

WHAT YOUR AI DEPLOYMENT PARTNER SHOULD BE TELLING YOU.

And what it means if they're not.

CI&T

Here is the thing nobody selling you AI wants to say out loud.

The foundation model is the **easy part.**

By the industry's own admission, only 30-40% of the value in an enterprise AI deployment comes from the foundation model itself. The rest comes from the harness. Wiring the model into live systems. Redesigning the workflows around it. Governing the agents. Making the gains real, measured, and repeatable.

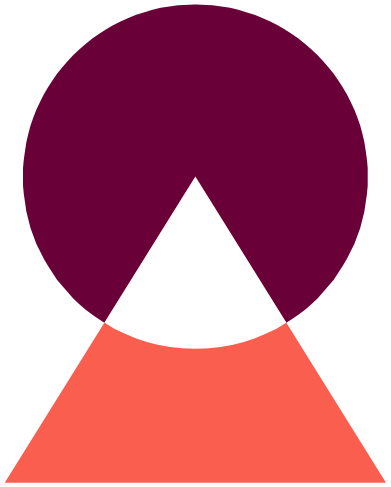
Right now, everyone is buying models.

Almost no one is building the harness.

That gap is the whole game. It is where transformation happens, or doesn't. And it is the part that can't be bought off the shelf, because it lives inside your people, your data, and your processes. So the question is not which model you bought, it's whether the people building your harness are telling you the truth about what it takes to make a deployment successful.

Here's the truth, as we see it. Read it as a test.



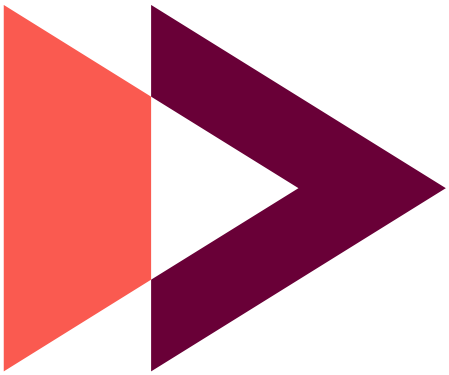


01.
REINVENT
THE LIFECYCLE

Agentic SDLC:
redesigning how software is built, not assisting it.

A copilot on top of an unchanged process gives you a faster version of the old thing, and a ceiling you hit quickly. The real gains come from reinventing the lifecycle itself, so work is done at agentic speed rather than human speed with assistance. This is the engine. A partner who leaves your process untouched has shown you the limit of what they can do.

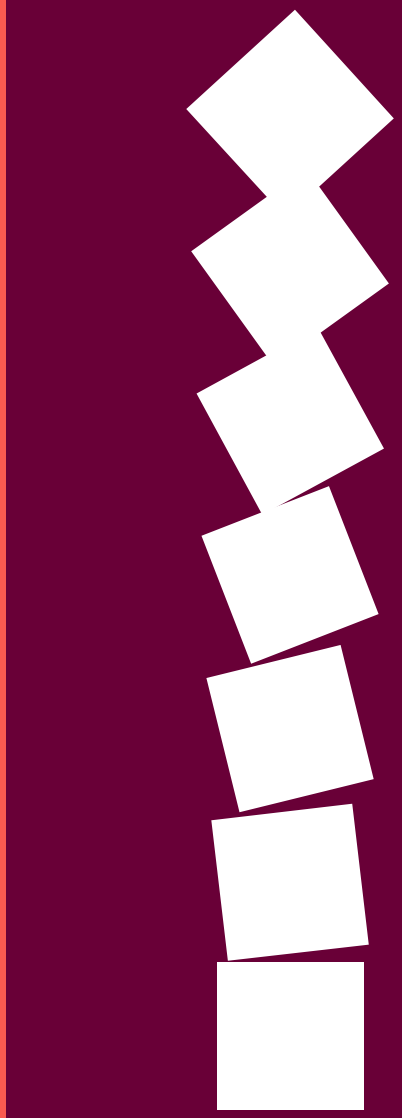
02.
GROUND IT IN DATA



Data as foundation: the dependency every AI system inherits.

An AI system is only as good as what it's fed and what it can reach. This dependency means the unglamorous work, the data foundation, comes first. A programme loud about agents and quiet about data is built on plumbing that does not exist yet. That bill arrives later, and it's large.

03.
CODIFY IT INTO REUSABLE KNOWLEDGE



Reusable knowledge: turning one success into a hundred.

The value of a deployment is not the first result. It's the second, and the hundredth. And the value is only realised if what works is codified into reusable knowledge, so a win earned in one place can be applied everywhere else. If every engagement begins from a blank page, you never stop paying the cost of learning.



04.
ALIGN THE COMMERCIALS TO SPEED

New commercial models:
pricing that rewards efficiency, not hours.

This one is arithmetic, not character.

The traditional way of charging earns more when work takes longer. AI makes work take less time. So when a partner's revenue depends on hours, and the technology reduces hours, the incentive is to slow the very thing you are paying for.

This is why how you're charged is not a billing detail. Instead, it's the clearest signal you have of whose outcome the engagement is actually built around. A model that doesn't change as the work takes less time is telling you something. **Listen to it.**

05.
ASSEMBLE THE RIGHT NETWORK

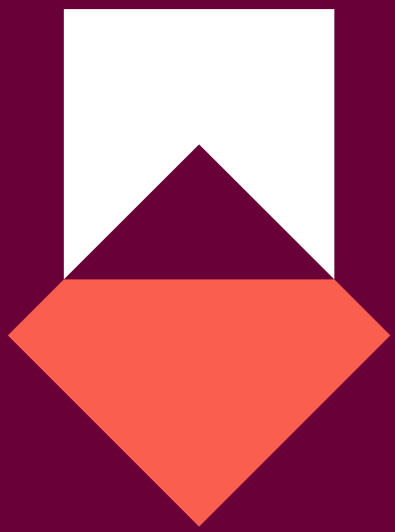
Partnerships: the best stack is built, not owned.

The best model, the best cloud, the best tooling rarely sit under one roof, and they change month to month. So insistence on doing everything in-house is a margin decision wearing a capability costume. You need a network assembled around your problem, not a single vendor defending its perimeter.

06.
GOVERN WITH A METHOD FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

Method and AI management: the precondition for scale.

A pilot tolerates improvisation; 100 agents across live systems do not. At scale, agents without oversight, models without auditability, security without controls, and gains nobody can measure stop being innovation and become exposure. A method and a management layer are not bureaucracy added after the fact. They're the precondition for deploying at scale at all. Enchantment is where this starts. It's a poor place to finish.



Read those six things as one argument, because that's what they are.

Reinvent the lifecycle. Ground it in data. Codify it into reusable knowledge. Align the commercials to speed. Assemble the right network. Govern with a method for impact at scale.

These are not six things to shop for. They're six conditions, and they're dependent on each other. Reusable knowledge is worthless without the data beneath it. A redesigned lifecycle that can't be measured can't be trusted to scale. New commercial models reinforce alignment towards the right outcomes. Remove one and the others lose their footing.

This is the actual test: not whether a partner can do one of these impressively, but whether they treat all six as a single system. A strong answer to three and a shrug at the rest is not a transformation. It's a pilot that will stall the moment it tries to grow, and the stall will be yours to absorb.

The CI&T way to deploy AI



We've spent this article not talking about ourselves. But in this section we'll break that, because it would be dishonest not to say where the six conditions came from.

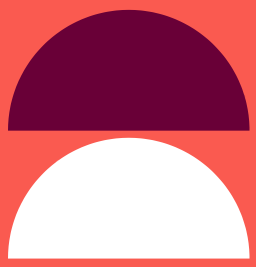
They're not a framework we drew on a whiteboard. They're what we learnt building this inside our own company first, across thousands of engineers and real client contracts, before we ever proposed it to anyone else.

We transformed our own lifecycle into one that's agentic and grounded it in data, because the early attempts that skipped that step failed. We codified what worked so it could be repeated. We changed how we charge, on purpose, knowing it compresses our own hours. We assembled the network rather than pretending to own the stack. And we built the method **(Lean AI)** and the system **(CI&T FLOW)** to govern all of it at scale, because we had to.

The six are not our pitch.
They're our scars.

That's the only reason we trust them enough to hand them to you.

The market has stopped debating whether to transform with AI.



It's now deciding who can actually do it.

So before you sign, hold the engagement against the six.

A partner reasoning from all of them, and willing to align their own economics to your efficiency, is building you the right framework for scale.

A partner comforting you around the gaps is selling you a model and leaving the hard part to you.

And if this is the first time the six have been laid out in front of you at all, that is itself the most useful signal in the room.

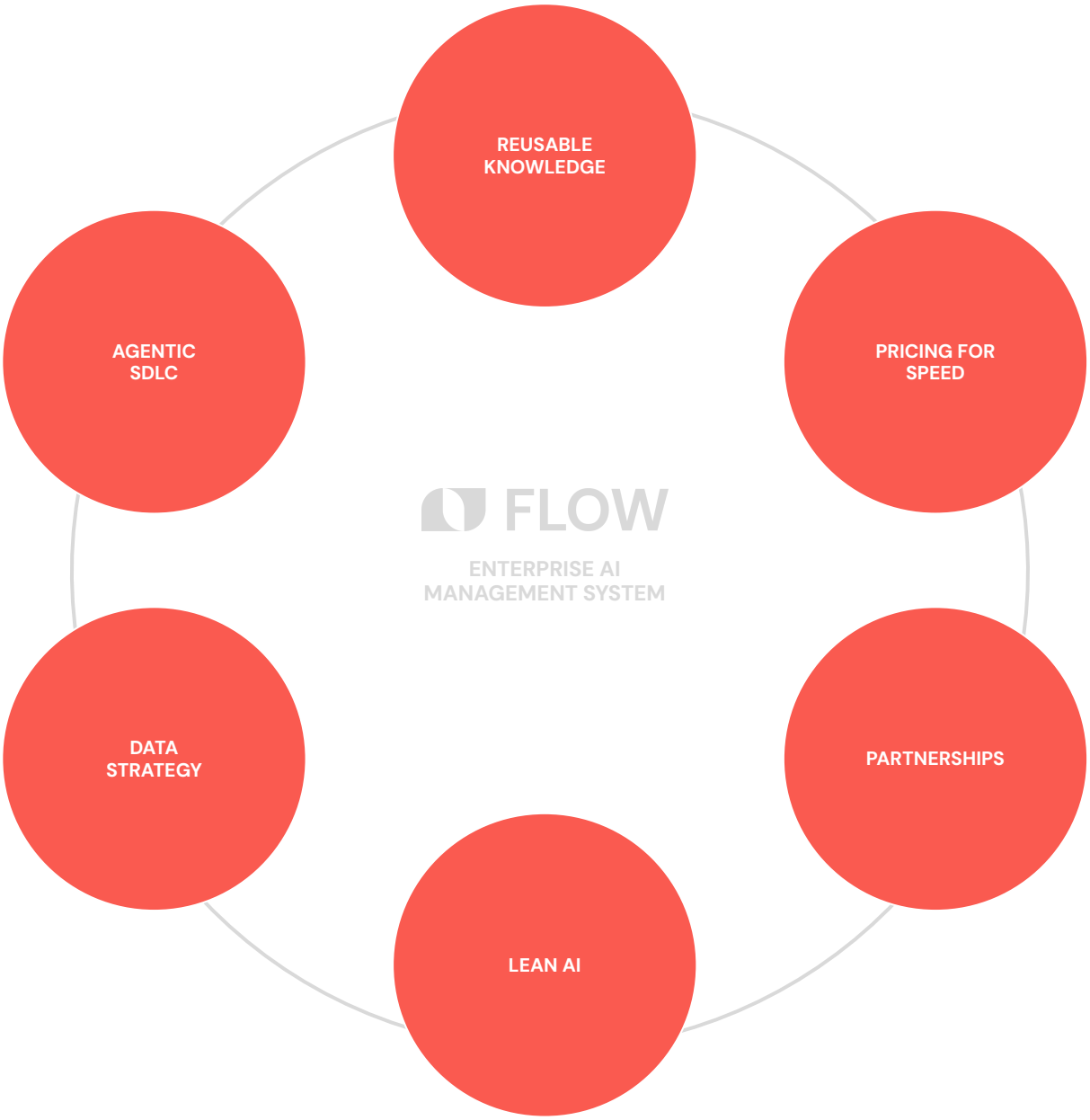
It's a signal that should not have come from an article.

CI&T

TALK TO US

ciandt.com

START YOUR AI TRANSFORMATION & MODERNIZATION JOURNEY WITH US.



LEARN MORE

AI Deployment For Real >
Culture Eats AI For Breakfast >
AI Doesn't Fix Your SDLC >

CI&T