Stop Automating the Mess:

A Lean Case for AI that Actually Works

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or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love A.I.

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The headlines

> … work itself is becoming denser, faster and more fragmented. AI is accelerating throughput without reducing workload…

ActivTrak Productivity Lab | 2026 State of the Workplace | AI Adoption & Workforce Performance Benchmarks

> More than two-thirds of organizations said 30% or fewer of their GenAI experiments would fully scale within 3–6 months.

BCG | How to Get ROI from AI in the Finance Function

> **… 95% of organizations are getting zero return [from AI]…**

MIT Nanda | State of AI in Business 2025

> Over 80% of AI projects fail to reach production, roughly twice the failure rate of traditional IT projects.

Technource AI Failure Analysis citing RAND research

> Median ROI from AI in finance functions is only 10%, and nearly one-third of leaders report limited or no gains.

BCG | How to Get ROI from AI in the Finance Function

> Only 39% of organizations report any EBIT impact from AI, despite 88% using AI in at least one business function.

McKinsey | The state of AI in 2025

The question

Why isn’t AI delivering the results we believe it should?

The reason

"There is no single development, in either technology or management technique, which by itself promises even one order of magnitude [tenfold] improvement within a decade in productivity, in reliability, in simplicity."

- Fred Brooks, *No Silver Bullet*

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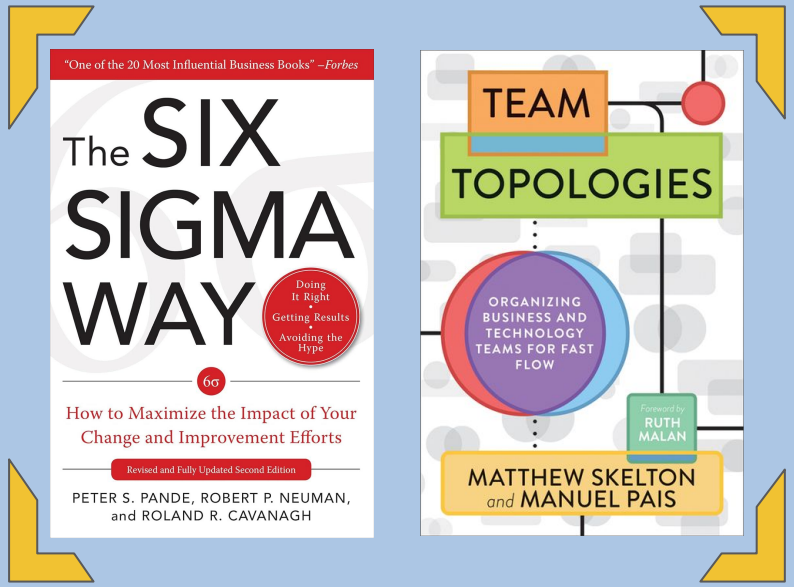
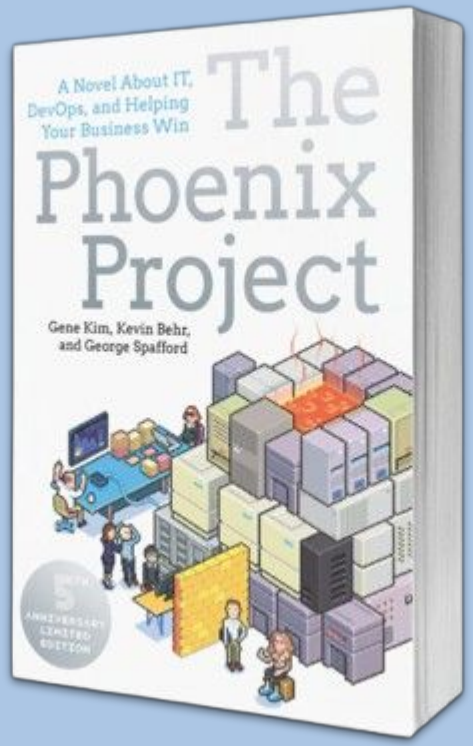
The solution: Pairing tech & techniques





Step 1: Make the work visible

Identify the work being done by the team

What to capture:

- Category & Task
- Time/Cost
- RACI role
- Complexity
- Priority
- Goal relationship
- Feedback
- etc.

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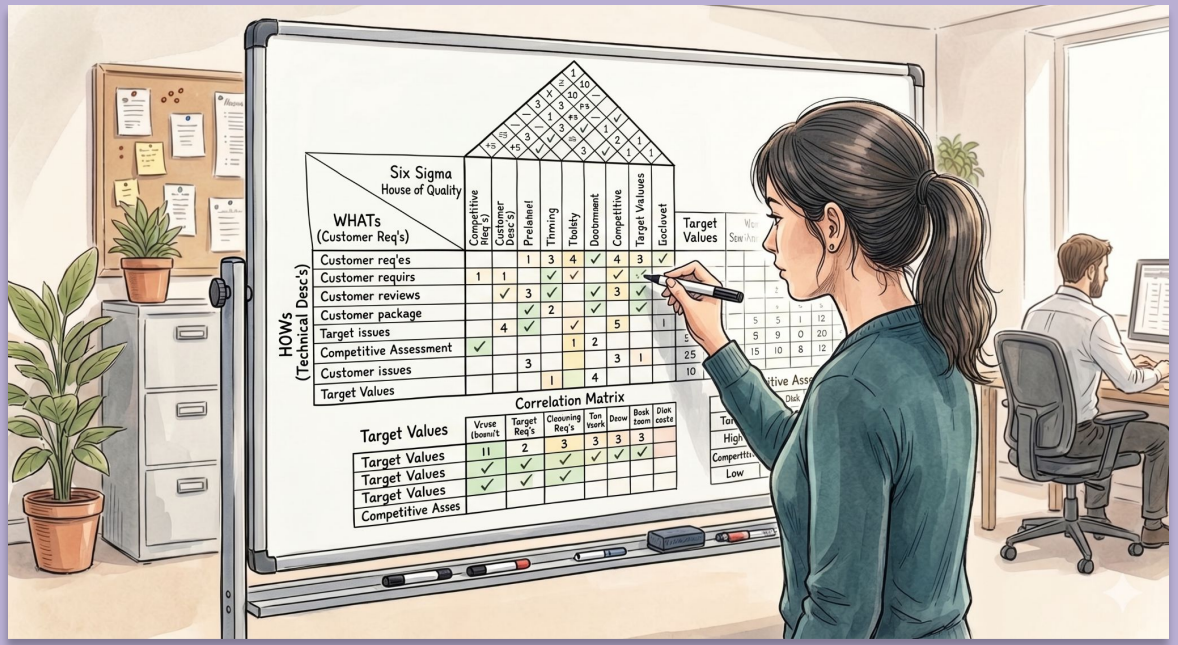
Step 2: Find the opportunities



Interrogate data for impactful opportunities

Where can we improve:

- Cognitive load
- Flow of value
- The “extrinsic load”
- Priority focus
- Unplanned work
- etc.

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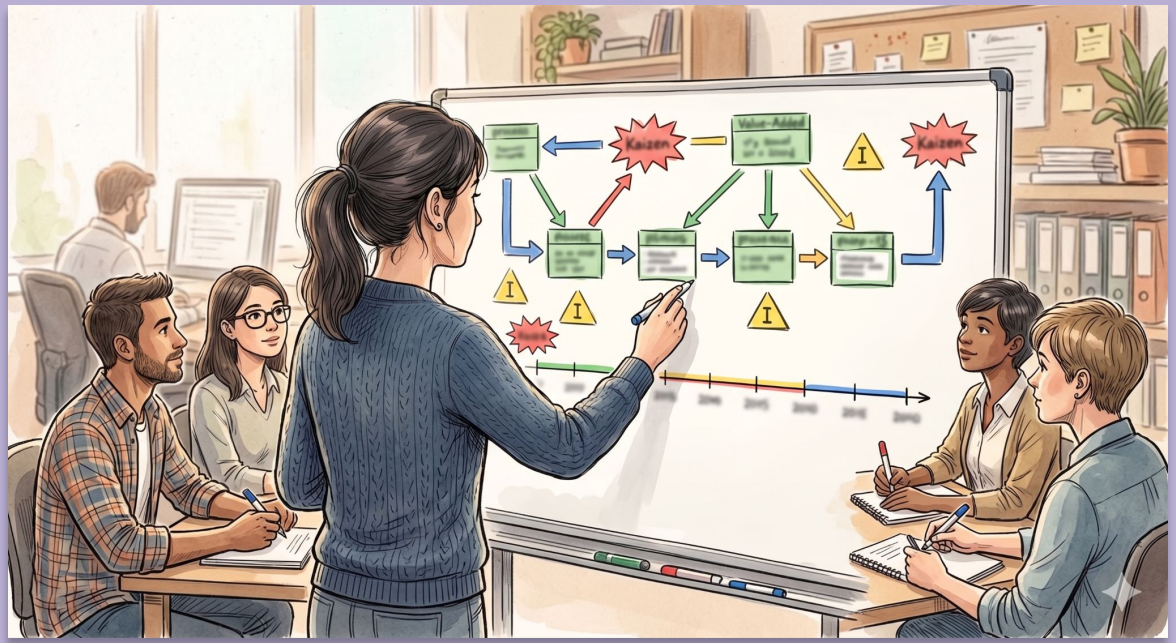
Step 3: Map it & walk it



For the highest-ranked candidates, **VSM + Gemba Walk**

Investigate:

- How it works
- Who does it
- What tools
- Bottlenecks
- Pain points
- All the metrics

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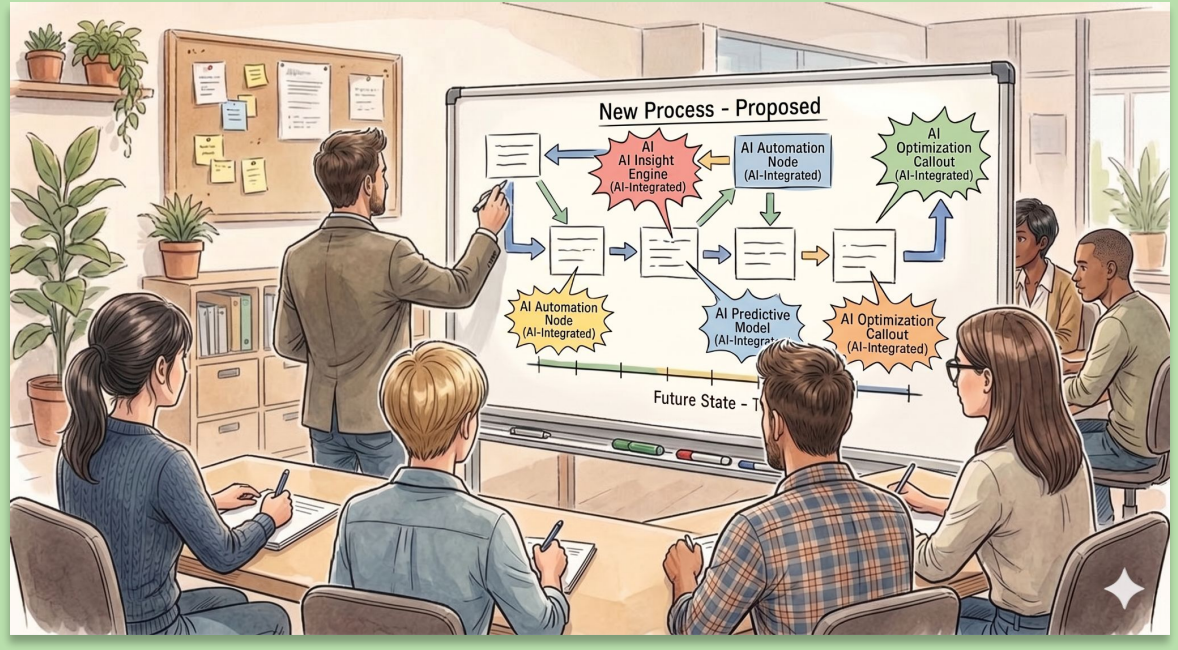
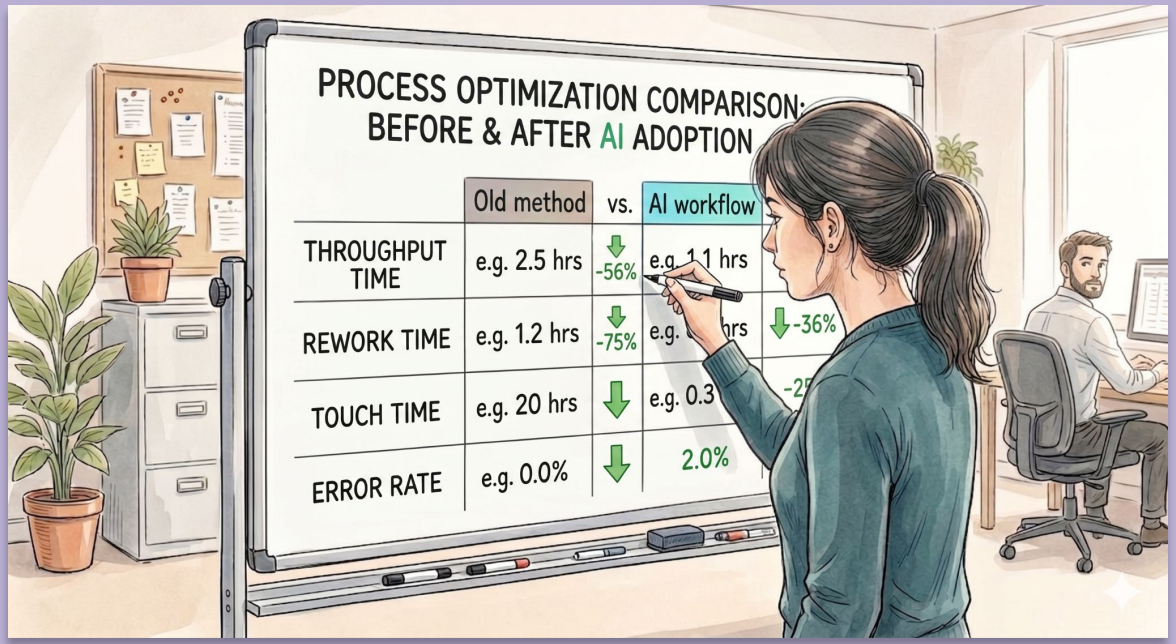
(re)Thinking



- Reinvent ~~redesign;~~ Conway's law is real
- Automate, augment, or transform
- Fix the pipeline, not the bottlenecks
- Take work out of the system

Step 4: Experiment, Observe, Repeat



Watch your metrics

- Throughput time
- Rework tim
- Touch time
- Quality
- Cost of AI
- Cost of labor

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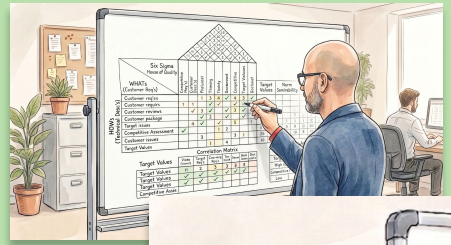
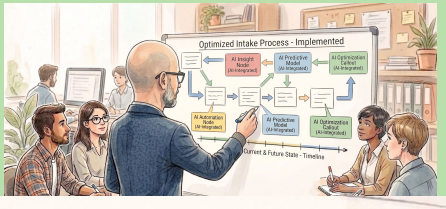
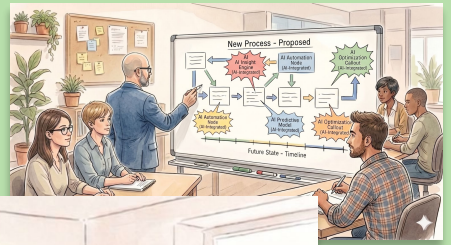
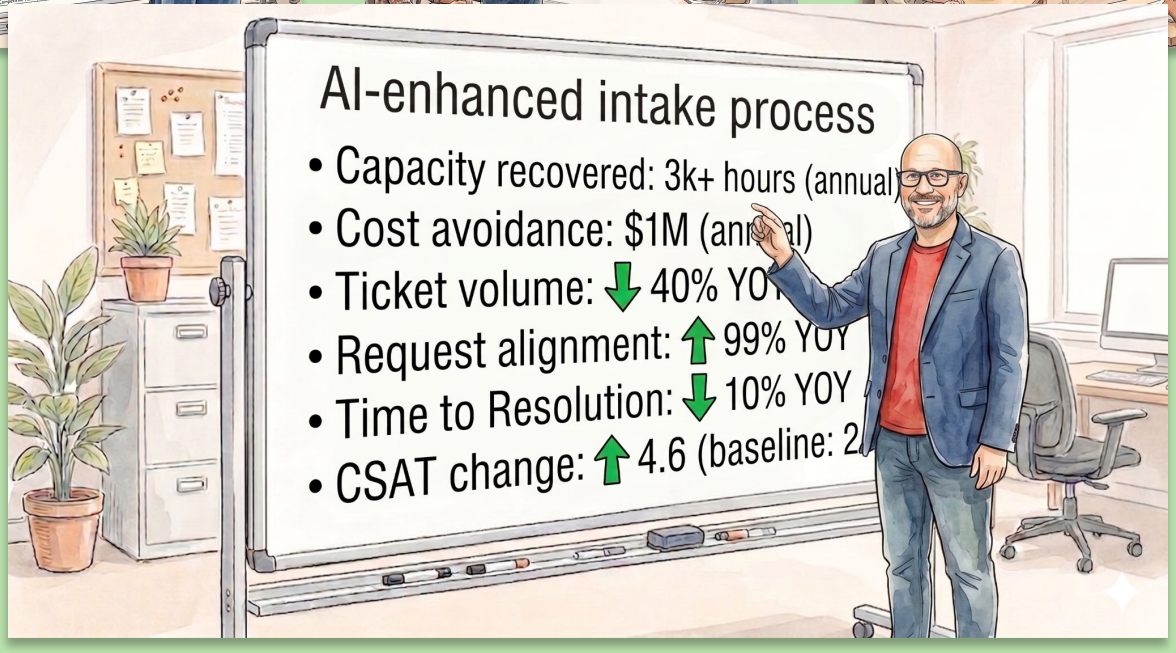
True Story







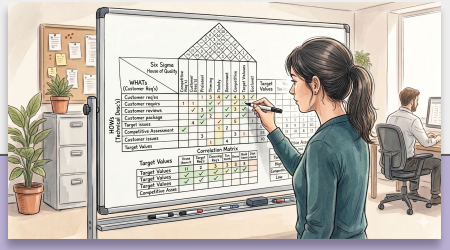


Step 5: Stack & Scale

Stacking

Return to your HOQ:

- Implement the next highest-value AI use case
- Stacked improvements have a compounding effect



Scaling

Democratize knowledge:

- Share your story across the org / with your customers
- Create AI Communities of Practice and Playbooks

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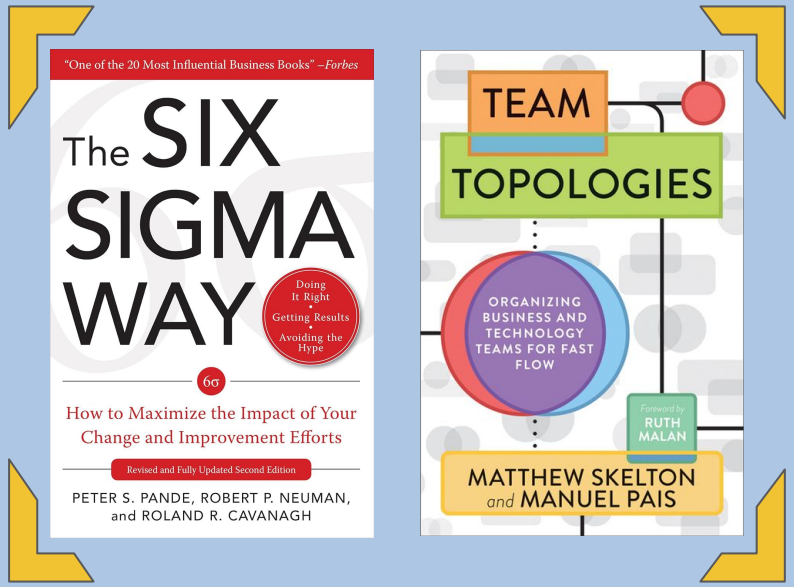
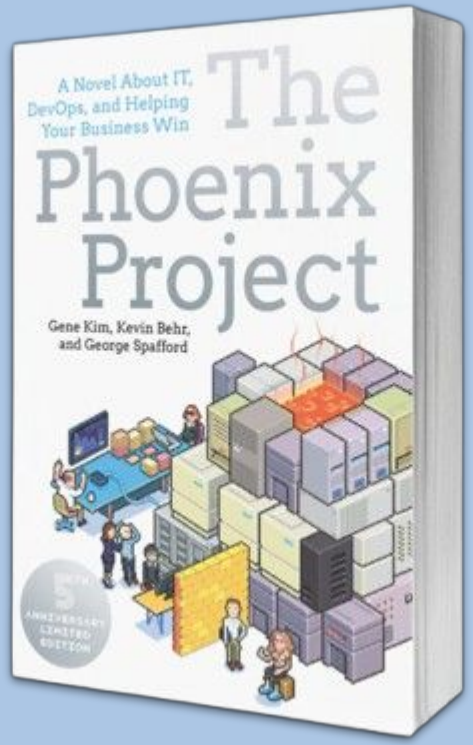
Parting thoughts





Thank you