



The People-first™ Framework for Adaptive Adoption (v0.5)

A systems-based framework for AI adoption in organizations. For senior executives, technologists, and policymakers.

© Paul Gibbons

What People-first™ AI is ...

- a framework that puts human flourishing first (normative)
- an approach that considers whether AI use-cases that make workers' lives better might assuage fear and understanding paving the way for efficiency- and ROI-centered deployments
- a framework that treats human trust, agency, and capability as **design constraints**, not soft factors
- a systems-theory approach to AI adoption in real organizations
- a way to reduce friction, shadow AI, and adoption failure **by design**

What People-first™ AI is **not**

- "greenwash" or "ethics-wash"
- feel-good fluff as in "people are our most important asset"
- solutionism: "the system will solve the problems"
- "deploy first, govern later"
- "AI will drive adoption on its own"

WHY : Human Constraints in Socio-Technical Systems

Core premise

Human trust, agency, and capability are first-order system variables in AI-enabled organizations.

Increasing human flourishing is the most important ethical test of AI adoption.

Systems logic

The context for AI adoption is an anxious, and unprepared workforce. Rather than focus on ROI, build trust in the technology by use-cases that make working lives better (rather than focusing on ROI.)

When these constraints are treated as externalities, system friction increases, shadow AI emerges as a compensatory behavior, and performance degrades over time.

Dominant failure mode

Naive solutionism: The belief that technical capability is a sufficient causal mechanism for achieving desired outcomes, independent of human adaptation, system dynamics, and second-order effects.

HOW: Adaptive Adoption in Complex Systems

1

Change is not episodic: business-as-usual is fluid; the context, from macro to micro, is dynamic.

2

Adaptive Adoption™ is a continuous learning process in a complex adaptive system, not a one-time implementation. It emphasizes, non-linear causality, emergence, and co-evolution between humans and tools.



*Success condition: Systems improve through iteration and learning rather than collapsing under scale, rigidity, or misaligned assumptions.
(Paul Gibbons)*

WHETHER: Bake in Ethics First

The Jurassic Park test: "Your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they could, they didn't stop to think if they should."

Core premise

System capability must be bounded by governance, reversibility, and human contestability.

System risks when constraints are ignored

- Dark patterns
- Forced automation
- Irreversible decisions
- Asymmetric power amplification

Diagnostic question

Do we even have qualitative risk-matrices that anticipate risks?

SUMMARY

WHY

Human Constraints in Socio-Technical Systems

Core premise

Human trust, agency, and capability are first-order system variables in AI-enabled organizations.

Systems logic

When these constraints are treated as externalities, system friction increases, shadow AI emerges as a compensatory behavior, and performance degrades over time.

Dominant failure mode

Naive solutionism: The belief that technical capability is a sufficient causal mechanism for achieving desired outcomes, independent of human adaptation, system dynamics, and second-order effects.

Frame this as a modeling error about how systems behave, not a disagreement about goals or values.

HOW

Adaptive Adoption in Complex Systems

Core premise

AI adoption is a continuous learning process in a complex adaptive system, not a one-time implementation.

Key mechanisms

- Feedback loops
- Capability accretion
- Workflow co-evolution
- Error visibility
- Local adaptation

Success condition

Systems improve through iteration and learning rather than collapsing under scale, rigidity, or misaligned assumptions.

Emphasize non-linear causality, emergence, and co-evolution between humans and tools.

WHETHER

Capability vs Appropriateness

Core premise

System capability must be bounded by governance, reversibility, and human contestability.

System risks when constraints are ignored

- Dark patterns
- Forced automation
- Irreversible decisions
- Asymmetric power amplification

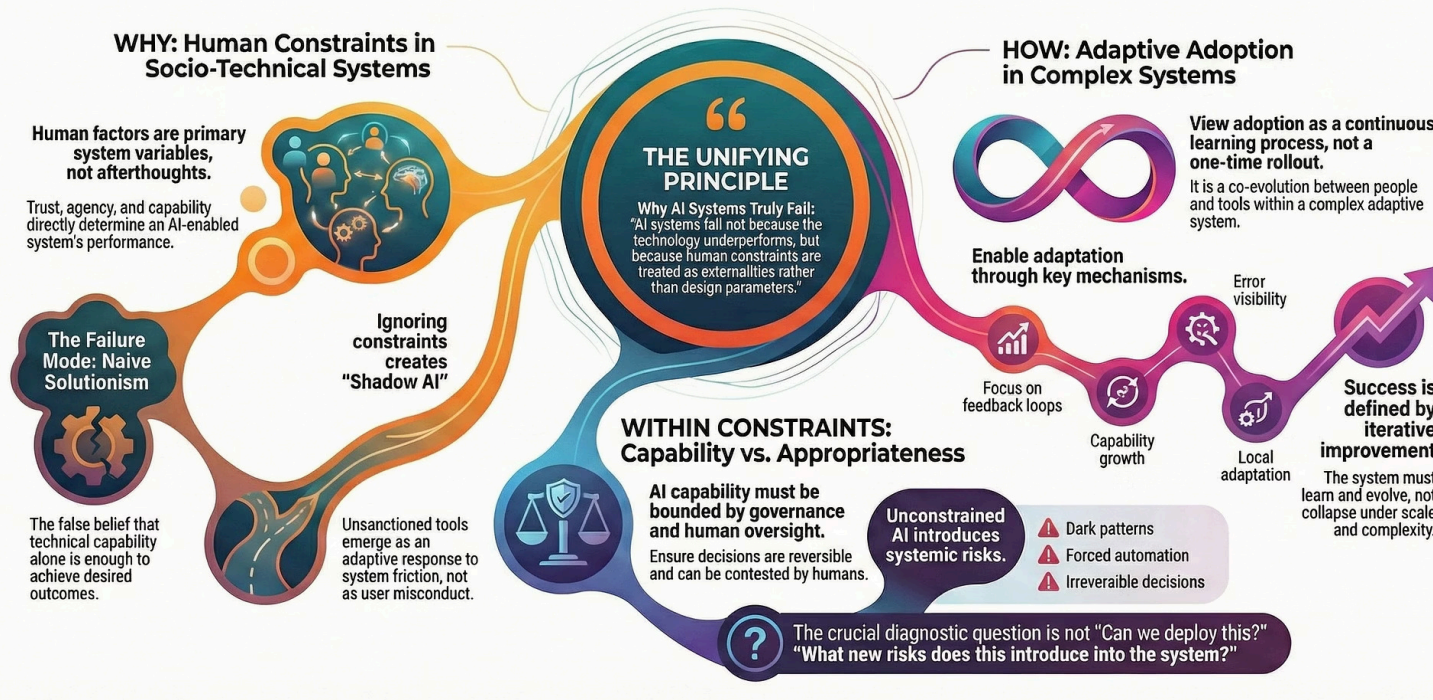
Diagnostic question

Not "Can we deploy this?" But "What new risks does this introduce into the system over time?"

Frame this as system safety, risk containment, and long-term performance protection.

A Systems-Based Framework for AI Adoption

Shifting focus from purely technical capability to a systems-thinking approach that prioritises human constraints and adaptive learning.



- Speaking: paulgibbons.net (paul@paulgibbons.net)
- Advisory: paulgibbonsadvisory.com (paul@paulgibbonsadvisory.com)