

INSIGHTS



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AI – THE PUPPET AND THE MASTER

A company's journey to utilising AI is not a simple yes or no decision. It's a strategic balancing act between seizing opportunities and thoughtfully navigating the real challenges. A cautious, pragmatic, and ethical approach will lead to long-term success.

The decision for a company to adopt AI is nuanced, shaped by the company's unique economic, social, and infrastructure landscape. A proactive and thoughtful approach is essential to harness AI's benefits while mitigating its significant risks.

Pros (Advantages & Opportunities)

1. Solving problems with practical, tailored solutions
2. Increased operational efficiency and cost reduction
3. Improved risk management and security
4. Enhanced competitiveness
5. Improved risk management and security

Cons (Challenges & Risks)

1. High initial costs and resource intensity
2. Infrastructure and connectivity limitations
3. Regulatory uncertainty and data privacy concerns
4. Exacerbating socio economic inequalities
5. Cultural and change management barriers



Must do

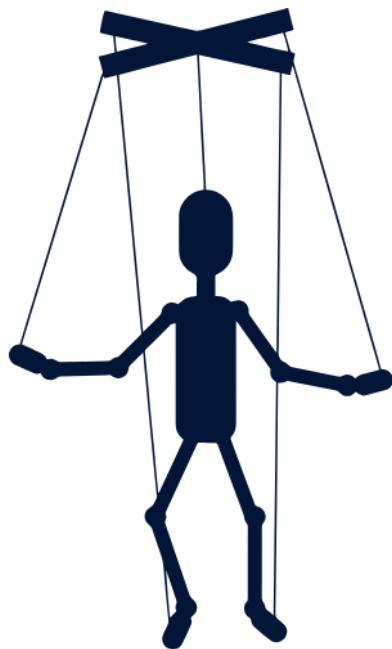
1. Start with a clear problem, not a technology:
Don't adopt AI for its own sake. Identify a specific business problem where AI can provide a measurable solution; if there is none, don't create it.
2. Prioritise data governance:
Before any AI project, ensure your data practices are compliant. Clean, secure, and ethical data is the foundation.
3. Upskill Your Existing Workforce:
Invest in training programs to reskill employees whose jobs will evolve. This builds internal acceptance and mitigates the skills shortage.
4. Strategic Partnerships:
Collaborate with universities, research councils (e.g. CSIR), and tech hubs to access talent, research, and shared resources.
5. Adopt a "Human in the Loop" Models:
Design AI systems that complement human involvement, not replace it.
6. Plan for Power and Connectivity:
Factor in the cost and logistics of uninterrupted power supply and robust internet connectivity.

Who is responsible

With limited regulations and developing legislation, companies must equip themselves with formal AI direction by creating and adopting internal AI governance and practices (Why, Who, What and How). This must incorporate the company's unique culture, size and operations.

A common risk and fear faced by companies is the uncertainty around AI use and its governance. It is vital to remember that it is a tool that is created and controlled by a person.

A remote control saves you the energy and effort of getting up to change the channel or leaving the car to open the gate and garage door. If it is not pressed it will do nothing; if it is broken or has a flat battery, it will malfunction or not work; if it is incorrectly coded or pointed in the wrong direction, it will not do what you want it to. Have knowledge and certainty of what it is, what it does; do you need it? How does it work? Then, use it accordingly and measure its performance against desired results.



AI is a puppet, and its master is the person that holds and pulls the strings.

- It's incredibly capable: It can dance, juggle, recite poetry, and perform complex tasks much faster and more precisely than a human could on their own.
- It follows instructions perfectly: It executes commands given through its strings with consistency.
- It has no will, intent or understanding: The puppet doesn't know why it's dancing, the meaning of the poem, or the consequences of a broken string. It simply moves as directed.

The Puppet Master

- Provides the vision and the goal: What must be done and why.
- Designs and directs the performance: Choose the correct puppet (select the right AI model), write the script (define the process and parameters), and pull the strings (provide the data and prompts).
- Is responsible for the puppet and its actions: The Puppet Master is applauded for a successful performance, ridiculed or disparaged for a failed or inappropriate act.



A well designed and purpose fit puppet (AI) is a powerful tool, but it is an instrument of the Puppet Master's (human's) will. The intelligence, intent, and therefore the ultimate accountability will always reside with humans and the company behind them.

A company (or employee) cannot claim, "The AI did it," any more than a Puppet Master can blame the puppet for a bad performance. The company is responsible for:

- Choosing the right puppet (selecting and vetting AI).
- Writing the script (training data and model design).
- Training competent Puppet Masters (employee training).
- Monitoring every performance (human oversight and auditing).
- Having a plan when a strings break (incident response).

Ultimately, using AI requires a culture of responsibility, not just a technical system. AI is a tool that augments human judgment but never replaces it. The responsibility for its appropriate, safe and ethical use must always rest with the people and the company that deploy it.

An AI governance framework and policy provides the essential strings that allow a company to innovate with AI at speed and scale, while ensuring it remains accountable, ethical, and in control. It transforms AI from an unchecked risk into a strategic asset.

By [Adv. Sannah Pooe](#) 2025/10/21