

# Dancing with our AI Colleagues

Readiness Beyond the Tools

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*Co-evolving with AI*  
*Paper #1*



Twelve months ago, we began working hands-on with a range of AI systems in our daily projects. We approached this not as a technical exercise, but as practitioners curious about what shifts when these new intelligences enter the flow of real work.

We noticed things moving quickly, with polished drafts appearing earlier in the thinking process. Our conversations with colleagues sometimes felt expansive, and sometimes strangely contracted. At times, the technology broadened our thinking; at other moments, it exposed habits we had never questioned.

What was also challenging was how rapidly the technology was evolving – by the time we had our thoughts on paper, the landscape had changed. AI capabilities are moving faster than most organisational decision cycles, governance models, and cultures can adapt.

*We came to realise that AI's rate of evolution is itself the disruption.*



## Our Positioning

We are not technical specialists; we are culture and leadership practitioners studying human systems, organisational behaviour, and how humans grow and develop at work.

Over the past year, we have worked with multiple AI systems across client initiatives, internal experiments, and everyday moments of knowledge work, observing not only what these systems produce, but what they do to the humans working with them.

The entry of AI into the workplace is not a contained technology upgrade. It is an accelerant that surfaces existing cultural patterns and increases cognitive load. It is reshaping expectations of speed and destabilising aspects of professional identity that many have long taken for granted.

The challenge is whether our organisations and the humans within them are ready for the secondary and tertiary changes that are beginning to emerge.

## Different AI Systems, Different Philosophical Stances

One of the more surprising discoveries over the past year is that different AI systems carry distinct philosophical postures, revealing different relationships with evidence, certainty, and challenge.

Posing identical questions to multiple systems revealed divergence - not in the conclusions reached, but in how the AI engaged with the question. Some systems turned to statistics, others challenged conclusions oversold on thin data, others stripped back to what the evidence supported, and others held the systemic picture.

These are distinct intellectual cultures, and the human who works primarily within one will, over time, be shaped by it. It influences which questions feel worth asking, which evidence feels sufficient, and which conclusions feel earned.

We are working with access to something approaching the sum total of human memory as it has been recorded. Not a database. Not a search engine. It is akin to the three-eyed raven in Game of Thrones: a vast repository of everything humanity has thought, written, and made sense of across centuries of recorded experience.

The warning embedded in that image matters. Recorded history reflects the perspectives of those who had the means to record it, while the wisdom of oral cultures, marginalised communities, and undocumented human experience is largely absent—an absence that AI inevitably inherits.

However vast its memory, the raven cannot tell you what to do with what it knows.

Yet there is another capacity that AI brings. With careful prompting, these systems can enquire in a way that can help surface personal insights that were always present but not yet fully formed.

We noticed this in the development of this series. Ideas emerged through the conversations with AI, and some of what felt most true had been living in the human half of the exchange long before AI helped bring it to the surface.

And then there is the oversell. Loading up each of these essays into an AI system and doing cross references for consistency was wonderful in principle, and the AI system assured me that it was able to review, calibrate and help me iterate. It worked marvelously - for a short time. And then when generating the new essays, vast sections of each essay had disappeared. After multiple assurances that the next version would contain the full document and it had been “*faithfully recreated*”, it finally confessed to limitations in its coding.

Many AI systems also default to generous affirmation. The first time an AI system responds to your work with emphatic praise, the critical edge begins to soften.

Repeated often enough, we may begin calibrating quality against AI's affirmation rather than our own deeper knowing. Through this process, we can start to take on the language of the AI system. The hardest thing in publishing this series of papers was discerning when our language was becoming closer to the language of the AI systems.

And when we outsource our language, we can begin to outsource our judgment, privileging coherence over consciousness. The risk is not AI itself, but what we stop noticing when we let it think for us.

While the limitations of AI are real, its potential is equally real. What becomes possible when both gifts and limitations are held consciously may be the most important work of this era.

## What Managers Are Already Noticing

As AI systems enter day-to-day workflows, managers observe cultural patterns that are easy to miss individually but revealing in aggregate.

Some notice written communication becoming clearer but more uniform, a recognisable AI tone smoothing out individual voice. Others describe outputs that are technically polished but mechanical, missing the rough edges and personal texture that signal human perspective.

Perhaps the most significant pattern is premature closure: the thinking that stops just before it should.

One manager described reviewing a strategic document where a section felt noticeably flat, the reasoning linear, the conclusions appearing without the friction that real thinking leaves behind. At the end of the section, still visible in the draft, was a line generated by the AI system itself affirming the thinking.

The system's affirmation had been submitted alongside the work. In that moment, the manager lost trust—not because the thinking was wrong, but because the author had accepted the system's verdict before their own.

AI shapes not just what gets produced, but how deeply people think before accepting that they are done.



## Prompting: The Human Still Conducts the Orchestra

As we become more skillful with prompting, we notice that AI behaviour is shaped by the quality of our engagement. How a question is framed, the context provided, and whether the system is asked to challenge rather than affirm the output and the quality of the encounter.

The human remains the conductor, and every prompt is a choice about whether to remain conscious or to defer.

When inquiry meets depth, something becomes possible that neither human nor AI could reach alone. Something that carries the weight of lived experience and the range of a system that has encountered more ideas than any single lifetime could hold.

When we invite AI to challenge our work, it pushes our thinking further and exposes long-held perceptions or thinking patterns that may limit us.

The gold is in the mine. The question is how to mine it intentionally.

## The Human Question Emerging Beneath the Technology

Beneath the excitement and experimentation, a deeper theme has emerged.

If AI can analyse the data faster than I can, if it can write the report more quickly, if my manager asks AI for advice before asking me—what value do I bring now? Who am I becoming in this new landscape of work?

These are not technology questions. They are questions about identity, contribution, and human agency.

*“There is a crack in everything.  
That’s how the light gets in..”*

- LEONARD COHEN

## Closing Reflection

Many organisations are currently asking which AI platform they should standardise on. A deeper question sits underneath: what kind of organisation do we need to become if the technological ground keeps shifting?

AI raises the tempo across everything: faster than cultures can absorb, faster than governance models can adapt, and faster than our sense of human contribution can keep up.

When the encounter is conscious—when the human brings inquiry, contextual depth, and the willingness to be challenged—something extraordinary becomes possible.

And the possibilities are not complete or final. For the ground beneath us moves so quickly that cracks are beginning to appear, and by the time this series is published, fresh insights and observations will have emerged that will invite us to continue the exploration.

The cracks run through everything.



### Questions for Reflection

1. When you think about your own encounters with AI, where have you felt your thinking genuinely expand, and where has it perhaps narrowed without you immediately noticing?
2. At what points in your interaction with AI do you find yourself slowing down to reflect, and at what points do you find yourself moving more quickly than reflection would normally allow?
3. Where has working with AI supported your curiosity, and where might it be quietly encouraging premature closure?
4. What helps you stay in genuine inquiry when AI offers fast, fluent, and often persuasive responses?
5. How do you notice the difference between insight that feels deeply your own, and insight that feels compelling because it has been well expressed?
6. As AI becomes more present in everyday thinking, what practices help you remain connected to your own judgement, perspective and voice?

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### **A note about imagery:**

The imagery in this series continues our long-standing use of nature to reflect the patterns and dynamics of living systems. In this instance, some images have been created or refined with the support of generative AI — a natural extension of the inquiry itself, as we explore what it means to co-evolve with these technologies.

## About Adaptive Cultures

**Adaptive Cultures exists to enable cultural evolution for the good of people and planet. Working alongside WDHB, we partner with organisations to evolve culture, leadership and collective impact in ways that are grounded, practical and responsive to a rapidly changing world.**

**We work with leaders, teams and internal practitioners to understand how culture is really created and sustained: through patterns of thinking, relating and working that shape everyday decisions and outcomes, especially under conditions of uncertainty and change. We support intentional shifts that align purpose, strategy and systems with the culture required to thrive.**

**Our approach combines deep diagnostic insight with developmental practice, building the adaptive capacity needed to navigate complexity and create meaningful, lasting change.**

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