36 AUTHORS · 12 PRACTICES · ONE CONCLUSION

THE CASE FOR

Connection

Why Connected Organizations Win: 12 Practices for the AI Era

Proof That Overperformance Is a Decision, Not a Secret

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Published by Raedhelm

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First Beta Edition 0.901, 2026

ISBN (ebook): 978-1-0668453-0-9

Typeset in Lora.

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Introduction

An engineer, a psychologist, an army general, a marketeer, a mathematician, and an entrepreneur walk into a room ...

This isn't the start of a joke. It's what happens when you bring together the ideas of thirty-six of the most respected thinkers across technology, leadership, and organizational design. They started from different places, solved different problems, yet arrived at the same answers. Answers that challenge conventional thinking: the organizations that outperform aren't the ones with the best technology. They're the ones where business and technology are most deeply connected.

Disconnected organizations don't just waste time, money, and talent. Well-intentioned conventional wisdom actively makes things worse. AI makes failures bigger, faster. Strong organizations pull further ahead, weak ones fall further behind, and the gap between them widens every quarter.

The Case for Connection shows there's another way. Traditionally intractable challenges have known answers: practical solutions backed by decades of evidence, made more urgent by AI. It applies whether the organization sells software, runs a bank, processes claims, runs a retail estate, manufactures products, or delivers public services.

If you're a business leader or technologist who wants better results, faster and at lower cost, or that needs genuine returns from AI, this is the book you've been looking for.

If You Only Read This …

The case is simple, and the evidence is overwhelming. 88% of business transformations fall short. 80% of software features go unused. Poor quality software costs the United States $2.41 trillion, of which around $1.52 trillion is technical debt. AI makes these statistics worse. Technology is not the problem. Technology doesn't fail companies; the relationships between the business and its technology fail companies.

Across decades of independent research, thirty-six experts from radically different disciplines converge on Twelve Practices that work as a system and produce results measured in multiples rather than margins: 5.1x more likely to produce strong results, 3x shareholder returns, 9x stock-price growth, +38% customer engagement, +37% brand awareness, 3x faster time to market, 3x more innovation, +40% quality.

Trust and psychological safety beats governance, outcomes are more important than outputs, shared ownership and collaboration beat hand-offs and internal contracts, small steps and visible feedback beat big bets and formal ceremonies, learning and adapting beats following a plan, cognitive diversity enables better decisions.

In this context, AI is an organizational mirror before it is a performance multiplier, magnifying both strengths and dysfunctions. AI indifferently exposes organizational weaknesses and makes Connection urgent. As AI homogenizes how organizations think, Connection protects strategy, distinctiveness and future.

We have the evidence, we know what works. That makes organizational performance a decision. One that many organizations have yet to make.

> *Connection was always the answer. AI made it urgent.*

The Paradox

We have never had better tools, sharper frameworks, or more capable people. Global IT spending is forecast to break $6 trillion in 2026. Enterprises each run hundreds of applications. AI is helping us go faster than ever before.

And yet, the returns are catastrophic.

- ***Transformations Fall Short***: 88% of business transformations fail to achieve their original ambitions. Tech Debt costs the USA $1.53 trillion.[Bain.1, CISQ.1]
- ***Features go unused***: 80% of software features are rarely or never used costing up to $29.5 billion.[Pendo.1,2]
- ***Investment delivers poor returns***: 74% of companies investing in AI struggle to generate tangible value.[BCG.1]
- ***Projects fail***: One in five projects are abandoned. Of the rest 61.7% are late, over budget or don't meet objectives.[Standish.1]
- ***Shareholder value destroyed***: organizations where business and technology share ownership deliver 60% higher total shareholder returns, 16% higher operating margins, and reach the market faster.[McKinsey.12]

Putting the problem into perspective, the waste is about the size of the world's tenth-largest economy.[Gartner.2]

For individual organizations, the impact is equally stark. A business with turnover of $100–200 million, spending $20 million each year on technology and change, can reasonably expect that:

- More than $14 million is spent on features and initiatives that fail to deliver intended value.
- Major projects will cost nearly twice their original budget and take three times as long.
- Only 12–20% of what is delivered will see meaningful adoption.
- Technology teams and business leadership will have fundamentally different views of what "success" looks like.

This is investment being systematically destroyed by organizational dysfunction. Not by bad engineers, or bad leaders. Not by inadequate tools. But by the absence of connection between the people making strategic decisions and the people delivering the solutions. AI does not fix any of this; it multiplies it.

> *The question is not whether there is a problem. The question is what is causing it?*

So What IS Happening?

When McKinsey, BCG, Bain, and Gartner examine failure, the root causes are consistent:

- ***Cultural resistance:*** as the primary barrier to digital transformation success.[McKinsey.14]
- ***Leadership and transparency gaps:*** 39% cite misalignment between leadership vision and execution reality.[McKinsey.13]
- ***Organizational silos:*** and behaviors are a significant inhibitor to transformation..[McKinsey.14]
- ***Talent misallocation:*** Bain found that 90% of transformation value is created by less than 5% of roles, yet organizations routinely put the wrong people in critical seats.[Bain.3]

When McKinsey and Bain examine why transformations fall short, the root causes are consistent:

- ***Cultural and behavioral challenges:*** the most cited barrier to digital progress, ahead of skills, infrastructure and funding[McKinsey.20]
- ***Organizational silos:*** executives rank siloed thinking first among obstacles to a healthy digital culture[McKinsey.20]
- ***Leadership and transparency gaps:*** a clear change story and accessible information rank above talent, tools and funding as predictors of success[McKinsey.21]
- ***Talent misallocation:*** Bain found 90% of transformation value comes from under 5% of roles, yet organizations routinely put the wrong people in critical seats[Bain.3]
- ***Collaboration:*** high-performing CxOs meet their CIOs four times more often than the rest[Gartner.3]

Technology is absent from the list. Tools, platforms, and frameworks are not the problem. Business leaders, customers, stakeholders, and technology teams are speaking different languages, translation is slow, expensive and lossy. Decisions that should take hours take weeks. Context that should be shared is hoarded. Trust that should be a foundation is treated as a nice-to-have.

The impact of this misalignment is significant. If 80% of software features go unused (Pendo), and 75% of development effort is wasted (McKinsey), and 70–80% of rework stems from building the wrong thing in the first place (Gartner), then the majority of technology investment is not just inefficient, it's irrelevant.

Add AI to this picture and the impact worsens. A disconnected organization building the wrong things now builds them faster, with more confidence, with polished dashboards showing the wrong things. DORA's 2025 research, and Faros' 1,255-team study reach the same conclusion: AI amplifies whatever organizational reality already exists. It does not repair it.

What we are seeing is not an engineering problem. It is a relationship and collaboration problem. The people who understand the business are not sufficiently connected to the people who build the technology. Inescapably, we reach the conclusion that

> *Technology doesn't fail companies. Relationships between the business and its technology, fail companies*

The Usual Suspects (Are Not Enough)

An instinctive response to improve organizational performance is to reach for more governance, more process, more control. ISO for security and consistency. ITIL for service management. CMMI for maturity. Prince2, PMBOK, SAFe for delivery, the list goes on. These frameworks certainly have value, they create baseline discipline and common vocabulary. But they address only part of the problem.

Governance frameworks are designed to reduce risk through standardization and control. They assume that if you define the right process and enforce compliance, good outcomes follow. For routine, repeatable work, this is largely true. But for the work that matters most, creating new products, responding to market shifts, building competitive advantage, standardization is almost precisely the wrong approach.

Again, this isn't opinion. Liang et al.'s 2017 peer-reviewed study of 429 matched pairs of business and IT executives,[Liang.1] published in *Information Systems Research*, found that intellectual alignment (a consistent, well documented set of plans) impedes agility by adding organizational inertia, while social alignment (mutual understanding, trust and commitment between leaders) facilitates it. Structure without mutual understanding makes you rigid and slow. Relationships and collaboration make you nimble and fast. This is not an argument against planning or governance. It is an argument that they on their own are insufficient. Social alignment compensates for the rigidity of formal planning, which makes sense; humans are social creatures.

That's what this book is about.

Thank you for reading this excerpt.

The full book continues with 14 chapters exploring the 12 practices that drive connected organisations to consistently overperform.

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