# Competing and Winning in an AI-Driven World

**Jake Burns**

Executive in Residence
Amazon Web Services

# A tale of two cities

Employees are facing layoffs, yet employers are facing talent shortages

AI is making many jobs obsolete, yet it's creating new categories of work

Many experts argue it is "just math," yet other experts say it will disrupt everything*

AI is making some people less capable, yet it is making others far more capable

* Both sides happen to be right.

# Executive in Residence

**A CROSS-INDUSTRY, CROSS-SEGMENT TEAM OF FORMER EXECUTIVES AND THOUGHT LEADERS WHO LED SWEEPING TRANSFORMATIONS AT LARGE AWS CUSTOMERS**

**Arvind Mathur**
Former AMEA CIO,
Kellogg Company

**Chris Hennesey**
Former Tech CFO
Capital One

**Dan Slater**
Former Head of Innovation &
Transformation, Amazon

**Helena Yin Koeppl**
Former Head of Thomson
Reuters Labs, SVP

**Ishit Vachhrajani**
Former CTO
A+E Networks

**Jake Burns**
Former VP Cloud Services
Live Nation

**Jana Werner**
Former Head of Transformation
Tesco Bank

**Jonathan Allen**
Former UK CTO
Capital One

**Mark Schwartz**
Former CIO
USCIS

**Matthias Patzak**
Former VP IT, CTO
AutoScout24

**Phil Le-Brun**
Former International CIO
McDonald's Corporation

**Ryan Seaman**
Former Global CIO,
Western Union

**Stephen Brozovich**
Former Technology and
HR Leader, Amazon

**Tom Soderstrom**
Former CTO
NASA JPL

**Tom Godden**
Former CIO
Foundation Medicine



Global leader in live entertainment and ticketing

Delivering 30,000 events to 85 million fans annually

44,000 employees worldwide

Over $10 billion annual revenue

# My Transformation Journey

Modernize IT / Close Our Datacenters Worldwide

Legacy IT Systems: 118 applications, 668 servers, 1PB storage

12 Month Deadline

No Budget

Frozen Headcount

# My Transformation Journey

Completed in 17 months

Reduced TCO by 48%

Reduced app deployment from 6 months to 72 hours

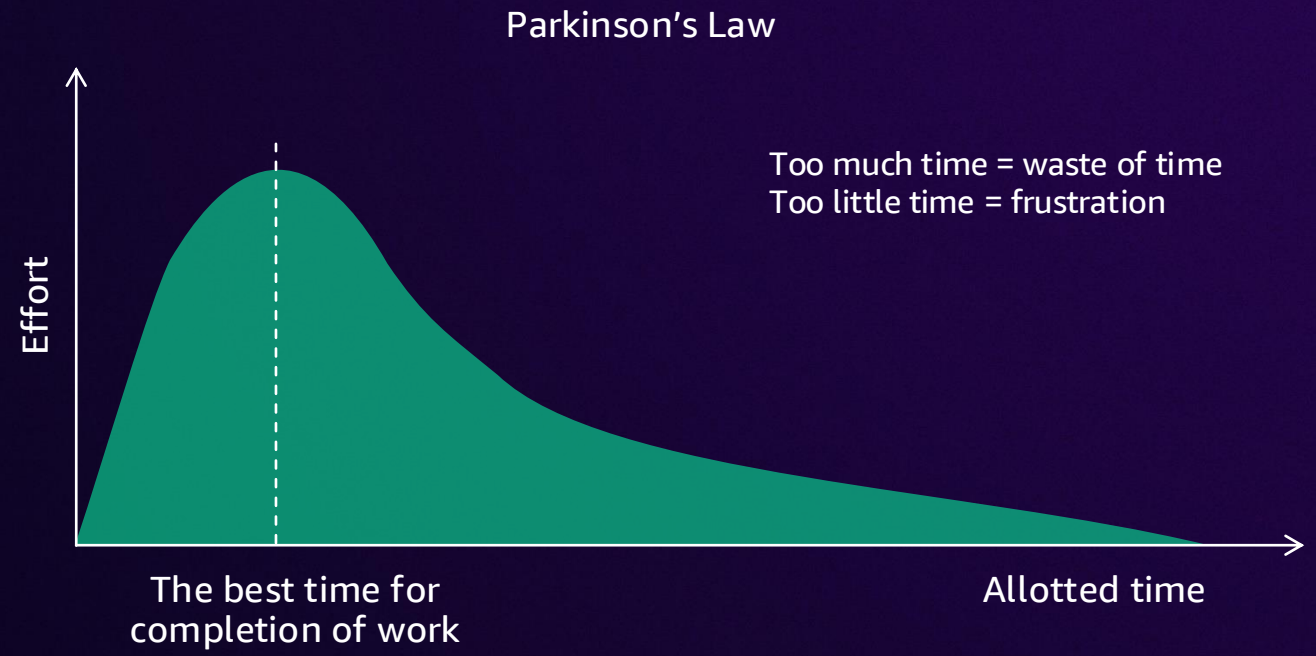
Increased availability from 99.9% to 99.999%

Eliminated all performance bottlenecks

# Pattern #1 - Constraints

**PARKINSON'S LAW**

Work expands to fill the time available for its completion




**Lack of urgency**
- Never get started

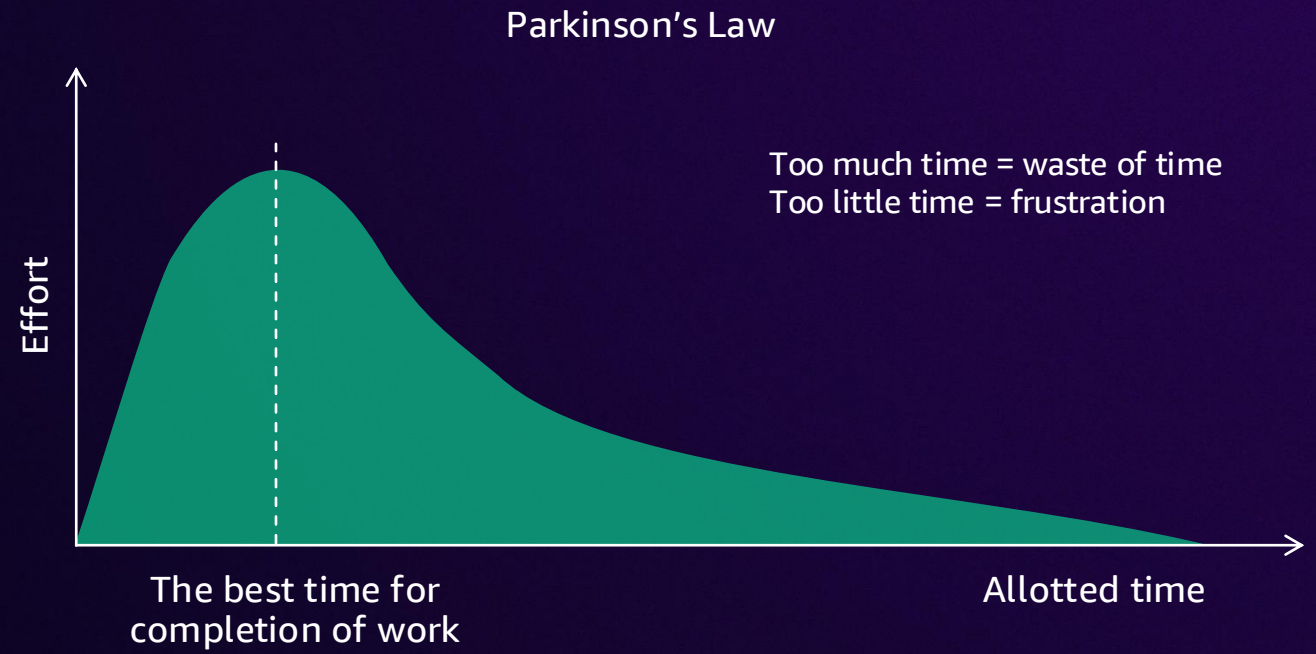
**Lack of focus**
- Spend major time on minor things

**Lack of innovation**
- Ability to maintain the status quo

# Pattern #1 - Constraints

**PARKINSON'S LAW**

Work expands to fill the time available for its completion




A deadline forces you to
- Begin before you are ready
- Focus on what matters
- Work backwards from a goal

A budget forces you to
- Become lean
- Invent and simplify
- Innovate

Limited headcount forces you to
- Motivate your existing team
- Upskill your existing team
- Create the talent you need

# Pattern #2 - Buy-in

A “bought-in” team doesn’t need to be told to work - they want to work

Explain:

- Why we’re doing this – give them meaning
- How we’re doing it – give them confidence
- What’s in it for them – why they should care

Then create an environment where everyone has an opportunity to contribute

# Pattern #2 - Buy-in

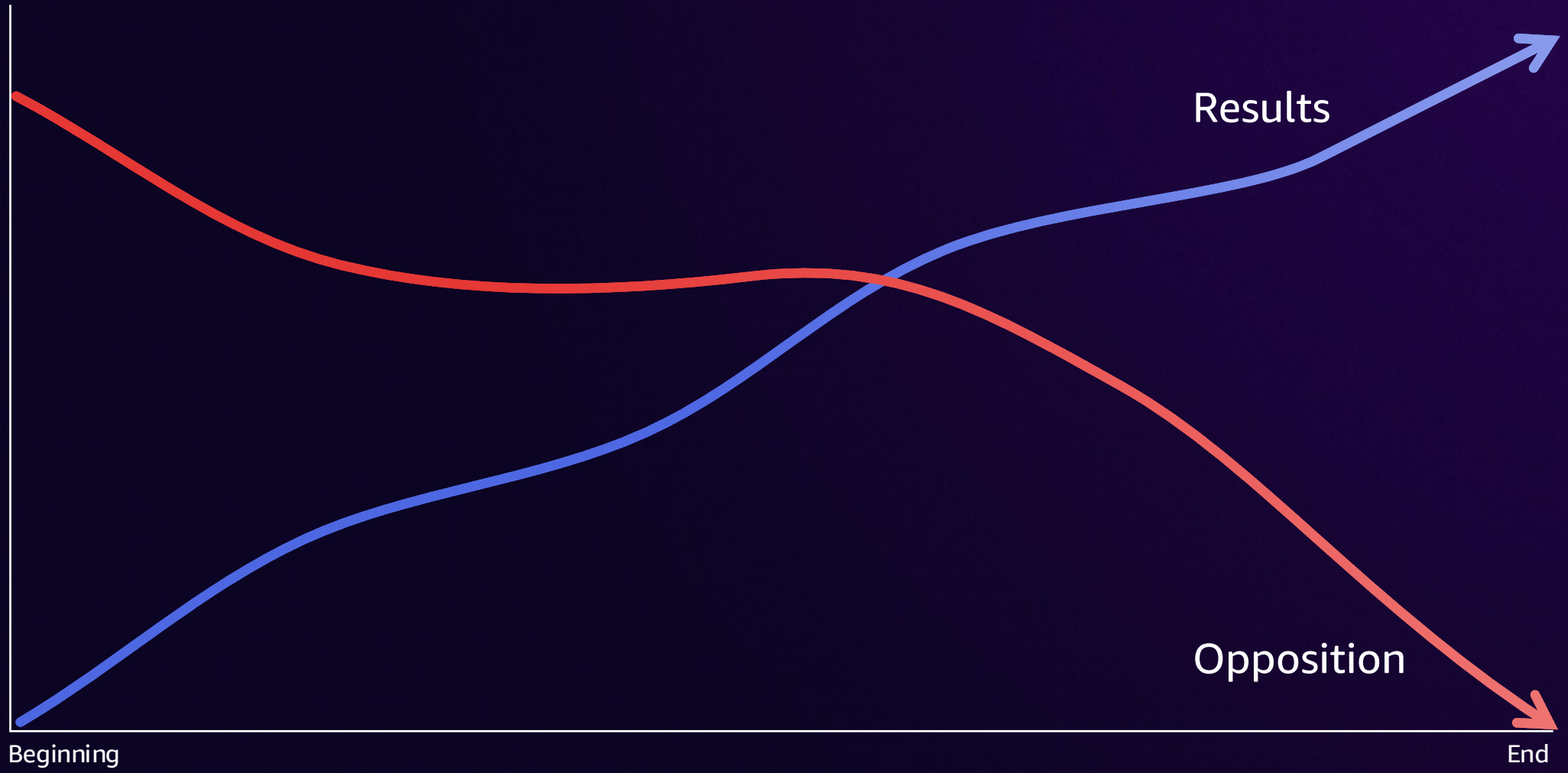
"Bought-in" stakeholders work with you - instead of against you

Explain:

- Why we're doing this – give them meaning
- How we're doing it – give them confidence
- What's in it for them – why they should care

Communicate the benefits to them, then deliver

# Pattern #3 - Momentum



# AI jargon, demystified

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Generative AI
- AI Agents
- Agentic AI
- Multi-agent systems (MAS)

# Hype vs. reality

## What most leaders want to talk about

- Fully-autonomous multi-agent orchestration systems*
- AI agent employees*
- Using AI coding tools to have non-developers write production software**

* Not seen outside the Silicon Valley startup ecosystem.
** Not seen anywhere.

# Hype vs. reality

## What’s they’re actually doing (today)

- Mostly chatbots and narrowly-scoped automated workflows
- Using AI coding tools to 10X developer productivity*
- Creating AI generated content that is completely undetectable**

* Much higher than this in some cases.
** There is no shortage of “AI slop,” but well-made AI generated content is by definition invisible and quite prevalent.

# What AI really is

## AI is a mirror and an amplifier

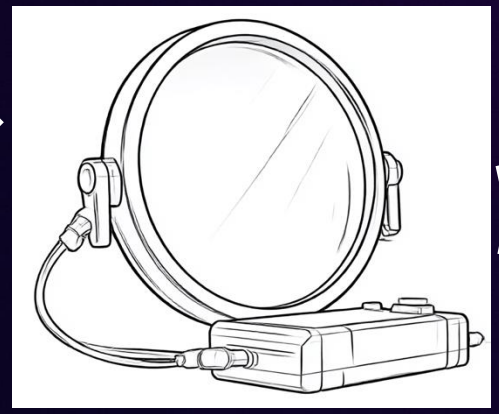
It has no objective of its own - It simply multiplies its inputs

Whatever you bring

Skill

Data

Effort



Gets force-multiplied

# AI is a mirror and an amplifier

## Anti-pattern 1

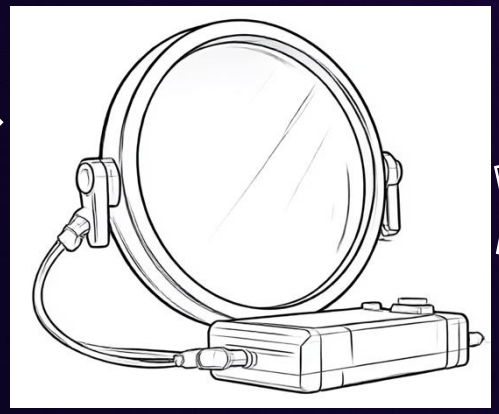
Multiplying zero always produces zero

Bring nothing

No skill

No data

No effort



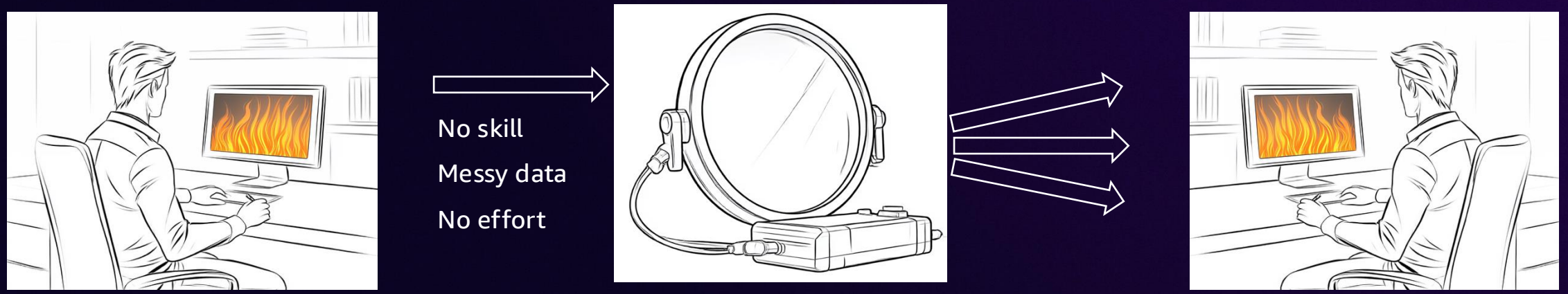
"?"

Get nothing

# AI is a mirror and an amplifier

## Anti-pattern 2

Multiplying negative value produces a bigger negative value



# AI is a mirror and an amplifier

## The opportunity

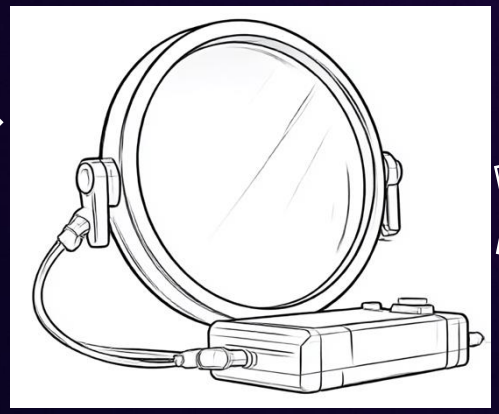
Multiplying value produces outsized value

Skill with AI

Domain knowledge

Quality data

High Effort

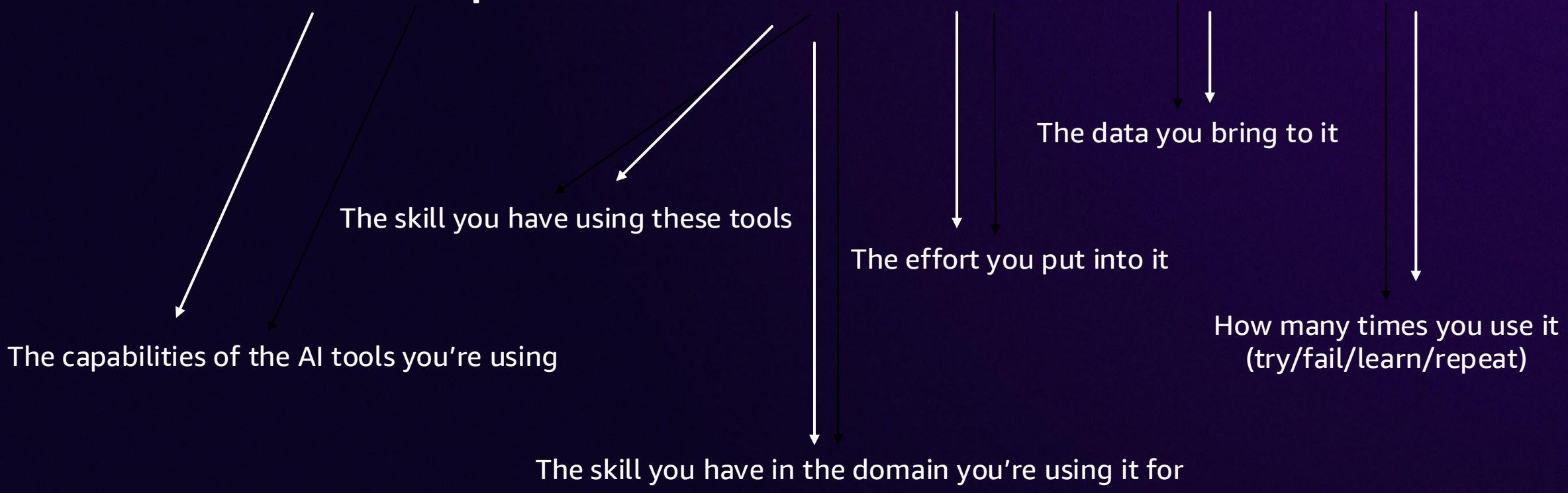


Bring value

Get multiplied value

# The formula for AI value

ROI = AI tool capabilities * (skill + effort + data) * iteration



# The implications

## AI doesn’t reduce work - It increases the *value per unit of work*

- This requires skill and effort. It’s not an ”easy button.”
- AI technology is commoditized. Your unique data is your differentiator.
- AI doesn’t replace your employees. It force-multiplies them.
- AI turns bricklayers into architects, which increases workforce ROI.
- Higher workforce ROI incentivizes having a larger AI-enabled workforce.
- This benefits the ambitious more than it benefits the lazy.

# How to get your workforce to embrace it

## What doesn’t work

- Top-down mandates to “use AI”
- Creating AI usage metrics
- Forcing your workforce to use specific AI tools
- Let them think they’re training their replacements

## What does work

- Making your desired outcome be the goal
- Providing opportunities to learn
- Providing access to the best tools
- Creating an environment where it is safe to fail

# Top issues most organizations struggle with

- All the pilots succeed, but all the production deployments fail*
- “Using AI” is the goal, but success is measured in business value
- Everyone claims to be an expert, but none of them are an expert
- Nobody has the expertise to spot the fake experts**

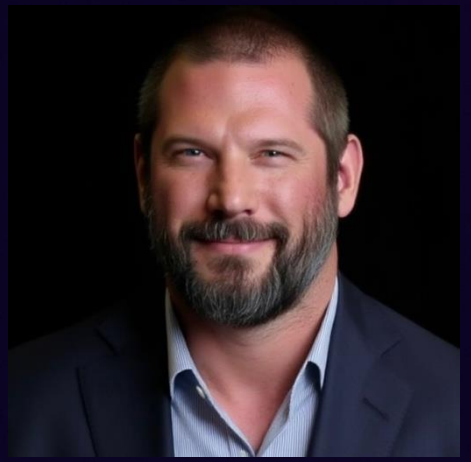
* Outside of well-established use cases.
** However, there is way to overcome this.

# The Future is Already Here

It’s just not evenly distributed

- AI is not about replacing work; it’s about amplifying work
- There is a very real learning curve. Everyone who denies this fails
- It is not difficult to be in the top 1% of all AI users
- The best way to learn it is to use it
- Skill + effort + data + iteration wins

# Q&A



Thank you

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