



ETC Framework Employees, Teams, Core

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They're talking past each other.

Why the ETC Framework Exists

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One leader means employee productivity tools. Another means workflow automation. A third means building AI into the product. They're all right — but without a shared language, "our AI strategy" becomes a collision of too many conversations driving too many disconnected tool decisions.

The ETC Framework — Employee, Team, Core — is a divide-and-conquer approach that gives leadership teams a common map. Each path has a distinct scope, distinct ownership, and distinct management requirements. Conflating them is where most mid-market AI strategies stall.

Across the three paths, the framework maps 13 distinct vendor and implementation categories — from AI point tools to fully custom agentic systems. Knowing which path you're on determines which categories are relevant and which can be set aside.

ETC Framework – Employee, Team, Core

Three Paths to AI Deployment

AI Deployment Path		Focus Owners	Use Cases
Path 1	Employee Productivity	Multiply efficiency & provide always-on functional access for employee velocity IT, Functional Leaders, HR	AI Assistants w/ Data Access and AI Coding
Path 2	Team Workflow Efficiency	Automate repeatable org tasks. Human-in-loop for high-value transactions, AI training & risk management. Functional Leaders, IT	AI enablement for teams' capabilities w/ SaaS (CRM, Marketing Automation, ERP, PLM, CAD)
Path 3	Core	A: Customer Experience Design AI for Differentiated Customer Experience Exec Staff Mktg & Sales	Unified Customer Journey & Data
		B: Differentiated Products Design AI for Differentiated Core Products Exec Staff Prod & Tech Leaders	Instant, Intelligent & Proactive Products

What Each Path Requires

Path 1 — Employee Productivity

The goal is velocity — helping individuals and small teams work faster and smarter without creating shadow AI or data silos.

Employee Skills Ladder — building AI fluency across the organization

Management and governance best practices for individual AI use

AI assistant tool decisions — selection, policy, and rollout

Path 2 — Team Workflow Efficiency

AI applied to repeatable processes across functions — but only where digital readiness and workflow standardization already exist.

SaaS tool selection and agentic activation within existing platforms

Workflow development and automation

Investment Diamond — prioritizing where to deploy AI across functions

AI Double Helix — scoping projects with the right data, people, and workflow dependencies

Path 3 — Core Competitive Differentiation

Path 3 is where AI builds your organization's moat. The most capable organizations are leveraging contextual data — customer history, behavioral signals, operational patterns — to deliver services that are instantaneous, intelligent, and proactive rather than reactive. They are also integrating what were once disparate relationships — between customers, products, channels, and internal systems — into unified, AI-mediated experiences. This is the highest-commitment path, requiring executive sponsorship and long-horizon investment, but it is also where durable competitive advantage is created.

Path 3A — Customer Experience

Reimagining how AI shapes every customer interaction and relationship.

- Customer Experience Protected Human Interactions
- The AI Platform Shift
- Remaining Relevant in an AI-Mediated Market

Path 3B — Differentiated Products

Embedding AI capability directly into core product offerings.

- Using AI Coding for Competitive Advantage
- AI Model Fine-Tuning and Building
- Intelligent & Embodied Products

Next Steps

The ETC Framework gives your leadership team a common map for AI deployment — separating employee productivity, team workflow efficiency, and core competitive differentiation into distinct paths with distinct ownership and investment profiles.

Each path connects to a set of frameworks and tools that support execution. The AI Decision Architecture guides vendor selection within each path. The AI Double Helix scopes individual projects. The Double Helix Project Canvas ensures the right dependencies are identified before commitment.

The Executive AI Clarity Program walks leadership teams through all three paths — producing a signed Strategic Clarity Document with a 12-month roadmap and no more than five priority initiatives with assigned ownership.

**To learn more, book a Strategic Briefing
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