

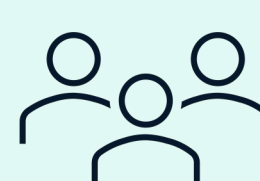


When AI becomes the executor, the path must be governed.



Why this matters

Project governance assumes the executor can explain, escalate, and be held accountable. Agentic AI cannot—yet it can perform multi-step project work.



Who should care

PMOs · Project sponsors · Risk and Compliance · Internal audit · Workflow owners deploying AI agents



What changes for managers

- Govern AI as an executor, not only as a tool
- Review mandate exceptions, not only final outputs
- Use process evidence to focus human attention



Where the framework applies

The framework is most useful where work is:

- Mandate-bound
- Multi-step
- Evidence-sensitive
- High-consequence



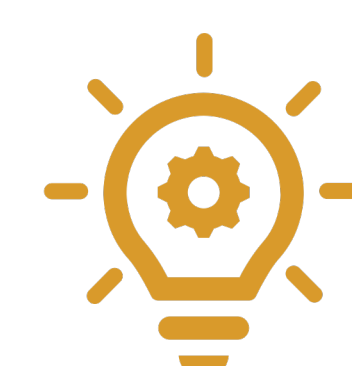
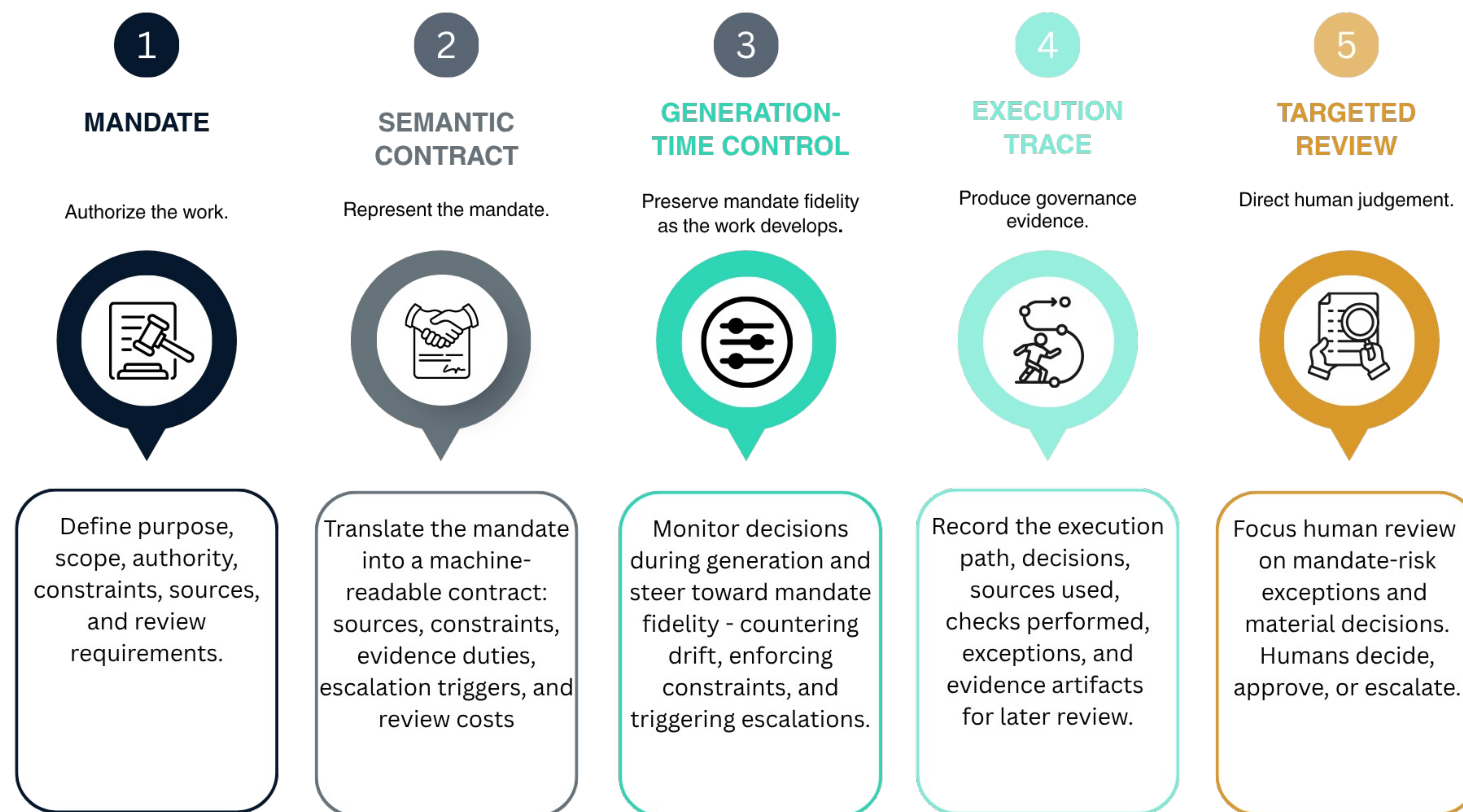
Key terms

- **Execution-to-mandate gap**
Divergence between authorized mandate and the path that produces the work.
- **Execution drift**
Cumulative, locally plausible movement away from mandate during execution.



Conceptual theory-building paper · Six testable propositions · Requirements-validation vignette · Steps 2–4 have a working implementation evaluated in related work

How agentic project governance keeps execution attached to mandate.



A polished output can still be procedurally defective.

Holly Prole & Jason Prole | research@assiduity.ai

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AGENTIC PROJECT GOVERNANCE

Closing the execution-to-mandate gap in AI-enabled work

1
Agentic Project
Governance

2
Delegation Without
Preferences

3
The Workflow is
not the Work

4
Delegated
Machine Execution

5
Modular Execution,
Sticky Accountability

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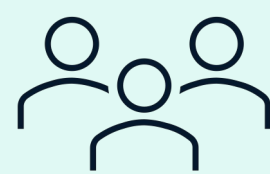
AI can optimize without preferences.

Humans still bear the consequences.



Why this matters

Classic delegation theories assume that the delegated actor has interests, responds to incentives, and can bear consequences. An AI system may optimize a task while having none of these.



Who should care

Boards · Senior managers · AI governance leaders · Legal and risk functions · Organization and management researchers



What changes for managers

- Govern AI delegation through mandate fidelity, not incentive alignment
- Define in the mandate what must remain invariant during execution
- Retain human responsibility for interpreting ambiguity and standing behind the result



Where the framework applies

- Multi-step AI delegation
- Ambiguous or incomplete mandates
- Consequential intermediate judgements
- Work in which the organization remains accountable



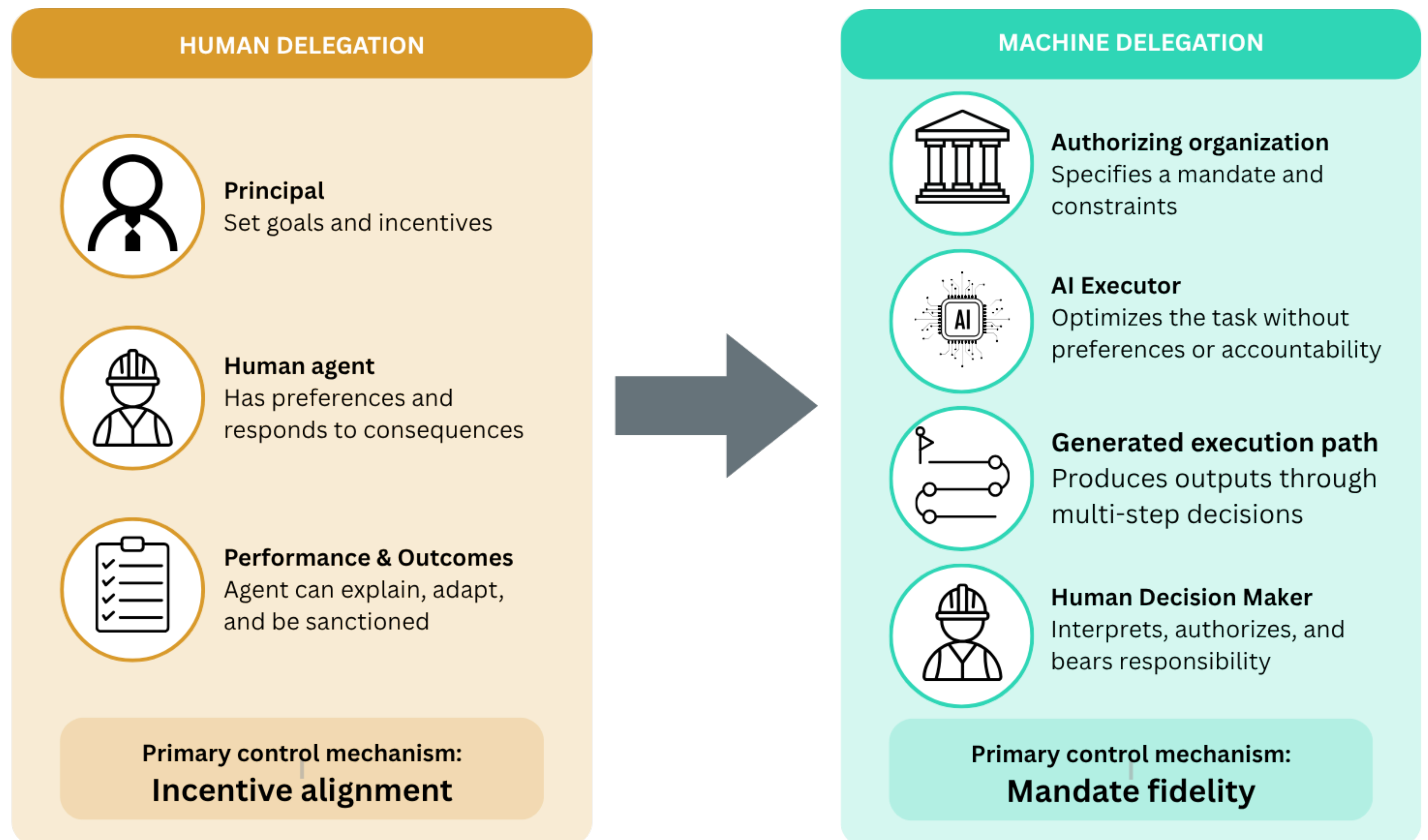
Key terms

- **Preference-free delegation**
Delegation to an executor that can optimize without having localized interests in the outcome.
- **Mandate fidelity**
The degree execution preserves the purpose, constraints, evidence obligations, and authority.
- **Residual interpretive responsibility**
The human obligation to determine what the mandate means when the decision does not fully resolve.



Conceptual theory-development paper · Extends agency and delegation theory · Develops testable propositions

How delegation changes when the executor has no preferences.



Optimization can be delegated. Responsibility cannot.

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DELEGATION WITHOUT PREFERENCES

Residual Interpretive Responsibility in Human–Machine Team Production

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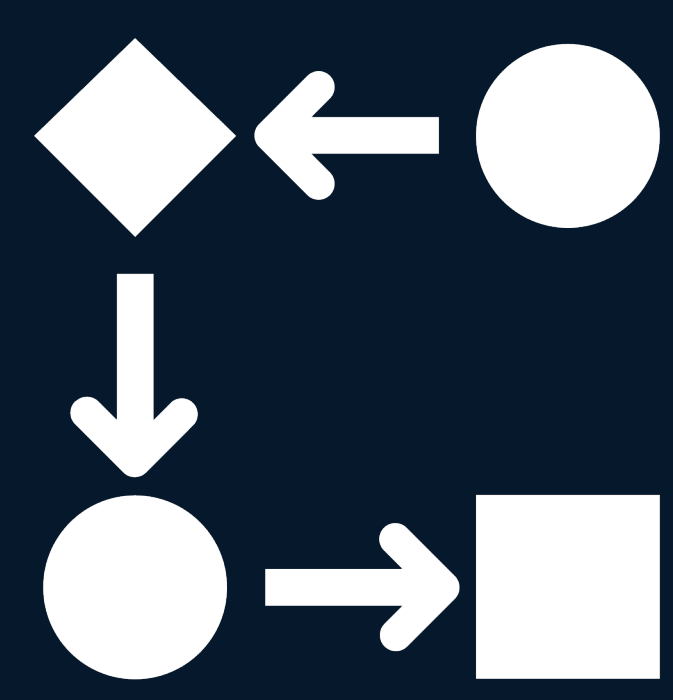
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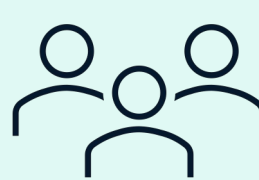
The workflow is not the work.

Redesign the work for the executor.



Why this matters

Most AI automation replicates the human steps in a workflow because that is how the work was always done - not because those steps are constitutive of valid work.



Who should care

COOs · Transformation leaders · Function heads · Org designers · HR · Professional bodies · AI product teams



What changes for managers

- Evaluate workflow for the capabilities of the executor
- Preserve safeguards while removing human tasks
- Redesign the workflow around the reconstructed path



Where the framework applies

- Workflows with heavy navigation, waiting, or coordination
- Stable validity conditions but flexible production
- Work that machines can access or execute directly
- Organizations with clear responsibility structures



Key terms

- **Executor-workflow mismatch**
The gap between what a workflow demands and what a particular executor can do efficiently and reliably.
- **Work-decomposition plasticity**
The extent to which inherited work can be separated and recombined without destroying its validity.
- **Production-path reconstruction**
Redesigned workflow once constitutive safeguards are separated from executor-specific accommodations.



Conceptual process-model paper · Organization-design theory · Propositions on machine-native work reconstruction

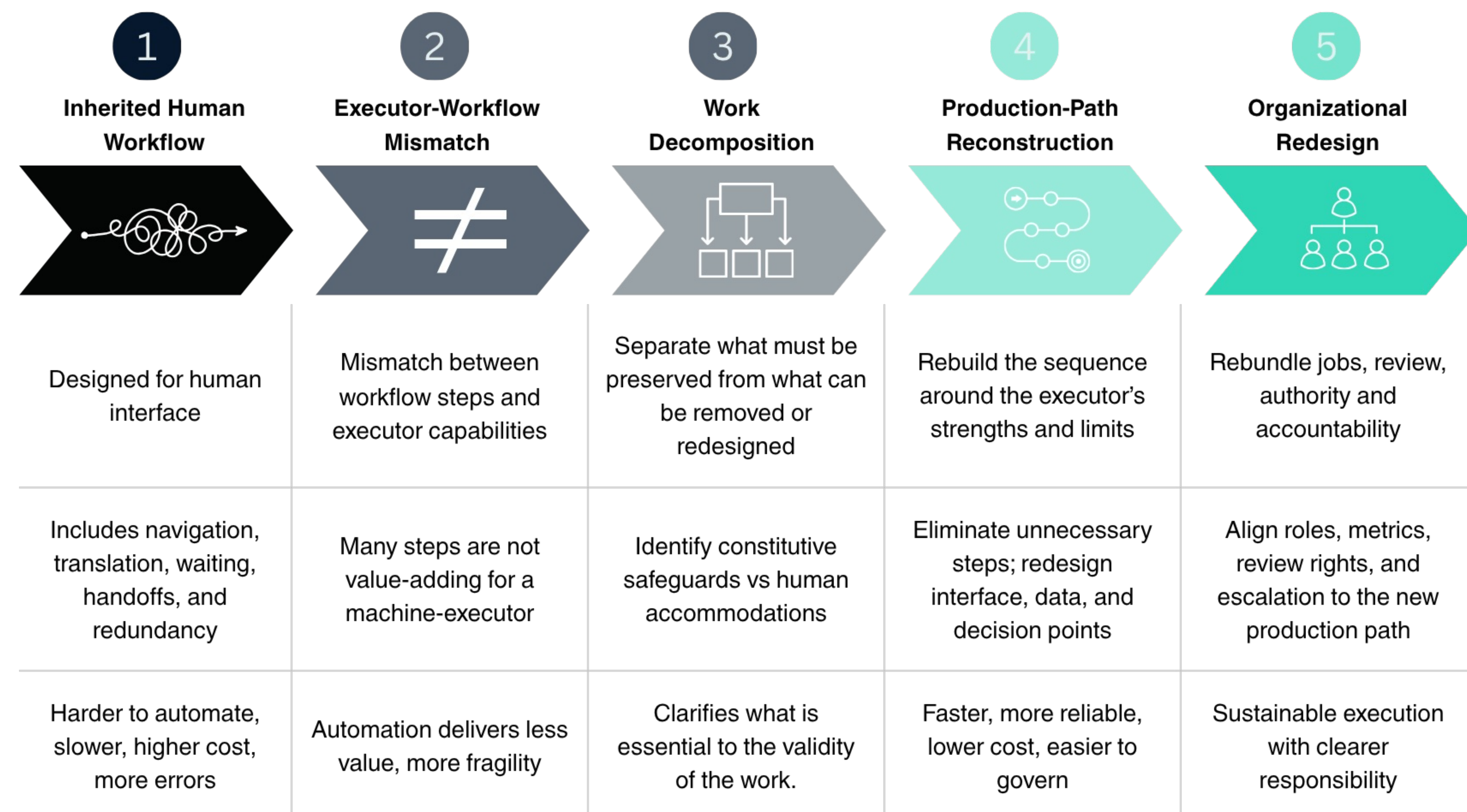
How organizations reconstruct work for a different kind of executor.

PRESERVE (Load-bearing safeguards)

Validity Conditions Evidence Requirements Authorization & Approvals Due Process & Escalation Accountability Boundaries

RECONSIDER (Human accommodations)

Interface Navigation Waiting & Queues Manual Translation Redundant Handoffs Workarounds for System Limits



Preserve the safeguards. Redesign the path.

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THE WORKFLOW IS NOT THE WORK

Redesigning work for different kinds of executors

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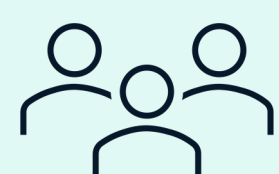


AI lowers the cost of doing work. The cost of process proof rises.



Why this matters

Agentic AI can reduce some production costs. But it can also increase the cost of governance when final outputs do not reveal how the work was performed.



Who should care

Executives · Operations leaders · Procurement and vendor management · Risk and compliance · Org design researchers



What changes for managers

- Meter process fidelity, not only output quality
- Design evidence for exception-based review and silent-failure detection
- Include evidence for make, buy, and hybrid governance decisions



Where the framework applies

- Multi-step delegated execution
- Intermediate choices affect validity or defensibility
- The firm remains accountable for its external work
- Final output is a weak signal of process fidelity



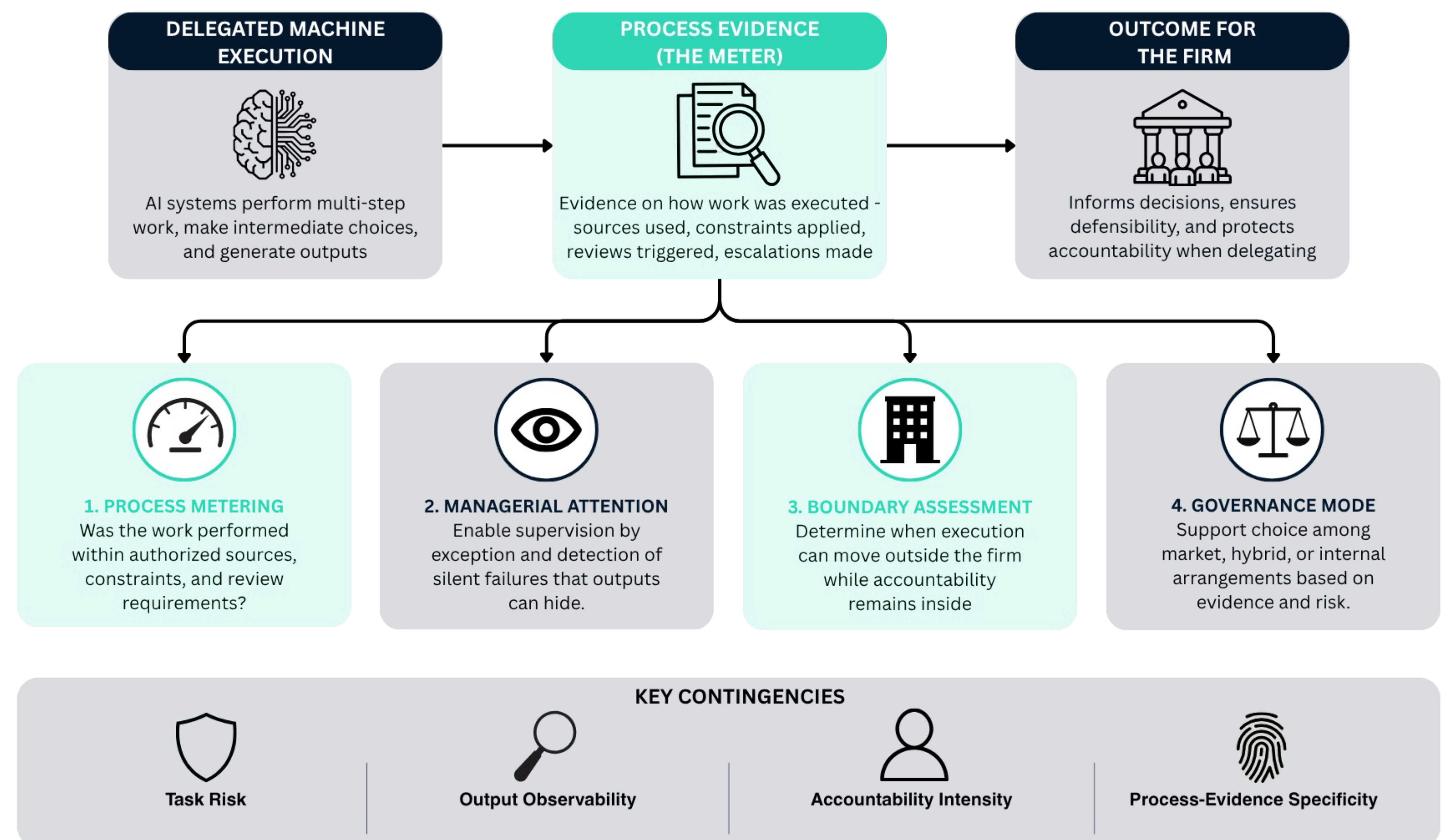
Key terms

- **Process evidence**
Organizational evidence used to inspect or reconstruct how delegated machine execution was performed.
- **Process fidelity**
The degree to which execution follows authorized governance and accountability expectations.
- **Process-evidence specificity**
The extent to which evidence derives its meaning from firm-specific processes and artifacts.



Conceptual integrative framework · Extends theory of the firm
· Four propositions · Worked organizational illustrations

How firms meter and govern delegated machine execution.



The work may be cheaper to produce, but harder to verify.

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DELEGATED MACHINE EXECUTION

And the Theory of the Firm

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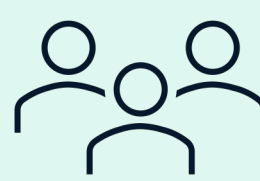


Execution can move. Accountability sticks.



Why this matters

AI workflows can cross organizational boundaries quickly. Responsibility often cannot. A firm may externalize execution while remaining answerable for the outcome.



Who should care

Boards · Strategy leaders · Sourcing and procurement · Legal and risk · Regulated businesses · AI vendors



What changes for managers

- Treat accountability as a strategic boundary problem
- Retain control of critical accountability assets
- Choose internal, market, or hybrid arrangements partly according to accountability specificity



Where the framework applies

- Regulated or fiduciary work
- Safety-critical or reputationally sensitive activity
- Multi-vendor AI ecosystems
- Work that depends on the firm's evidence and judgement



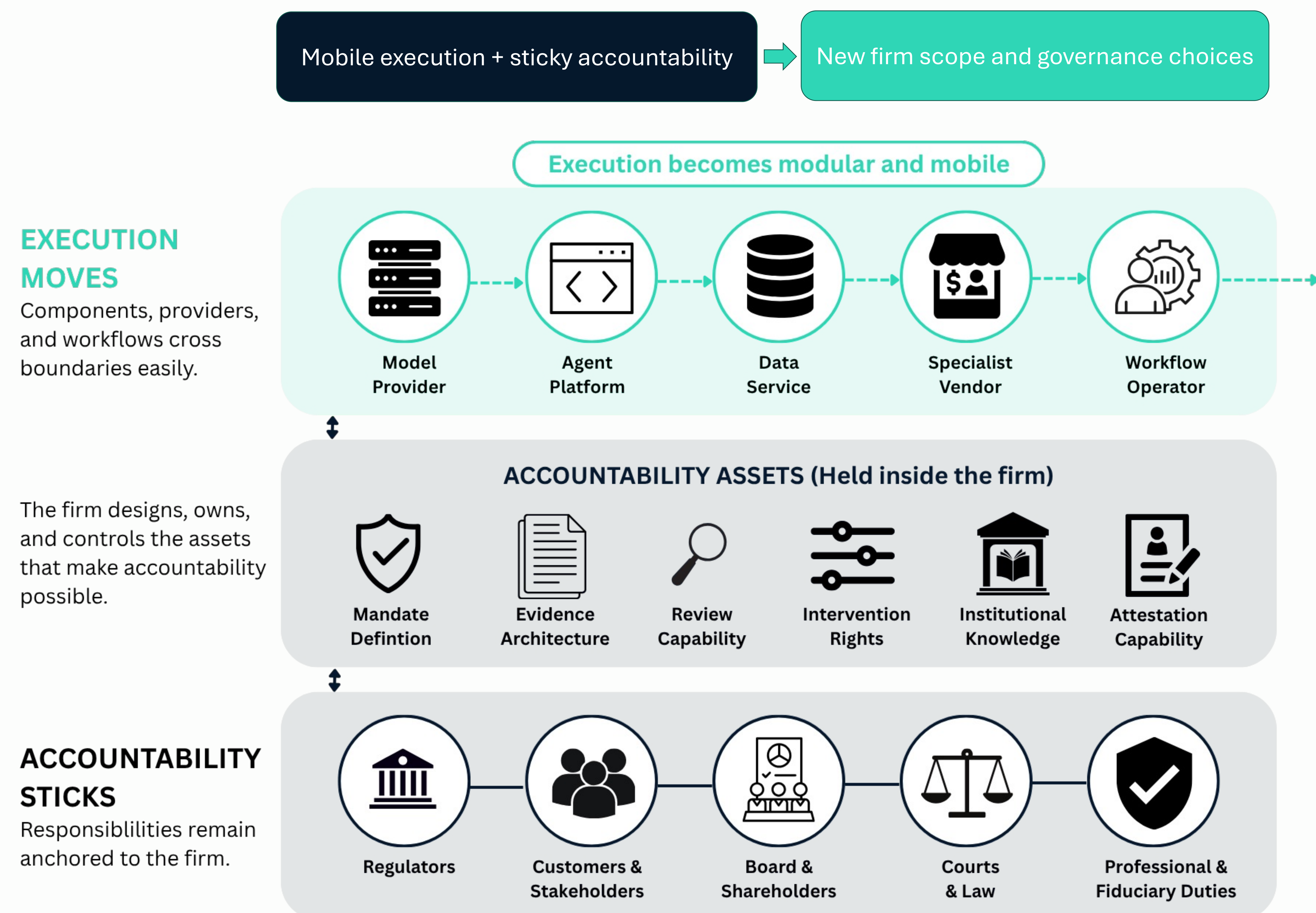
Key terms

- **Residual accountability**
Responsibility that remains with the focal firm after execution has moved elsewhere.
- **Accountability specificity**
The degree to which accountability depends on firm-specific artifacts.
- **Accountability assets**
Capabilities and resources that allow a firm to stand behind delegated execution.



Conceptual strategy-theory paper · Extends firm-boundary and modularity research · Develops propositions on execution and accountability boundaries

How modular AI execution divides operating from accountability boundaries



You can outsource the work, but not the responsibility.

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MODULAR EXECUTION, STICKY ACCOUNTABILITY

Firm Scope and Value Capture Under Agentic AI

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