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The AIDA *Manifesto*

Where AI & Data Move from Promise to Impact

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How to Read This

This is a manifesto. It is opinionated on purpose.

If you want a neutral survey of AI trends, you will not find it here. If you want a vendor short-list, you will not find it here. If you want an implementation manual with step-by-step checklists, you will not find it here.

You *will* find a simple claim:

Enterprise AI and Data fail at scale because we run them like procurement programs. They succeed when we run them like products.

A quick note on the name: yes, “AIDA” is also a marketing acronym. This manifesto is not about funnels. It is about ownership. We use AIDA because it is memorable, it signals that AI and Data belong together, and it sounds like what it is: a call to action.

Read the Declaration first. If it makes you uncomfortable, good. That discomfort is a signal that your organization is optimized for process, not for value.

Then read the chapters in order. Each one answers a practical question:

- Why are AI and Data inseparable?
- Why do most AI programs produce no measurable impact?
- Why does “transformation” keep happening without results?
- What did Agile and product thinking already prove?
- What does “AI & Data as a product” actually mean?
- How do we go from problem to proof — fast?
- Who owns this work inside the company?
- How do we govern without killing speed?
- How do we measure what matters?

If you only have 10 minutes, read the Executive Summary and the Declaration.

If you have 60 minutes, read Chapters 1, 4, and 5.

The Case for Change

Most enterprises are not failing at AI & Data because the models or platforms are weak.

They are failing because they are using a 1990s playbook to build a 2020s capability.

The playbook looks familiar:

1. Declare an “AI strategy” or a “Data strategy”
2. Collect requirements from every stakeholder
3. Issue an RFP
4. Pick a platform
5. Hire consultants
6. Spend 12–18 months integrating, customizing, and rolling out
7. Celebrate “go-live”
8. Discover that nothing meaningful changed

You can ship something technically impressive and still deliver zero value. In many organizations, that is exactly what happens — again and again.

*Across industry surveys, the pattern is consistent: **the overwhelming majority of AI pilots never generate meaningful ROI.** The system is producing activity, not impact.*

AIDA stands for AI & Data as a Product. It makes one move:

Stop treating AI and Data as a project to deliver. Start treating AI and Data as a product to own.

This is not semantics. The moment you treat AI and Data as a product, different questions become natural:

- *What problem are we solving?* (instead of *What are the requirements?*)
- *What is the fastest experiment that could prove value?* (instead of *Which vendor should we select?*)
- *What value did we create in the last 30 days?* (instead of *Are we on schedule?*)
- *What capability did we build internally?* (instead of *Which consultant is running the platform?*)

AIDA is built on four principles:

Principle 1

Problems over Requirements

Principle 2

Discovery over Procurement

Principle 3

Value over Transformation

Principle 4

Capability over Dependency

AIDA also makes a second claim:

AI and Data are one system. You cannot separate them and succeed. Data without AI is inert. AI without data is hallucination.

Signs you're running the old machine

If any of these feel familiar, you are not alone — and you are exactly who this manifesto is for:

- Your main AI artifact is a roadmap.
- Your main AI meeting is a steering committee.
- Your main AI output is a pilot that never reaches production.
- Your main data achievement is a platform that nobody uses.
- Your main metric is budget spent, not value delivered.
- Your best people are tired, and your skeptics are winning.

What you do on Monday morning

AIDA gives you a practical operating model:

- Pick **one** problem that matters.
- Run a **4-week discovery sprint** to prove (or disprove) that AI and Data can solve it.
- Demand a **Proof of Value** — not a Proof of Concept.
- If the evidence is strong, scale with a product team that owns the full lifecycle.
- Govern with **guardrails, not gates**.
- Measure success with a simple scorecard: value delivered, time-to-value, learning velocity, and dependency reduction.

Make “process-driven AI program” sound as outdated in 2036 as “waterfall software development” sounds today.

The AIDA Principles

This manifesto was written by a practitioner — someone who has spent decades building products, running systems where reality cannot be negotiated, and leading AI and Data work inside an enterprise.

We are done pretending that AI impact will emerge from committees, roadmaps, and procurement cycles.

We choose a different approach.

1

Problems over Requirements

We value understanding the problem over collecting requirements.

2

Discovery over Procurement

We value rapid discovery over vendor selection processes.

3

Value over Transformation

We value delivering measurable value over running transformation programs.

4

Capability over Dependency

We value building internal capability over creating consultant dependency.

AI and Data are too important to be run as an IT purchase. They must be owned as products that earn their place through impact.

One System, Not Two

Why AI and Data Belong Together

It's Monday morning. You walk into a meeting.

On one side of the table: "Data." On the other side: "AI."

They have different leaders. Different budgets. Different roadmaps. Different vendors. They talk to each other once a quarter, usually because something broke.

And then everyone acts surprised when the AI pilot can't get clean, trusted data. Or when the data platform has no users because nobody built anything valuable on top of it.

This separation is so normal that it feels inevitable. It isn't.

It's like separating lungs from bloodstream and asking why the body can't breathe.

Data without AI is inert

A beautifully governed data warehouse that nobody uses is not a strategy. It's an expensive library with no readers.

Data has potential energy. It *could* create value. But potential energy does nothing on its own. AI is what converts it to kinetic energy: prediction, automation, insight, action.

AI without data is hallucination

An AI model without grounding in real, relevant data produces confident nonsense. It's a brain without senses — capable of reasoning, disconnected from reality.

Without high-quality, domain-relevant data, AI becomes theatre. It looks alive. It isn't.

Together, they are one product

Data is the raw material of intelligence. AI is the mechanism that turns raw material into value.

You cannot have a strategy for one without a strategy for the other. When you try, you get predictable failure modes:

- Data teams build infrastructure nobody needs for the problems that matter.
- AI teams build models on data they don't understand, don't trust, and can't operate.
- Business teams lose trust because outputs change, drift, or cannot be explained.
- Everyone retreats to their lane and calls it "governance."

The split between “data strategy” and “AI strategy” is not a structure. It’s a symptom.

What “one system” means in practice

AIDA does not require one monolithic team doing everything. It requires one accountable product team per problem domain — a team that owns the end-to-end flow: from data quality and availability, to model design and deployment, to integration into real workflows, to monitoring, iteration, and measurable impact.

It also requires one simple shift in language:

Stop saying: “What’s our data strategy?” and “What’s our AI strategy?”

Start saying: **“Which problems should we solve with AI and Data — and who owns them?”**

The quickest diagnostic

Ask two teams one question each:

- Ask the AI team: “What data would make your work useless if it changed tomorrow?”
- Ask the Data team: “What decision would become better next week because of your work?”

If either team cannot answer, you have two programs. You do not have one capability.

MONDAY MORNING IMPLICATIONS

- If your AI team cannot answer “where does our data come from?”, you do not have an AI team. You have a demo team.
- If your data team cannot name the top three decisions their work improves, you do not have a data strategy. You have a storage strategy.
- If AI and Data report into different priorities, you will build two half-systems that never become one full capability.

The Broken Machine

Why Most AI Programs Produce No Impact

It's Monday morning again. The AI steering committee meets for the 14th time. The agenda is identical to the last 13 meetings: vendor status update, integration risks, governance approvals, "change management" plan, and a dashboard with green dots that reassure everyone that progress is happening.

Someone asks the question that matters: *"When will we see value?"*

The room goes quiet. Then the answer arrives: "After Phase 3." Phase 3 is nine months away.

This is what failure looks like in a modern enterprise. Not a crash. Not a scandal. A slow, expensive drift into irrelevance.

The enterprise AI playbook (and why it fails)

Most AI and Data initiatives follow a process designed for buying enterprise software. It looks rational. It is also structurally incapable of producing learning fast enough to create value.

This process optimizes for one thing: **predictability**. It tries to remove uncertainty by planning harder.

AI does not reward planning. AI rewards learning.

Six anti-patterns that kill value

These are not edge cases. They are the default behaviors of process-driven organizations:

- **The RFP Trap:** six months selecting a platform before knowing what you need it to do.
- **The Consultant Spiral:** every step requires external help, so capability never becomes internal.
- **The Requirements Cathedral:** a document becomes sacred, and reality becomes inconvenient.
- **The Pilot Graveyard:** pilots proliferate because "learning" is never connected to delivery.
- **The Dashboard Delusion:** beautiful charts replace better decisions.
- **The Data Quality Excuse:** "we can't do AI until the data is perfect" becomes a permanent postponement strategy.

The real costs aren't on the invoice

The budget waste is visible. The invisible costs are worse:

- **Time:** 18 months spent implementing yesterday's assumptions
- **Talent:** your best people learn helplessness and leave
- **Cynicism:** the organization builds antibodies to the next initiative
- **Opportunity:** competitors ship learning cycles while you ship status reports

The most damaging outcome of a failed AI program is not the money. It's the belief that "AI doesn't work here."

AI works. The program didn't.

A 95% failure rate is not bad luck. It's a system working exactly as designed. Consider what it is designed to produce: activity, not impact.

The two questions that expose the machine

Ask any AI program two questions:

1. **What problem are we solving right now — in one sentence?**
2. **What evidence do we have that we're solving it?**

If you get a paragraph and a roadmap, you have your answer.

MONDAY MORNING IMPLICATIONS

- If you cannot name the single problem your AI program is solving right now, pause spending until you can.
- If your program's main artifact is a roadmap, demand an experiment instead.
- If your success metrics are budget and timeline, your system will produce budget and timeline — not outcomes.

Transformation Is a Treadmill

Why Catching Up Never Creates Advantage

The word “transformation” is everywhere. It shows up in strategies, operating models, org charts, and board decks. It sounds ambitious. It sounds important.

In practice, transformation is often a polite name for one thing: **spending money to look modern.**

Transformation vs. innovation

Transformation is adopting what exists. **Innovation** is creating what doesn't.

Transformation is catching up. Innovation is moving forward. There is nothing wrong with catching up. But catching up is not a strategy for winning. It's a strategy for not losing *yet*.

The treadmill effect

You run hard. You spend a lot. You generate heat. You do not move.

By the time you finish year one of your “modern data platform” transformation, year two arrives with a new wave: new model capabilities, new tools and vendors, new governance requirements, new threats, new competitors who learned faster than you.

You start transforming again. You never stop. Because the industry selling transformation does not get paid for stopping.

Transformation is a program. Innovation is a habit.

The hidden damage: transformation kills optionality

When you invest in discovery, you create options: multiple ways to solve a problem, tested cheaply, with evidence.

When you invest in transformation, you often destroy options: you lock into a platform early, you lock into a vendor operating model, you lock into a roadmap that becomes politically difficult to change, you lock into a budget that must be defended, even when evidence says “stop.”

What AIDA changes

AIDA rejects transformation theatre. It does not reject modernization. It changes the unit of progress:

Not “platform implemented.” Not “users migrated.” Not “roadmap delivered.”

But: **problems solved, value delivered, capability built.**

MONDAY MORNING IMPLICATIONS

- If your AI strategy is a three-year roadmap, shorten your planning horizon and lengthen your learning loop.
- If your program cannot show value in 4–8 weeks on a real problem, your risk is not too high — it's too low. You're making big bets without evidence.
- If every initiative is framed as transformation, challenge your team: "What innovation will this create? What will we do next year that we cannot do today?"

The Product Revolution

What Agile and Product Thinking Already Proved

In 2001, a small group of practitioners wrote the Agile Manifesto. They were not trying to create an industry. They were trying to stop wasting their lives on failed software projects.

They made a simple move: **value over process**. And it worked.

From “build it right” to “build the right thing”

Product leaders put language to what strong teams were already doing: don't just deliver features — solve problems. Run discovery continuously. Trust empowered teams to find solutions.

This shifted organizations from output obsession to outcome obsession. It also introduced a discipline that most enterprises still lack in AI: **separating ideas from evidence**.

The transfer to AI and Data is obvious

And yet, most enterprises did not transfer the lesson. They run software teams with sprints and standups. They run AI and Data with committees and RFPs.

They practice Agile where it is familiar, and waterfall where it is frightening.

AI work is not a linear assembly line. It is a learning loop. You test a hypothesis. The data surprises you. The model surprises you. The user surprises you. Reality surprises you. You adjust.

AIDA is Agile's successor in this domain

AIDA is not “Agile for AI” as a set of ceremonies. It is Agile's original spirit, applied to AI and Data programs:

- Respond to evidence over following a plan
- Create value early over perfecting the roadmap
- Build capability over buying solutions
- Learn fast over looking certain

AIDA also warns against Agile's failure mode. Agile became a process industry. If AIDA becomes a certification industry, it dies.

WARNING

If your AIDA adoption creates more meetings than models, you missed the point.

In uncertainty, the only durable advantage is learning faster.

MONDAY MORNING IMPLICATIONS

- If your AI backlog looks like a feature list, rewrite it as a problem list.
- If stakeholders demand certainty, give them transparency instead: show experiments, evidence, and decisions.
- If your organization hates “Agile language,” fine. Keep the values, drop the vocabulary.

AI & Data as a Product

The Shift That Makes Everything Else Work

A product is something that exists to solve a problem for a specific user, that evolves continuously, and that is measured by the value it creates.

The project model is the root of the dysfunction

Projects have a shape: fixed scope, fixed timeline, fixed budget, success measured by delivery against plan.

The highest risk is not “can we build it?” The highest risk is “is this the right thing to build, and will anyone use it?”

What changes when you treat AI & Data as a product

Treat AI & Data as a product and four things become non-negotiable:

1. **A real user** (internal or external)
2. **A real problem** (pain, friction, cost, missed opportunity)
3. **A real metric** (value, not activity)
4. **A real owner** (a team with authority and responsibility)

No user? You have a research project. No metric? You have a hobby. No owner? You have a committee.

The one FROM → TO table

INSTEAD OF...	AIDA SAYS...
<i>“What are the requirements?”</i>	“What is the problem, and who feels it?”
<i>“Which platform should we buy?”</i>	“What experiment proves value fastest?”
<i>“Are we on schedule?”</i>	“What value did we deliver, and what did we learn?”
<i>“Who approved this?”</i>	“Who owns this outcome?”
<i>“When is the project done?”</i>	“How will this product improve over time?”

“But we need an enterprise platform”

Maybe. But the platform is not the first decision. The first decision is: **which problem will we solve, and how will we prove value?**

When you buy the platform first, you buy assumptions.

“But our data isn’t ready”

Your data will never be “ready” in the abstract. Data readiness is not a property of your enterprise. It is a property of a specific problem.

If data quality is the bottleneck, discovery will reveal it early — and then your data investment will be targeted, not generic.

Platform is a product too (but not the first product)

The right sequence is: prove value on one problem, extract reusable capabilities, build platform services that accelerate the next problems.

Platform should be the byproduct of learning — not the prerequisite for it.

MONDAY MORNING IMPLICATIONS

- Name your AI & Data products. If you cannot name them, you cannot own them.
- Assign a single accountable team per product. Not a committee. Not a program. A team.
- Demand outcome metrics and usage metrics before funding scale.

From Problem to Proof

The AIDA Discovery Framework

Most enterprises do not fail because they picked the wrong platform. They fail because they invested heavily before they had evidence that the problem was solvable and valuable.

Discovery is how you buy evidence.

The one-problem rule

AIDA starts with one problem. Not three. Not five. One. Because focus creates learning. And learning creates speed.

The 4-week sprint

- **Week 1 — Problem deep-dive:** map the workflow, users, decisions, pain points, and baseline.
- **Week 2 — Data assessment:** locate the data, evaluate quality, check access, identify what is missing.
- **Week 3 — Solution experiments:** run fast experiments to see what could work (off the shelf only).
- **Week 4 — Proof of Value:** test the smallest viable solution on real data with a measurable outcome.

Off-the-shelf only (zero customization)

Discovery is not the place to build. AIDA sets a hard rule for discovery sprints: use off-the-shelf tools, zero customization, configuration is fine — custom development is not.

You're not trying to win an architecture award. You're trying to answer one question: *does this change a metric that matters in a real workflow?*

Rule: If you can't beat a simple baseline, stop.

This is not a Proof of Concept. A Proof of Concept proves technology works. A **Proof of Value** proves the technology changes a metric that matters.

The Evidence Ladder

0	Opinion	"We believe this problem exists."
1	Baseline	"We can quantify the problem."
2	Experiment	"We have evidence an AI/Data approach can address it."

3 **Production** “We proved measurable value in a real workflow.”

4 **Impact** “We scaled and the value compounds.”

Most enterprises start spending big money at Level 0. AIDA does not invest beyond a discovery sprint until Level 2.

Decision gate: go, kill, or pivot

- **Go:** the problem matters, the data is sufficient, and the proof shows measurable value.
- **Kill:** the data is missing, the impact is too small, or simpler non-AI fixes work better.
- **Pivot:** adjust the problem framing, scope, or approach based on what you learned.

The kill decision is a success. It saved you 18 months of waste.

A discovery sprint is not a cost. It's insurance against 18 months of expensive guessing.

MONDAY MORNING IMPLICATIONS

- Pick one problem and write it in one sentence. If you need three paragraphs, you do not understand it yet.
- Demand a measurable baseline before you fund a solution.
- Run discovery with off-the-shelf tools and zero customization. If you need custom build work to prove value, reframe or kill the use case.

Teams, Not Vendors

Stop Outsourcing Your Intelligence

There is a sentence you should never allow in your company: *“We can’t change that because the vendor owns it.”*

The moment that sentence becomes normal, you outsourced your intelligence.

The consultant dependency trap

It usually starts reasonably. You buy a platform. The platform requires integration. The vendor provides consultants. Over time, the consultants become the only people who understand the system.

You are paying someone else to become good at your business.

AIDA’s team model

AIDA does not require huge AI teams. It requires empowered teams that own outcomes end-to-end. A minimal AI & Data product team has:

- **Product leadership:** someone accountable for the problem and the metric
- **Domain expertise:** someone who understands the workflow deeply
- **Data/engineering capability:** someone who can access, shape, and operationalize data
- **Modeling capability:** someone who can experiment with AI approaches and evaluate them
- **Delivery capability:** someone who can integrate into real systems and ship

The solution can be right. Still wrong for you.

Before you buy anything “strategic,” run a simple test:

- Can we run it without the vendor in the room?
- Do we have the skills to implement it properly?
- Do we have the operating model to maintain it?
- Do we have budget for the *run*, not just the build?
- Will this make our teams stronger — or more dependent?

“Enterprise-grade” is not what the brochure says. Enterprise-grade is what you can sustain.

The right role for vendors and consultants

AIDA is not anti-vendor. It is anti-dependency. The right role: accelerate discovery, coach teams on capabilities they can own, provide tools that reduce time-to-value.

If your AI strategy depends on consultants, it's their strategy, not yours.

MONDAY MORNING IMPLICATIONS

- Identify one AI & Data product and name its owner team. If you cannot, stop calling it a product.
- Audit your dependencies: who can change the system without vendor involvement?
- Redefine consultant success: "we are independent" is the deliverable.

Governance Without Bureaucracy

Guardrails, Not Gates

Executives have a legitimate fear. AI can create real harm: privacy violations, biased decisions, security exposure, hallucinated outputs presented as truth, automation that breaks trust.

The response in most enterprises is predictable: add gates, add approvals, add committees. Then the program slows down until nothing happens — which feels safe, because nothing can go wrong if nothing ships.

That is not governance. It's paralysis.

The AIDA governance model

AIDA governance has four pillars:

1) Guardrails, not gates

Define what teams can do without asking: what data classes they can access, what environments they can deploy to, what budgets they can spend on discovery, what risk thresholds require escalation.

This is the difference between: “You must ask for permission to drive” and “Here are the rules of the road. Drive.”

2) Transparency over permission

Replace approval meetings with evidence reviews. Teams share regularly what they're working on, what they ran, what they learned, what they will do next.

3) Ethics by design

AI ethics is not a checklist at the end. It is a lens applied throughout: Who could be harmed? What assumptions does the model encode? How do we detect drift, bias, or failure? What is the human fallback?

4) Portfolio thinking

AIDA assumes some experiments will fail. That is not a bug. It is the cost of learning. The job of leadership is to allocate budget across the portfolio based on evidence — not to demand that every bet be certain.

Gates create the illusion of control. Guardrails create real control by enabling learning without chaos.

MONDAY MORNING IMPLICATIONS

- Replace one approval meeting with one evidence review.
- Define discovery budgets that teams can spend without escalating every decision.
- Make ethics a design input, not a release checkbox.
- If you are regulated, define risk tiers so that low-risk experiments can move fast.

The AIDA Scorecard

Measure What Matters, or You Get Theatre

Your organization already has an AI scorecard. Even if you never wrote one down. It's in what gets praised. It's in what gets funded. It's in what gets promoted.

If you reward milestones, you will get milestones. If you reward value, you will get value.

The AIDA Scorecard

DIMENSION	QUESTION	EXAMPLE MEASURES	TYPE
Problems solved	Which business problems improved because of AI & Data?	Problems from baseline to improved; adoption rate	Lagging
Value delivered	What measurable value appeared?	Revenue lift, cost reduction, cycle time, quality	Lagging
Time to value	How fast from problem to measurable impact?	Median days from selection to PoV; to production	Both
Discovery velocity	How quickly are we buying evidence?	Experiments per week; time per experiment; % killed early	Leading
Capability built	What can we do now that we couldn't 90 days ago?	Reusable assets; deployment maturity; internal skills	Leading
Dependency reduction	More or less reliant on outsiders?	% changes requiring vendors; consulting spend trend	Leading

The metric most programs avoid: time-to-value

Process-driven programs hide time. They talk about “phases” and “roadmaps” to avoid the simplest question: *How long until anything changes?*

AIDA makes time visible. Because time is your most limited asset.

If your AI program cannot show value, the first metric to look at is not accuracy. It's time-to-value.

MONDAY MORNING IMPLICATIONS

- Write your AI scorecard on one page. If it takes ten pages, it's theatre.
- Add discovery velocity to leadership reporting. If it is low, you are not learning.
- Track dependency like you track budget. Dependency is future cost.

Sound the Trumpets

A Call to Action

If you read this manifesto and feel defensive, you are not alone. Most organizations did not choose process-driven AI because they are foolish. They chose it because it is the default system for spending money safely inside large institutions.

But safe spending is not the same as wise spending.

Start small. Start real. Start now.

AIDA does not ask you to reorganize the company tomorrow. It asks you to do one disciplined thing:

1. Pick one meaningful problem.
2. Run one discovery sprint.
3. Demand one proof of value.
4. Scale only what earns the right to scale.

Do this once and the conversation changes. Instead of debating vendors, you debate evidence. Instead of celebrating milestones, you celebrate outcomes. Instead of buying capability, you build it.

The vision

In ten years, we should look back on process-driven AI programs the way we look back on waterfall software projects: well-documented, carefully planned, painfully slow, predictably disappointing.

And we should wonder why we tolerated them for so long.

*Because AI and Data do not become real through strategy. They become real through **ownership, evidence, and impact.***

Jean-Philippe Schoeffel

This manifesto is written from the perspective of a practitioner who has spent 30 years building, shipping, and operating technology in environments where reality does not negotiate.

- A **PhD in Quantum Physics**, trained in first-principles rigor
- An **MBA in Strategic Management**, trained in how organizations allocate resources and make decisions
- **Six years in strategy and marketing consulting**, learning exactly how transformation theatre is sold and why it persists
- **Two decades as a technology founder**, building sales and marketing automation products that had to deliver value to survive
- Operating a **hedge fund and an algorithmic trading research company**, where the feedback loop is brutally honest
- Leading **AI and Data in a Swiss enterprise**, applying product thinking to the hardest environment: a large organization optimized for process

The conviction behind AIDA is simple:

Ten years ago, the technology wasn't ready. Five years ago, it was almost there. Now it is.

AI and Data will define the next decades. Most companies will waste the opportunity — not because they lack talent, but because they keep using a procurement mindset to build a learning capability.

This manifesto exists to change that.

AI and Data do not become real through strategy. They become real through ownership, evidence, and impact.

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