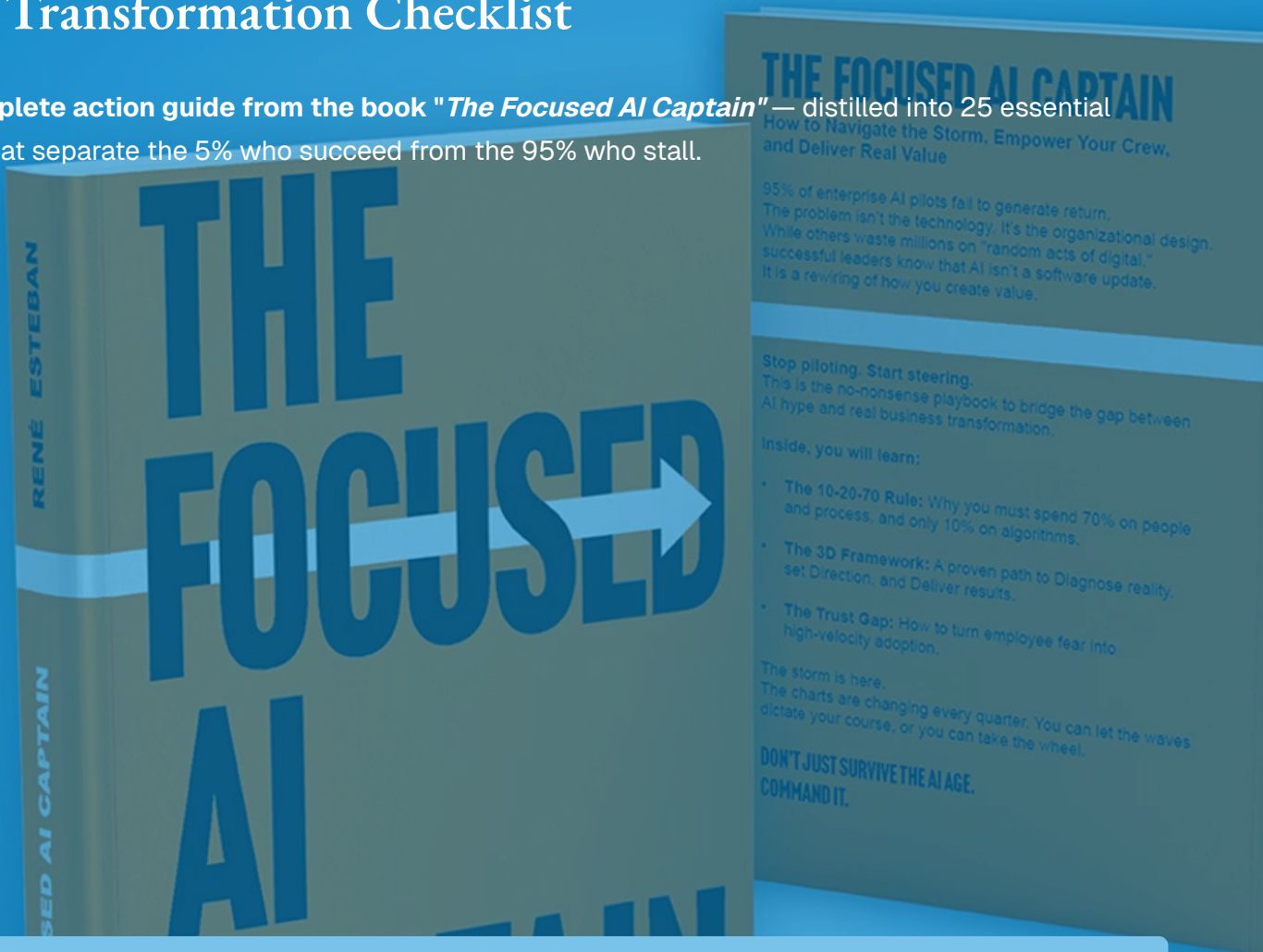


The AI Captain's 25 Actions

Your Transformation Checklist

The complete action guide from the book "*The Focused AI Captain*" — distilled into 25 essential moves that separate the 5% who succeed from the 95% who stall.



☐ Why This Checklist Exists

AI transformation isn't a technology project. It's an organizational redesign that happens to involve technology. The leaders who succeed don't have better algorithms or bigger budgets. They have a systematic approach built for AI's unique challenges.

This checklist follows the **3D Framework: Diagnose** where you actually are, set **Direction** for where you're going, and **Deliver** results that stick. Each action builds on the last. Skip steps, and you join the 95% whose pilots never scale.

Remember the **10-20-70 Rule**: Invest 10% in algorithms, 20% in infrastructure, and 70% in people and processes. That 70% isn't overhead. It's the investment that makes everything else work. **Let's begin.**

Phase 1: DIAGNOSE

You can't fix what you can't see.

- ☐ **1. Complete the AI Maturity Self-Check** across all 7 dimensions: AI Direction, Value Realization, Tech & Data, Governance, Competency, Organization & Process, and Culture & Change
(→ <https://ai.focusfirst.com>)
- ☐ **2. Conduct a comprehensive AI Maturity Assessment** with 15-30 stakeholder interviews to uncover hidden constraints beyond self-perception
- ☐ **3. Identify your biggest constraint.** The single dimension holding everything else back (this is your leverage point)
- ☐ **4. Map your current state costs**, external vendors, internal manual effort, legacy systems, and error/compliance costs
- ☐ **5. Identify quick wins** in areas where you have both capability and organizational readiness
- ☐ **6. Fix the basics first.** Rewrite vague objectives into measurable OneGoals, clarify roles, establish meeting rhythms
- ☐ **7. Build trust through early wins** to break the cynicism from past failed initiatives

Phase 2: DIRECTION

Diagnosis alone doesn't transform organizations.

- ☐ **8. Craft your OneGoal**, a singular, inspiring, time-bound destination that mobilizes your entire organization
- ☐ **9. Apply the 10-20-70 Rule.** Allocate 10% to algorithms, 20% to infrastructure, and 70% to people & processes
- ☐ **10. Choose your strategic intent:** operational excellence, customer experience, innovation, or decision intelligence (pick ONE primary focus)
- ☐ **11. Build your 3-year business case** with realistic timelines: Year 1 = invest, Year 2 = scale, Year 3 = mature
- ☐ **12. Prioritize back-office transformation** (finance, procurement, operations) for highest structural cost elimination
- ☐ **13. Create a phased roadmap:** Months 1-6 centralized foundation → Months 7-18 hybrid expansion → Months 19-24 federated scale
- ☐ **14. Build your stakeholder orchestration system.** Map evolving needs monthly, find win-win intersections, establish operating rhythms

Phase 3: DELIVER

Execution is where most AI strategies die.

Actions 15-19: Foundation

- ☐ **15. Design your 3-layer operating model:** Platform (15-20%), Domains (60-70%), and CoE as enabler (10-15%)
- ☐ **16. Build your talent mix:** AI Champions (1 per 50-100 employees), Technical Specialists, Business Translators, and Change Leaders
- ☐ **17. Invest 80% of transformation budget on non-technology.** Training, change management, and workflow redesign
- ☐ **18. Deliver hands-on AI training.** Structured training creates 144% higher trust and 3x more likely daily usage
- ☐ **19. Create psychological safety.** Celebrate intelligent failures, separate learning metrics from performance reviews

Actions 20-25: Sustainability

- ☐ **20. Implement platform-based governance** with "Sea Lanes" (approved platforms with embedded guardrails) and tiered autonomy based on risk
- ☐ **21. Prevent Shadow AI** by making approved paths faster and better than workarounds
- ☐ **22. Track dual metrics:** Business value (ROI, capacity, risk reduction) AND Adoption indicators (daily usage >60%, training >90%, shadow AI <10%)
- ☐ **23. Establish learning loops:** weekly operational reviews, monthly use case retrospectives, quarterly strategic assessments
- ☐ **24. Build continuous learning capability.** Monthly tech radar sessions, quarterly capability assessments, 10-15% experimentation budget
- ☐ **25. Treat transformation as iterative.** Identify inflection points, adjust strategy when adoption stalls or value lags

Your Next Move

The storm is here. The charts are changing every quarter. But captains aren't born in calm waters. They're forged in storms.

The leaders who will define this era aren't the ones who waited for certainty. They're the ones who moved forward despite uncertainty, learned faster than competitors, and treated each setback as data rather than defeat.

Start with Action #1. Complete your diagnosis at <https://ai.focusfirst.com> Know where you actually stand, not where you wish you were. Then chart your course from there.

The question isn't whether AI will transform your industry. It will.

The question is whether you'll be the one leading that transformation, or watching others do it.

AI, AI Captain.

Stay focused,

René Esteban

Author "The Focused AI Captain" & CEO, Founder of FocusFirst

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