

Lead signal

Governance starts where authority can stop work.

The Chief AI Officer reached 76 percent of organisations, the mandate did not arrive with the title.

Lead signal

The Chief AI Officer moved from emerging role to executive at speed, now in 76 percent of surveyed organisations, up from 26 percent in 2025.

The title has arrived, the governance test sits underneath it. The person carrying it either holds authority over budget, stopping power, workflow redesign and value proof, or the enterprise has added another layer of visibility while the decisions stay exactly where they were. **76 percent** have the role, far fewer have given it the mandate.

This is an operating-model question before it is an appointment. Once coordination becomes cheaper, hierarchy has to earn its place through judgement, escalation, decision rights and accountability, and a Chief AI Officer without stopping power is a coordinator in a world that just made coordination cheap.

<p>The title</p> <hr/> <p>Chief AI Officer appointed</p>	<p>The test</p> <hr/> <p>What can that person stop</p>
---	---

From my office, I built the Workflow Coroner as a decision mechanism for exactly this role, working alongside the AI BVE, the Human-Agent Diagnostic and aibvf-mcp to rule on whether a workflow should survive before any more is invested in it. The procurement fixture returned a Stop, removed 11 of 14 steps under a single delegated approval rule, and surfaced **2.76 million euro** in annual saving with no new AI project required.

aibvf-mcp adoption held at **1,267 npm downloads** through the rolling thirty-day window, sustained signal rather than a one-off burst. Live at brief.craighortonadvisory.com/workflow-coroner.html, source at github.com/Bahamas1717/ai-bvf.

On the radar

Three signals from the week.

Each one tests where authority and accountability actually sit.

Karpathy and Clark · May 2026

60%

odds on automated AI R&D by end of 2028

Jack Clark puts roughly 60 percent odds on automated AI R&D by the end of 2028, where frontier models autonomously train their successors. Andrej Karpathy joined Anthropic's pretraining team. The organisational signal matters as much as the technical one, the work that designs the next system is itself being automated.

RAND and Gartner · 2024 to 2026

80%

of AI projects fail to land

More than 80 percent of AI projects fail, often on wrong problem selection, unready data, or a model that does not fit the workflow. Gartner's GenAI failure guidance names poor use-case selection and absent business value as central causes. The failure is rarely the model, it is the decision about where to point it.

ARPA-H · January 2026

IST

FDA-authorised clinical agentic system

The ADVOCATE programme pursues a first of its kind FDA-authorised clinical agentic AI system for cardiovascular care, with clinical AI agents and a supervisory AI overseer above them. Autonomy paired with a named supervisor is the governance pattern the rest of the enterprise still has to learn.

Against the grain

The Chief AI Officer role becomes enterprise lip service when it is treated as an appointment rather than an operating-model change. The headline number, 76 percent, reads as progress, the absence of stopping power reads as the opposite.

The operational test is simple, who can stop poor AI work before it consumes budget, data, people and executive attention. If nobody can, the title is decoration on a decision that never moved.

Perspective

Most enterprises appointed the role to signal seriousness, not to relocate authority. The seriousness shows up the first time the Chief AI Officer halts a funded initiative that the business wanted and the data did not support. Until that moment has happened at least once, the enterprise has bought visibility, not governance.

The reframing question

If your enterprise appointed a Chief AI Officer this year, what can that person actually stop?

One test this week to find the answer.

Run it against the AI portfolio

Map every AI initiative against a single question, who can stop it before it spends more budget, data and attention.

If the answer is unclear, split across teams, or sitting between sponsor and owner, you do not have governance where the money is being spent.

What's next

Issue 08 lands Friday 29 May 2026, the workforce composition problem, where the senior talent of 2030 comes from once agents take the junior rung, and the upskilling budget that separates the value capturers from everyone waiting for productivity to appear.