

The Great AI Unlock: Redefining the Operating Model for AI

AI was supposed to be the great “unlock,” a force multiplier that would redefine productivity, accelerate growth, and reinvent how work gets done. Instead, most organizations are stuck in the middle. They’ve adopted the tools but not the transformation. They’ve layered intelligence onto legacy structures and wondered why the gains are *incremental* instead of *exponential*.

The truth: **the unlock doesn’t come from AI itself. It comes from rethinking how the enterprise operates around it.**

At Yates, we see a consistent theme across enterprises and echoed in our most recent Spark Forum session: companies are adopting AI, but they’re not *transforming*. Organizations are optimizing the edges while the core remains untouched. The next frontier isn’t another pilot or platform. It’s the operating model in how work flows, how decisions are made, and how value is created. This is where AI can move from promise to performance.

Why Operating Models Are the New Battleground

Technology is only as powerful as the system it runs on. Most enterprises are running next-generation tech on last-generation models...structures built for efficiency, not intelligence. The result?

- Workflows that move faster but not smarter.
- Decisions that are automated but not improved.
- Costs that shift but value that doesn’t scale.

True transformation begins when an organization rewires its core assumptions:

- What should be done internally and what shouldn’t exist at all.
- How people and intelligent systems collaborate to deliver outcomes.
- Where value is created and what’s just overhead.

The companies unlocking AI’s potential aren’t deploying more tools. They’re *redesigning the architecture of work itself*.

Moving From Adoption to Impact

You can’t bolt AI onto old processes and expect transformation. You have to rebuild the system to harness it. That means redesigning workflows, rethinking decision rights, and realigning accountability around outcomes. Our approach is built on pragmatism, not theory:

- Start small. Pick a domain where AI can deliver visible value.
- Redesign how work gets done, embedding intelligence where it matters most.
- Use the results as a blueprint for systemic change.

Transformation doesn’t happen because you have better tools. It happens because you change how the business runs.

Reframing Value

Efficiency is no longer enough. The unlock lies in **outcomes**. At Yates, we measure transformation by what actually moves the business forward:

- Speed to market

- Customer impact
- Cost-to-serve
- Organizational adaptability

Every initiative we lead is anchored in outcome-based value realization, ensuring every investment in technology, talent, or process redesign translates directly to measurable impact. This shift reframes the role of AI from a cost lever to a value engine, driving performance across the enterprise, not just productivity at the margins.

Designing for Independence

Many enterprises have outsourced their operating models to third parties with managed services, contractors, and offshore teams. What started as flexibility became fragility. The AI-enabled organization is different and doesn't depend on headcount to scale. It depends on *design*.

We help clients rebalance the equation by embedding intelligence, simplifying ownership, and reclaiming control. The result is an operation that's leaner, smarter, more self-sufficient, and built for speed.

The Blueprint

Unlocking AI's full potential requires more than strategy decks and pilot programs. It demands a new way of running the business. Our framework integrates strategy, design, and enablement into a continuous operating capability:

- Assess readiness across data, tech, and culture.
- Reimagine flows that align with outcomes instead of org charts.
- Engage teams early to adopt and change.
- Pilot and validate, and then quickly scale what works.
- Govern for adaptability beyond compliance.

Transformation stops being a program when the operating model itself becomes intelligent — when it learns, adapts, and scales on its own.

The Reset

AI isn't the unlock. The operating model is. Technology can accelerate progress, but only if the system is designed to capture it. The organizations that will win the race treat transformation as a core business discipline.

At Yates, we help enterprises make that leap from incremental improvement to reinvention, automation to intelligence, and adoption to impact. The unlock is here but it's not in the code, it's in the design of how the enterprise runs.