentially unchanged. The published 2025 and 2026 reports state 39% and 37% respectively. “No better than last year” is retained from the original, not an assertion of identical percentages.

ABOUT COLLABOR8™

We work with your tech team on the platform, and inside your business on the work. Two experts, one team: technology and business.

Disclaimer: General analysis, not legal, regulatory or investment advice. Survey findings are self-reported and do not establish causation or guarantee returns. Company experience is identified separately. Public sources checked in November 2026. The five-layer ladder is a Collabor8™ framework, not a numerical maturity score.

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