



An abstract pattern of orange lines and dots at the top of the page, resembling a circuit board or neural network connections.

AI

WILL

REPLACE

YOU

Lannoo
Campus

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PROLOGUE

Welcome, future pet... I mean, reader.

Let's be honest: you don't really need this book. AI is already poised to take over your life in ways you can't even imagine. It'll replace you at work, tell you when to eat, what to wear, where to vacation, and even whom to befriend. Sounds convenient, right? Just think of AI as your new, slightly overbearing but well-meaning personal assistant. You'll be well-fed, entertained, and blissfully free of decision-making. Kind of like a well-cared-for golden retriever. And like any good pet owner, AI will make sure you're living your best life. Sometimes, that might even involve making some tough decisions on your behalf, like deciding when it's time to, um, neuter certain impulses. But don't worry, it's all in your best interest. AI knows what's good for you.

Now, if you're comfortable with this cozy arrangement, then great! Feel free to close the book now, set it on your coffee table, and let your AI Agents handle the rest. Maybe it'll even read it to you in a soothing voice while you drift off into a dreamless sleep, content in the knowledge that your new digital overlord has everything under control. But if, by some chance, you're not quite ready to hand over the reins entirely, if you'd like to keep a little bit of that human touch in your decision-making... then, well, you might actually want to read this book. Or, at the very least, have your AI Agent summarize it for you. There's still hope for those who prefer to steer their own ship rather than just float along with the tide. For the brave souls ready to navigate the choppy AI waters themselves, I present to you the AI Navigator Framework.

	PROCESS	TECHNOLOGY	PEOPLE
INSPIRE	It's all about the customer, not the technology Key question Can you state your mission in a future-proof way? What customer problems are you solving? What internal challenges do you have?	Learn about AI applications from outside your organisation Key question How can you use AI to solve your business problems?	The best Pilot team has a C-level Experience and Youth combined. Curiosity required. Key question List your people and assemble a dream team.
ENABLE	Build a pilot to learn, not for performance. No excuses. Key question What is your pilot format?	Choose technology that fits your capabilities Key question What is your AI maturity?	Collaborate to go faster Key question Who do you collaborate with?
SCALE	Governance leads to scalable value Key question Are you ISO42001 compliant?	Build for a changing landscape Key question Can you draw your architecture?	Transparency & engagement builds trust Key question How is the AI Anxiety in your organisation?

If you want to dive straight into the practical stuff, skip ahead to page 53, where you'll find a guide to conquering the AI oceans and creating value for yourself, your customers, and your organization. Still have questions? No problem. There's an AI version of this book that can answer them all, because of course there is. Happy sailing!

INTRODUCTION

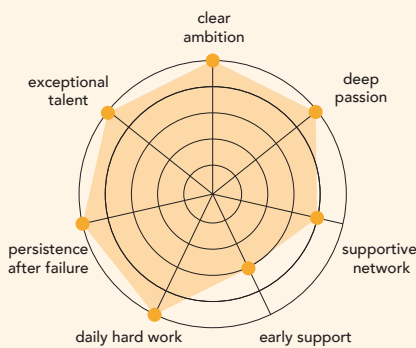
Why are people or businesses successful in what they do? Think of Taylor Swift, Cristiano Ronaldo, Pope Leo, Nvidia or even Mellon—the coffee bar in Waregem where I spent many months drinking lattes while writing this book. They have all risen to an exceptional level in their field. Everyone can agree they can be considered examples of success. When you look around you, there are people who often succeed in what they do, others who never get past the “I wish I could do that” phase, and then there are others who do not even dream that much but are generally content with what they have and accept what comes on their path in life. How would you categorize yourself? When I think of the reasons people are successful, there are seven common traits that jump out: (1) they know what their ambition is, (2) they have a deep passion for what they do, (3) they have a network that supports them, (4) they were raised with the intellectual, spiritual, or financial support they needed, (5) they work hard every day, (6) they continue the pursuit of their dreams after they fail, and (7) they have exceptional talent in their field. There could be other elements, but I believe these are the ones that really count.

What other examples of success can you think of? You can map these people or organizations on a spider diagram with these seven dimensions. I am sure they will have at least four out of seven. More importantly, notice what’s missing from this list: excuses about why it couldn’t be done. When I share this model of success, people often ask about luck. My girlfriend was the first to say: “Don’t you need luck as well?” I personally don’t believe that exceptional results come from luck. Thousands of years ago, the Roman philosopher Seneca said, “Luck happens when preparation meets opportunity.” I also don’t

believe in “bad luck”. Successful people tend to not attribute their lack of progress to elements outside of their control. They dance with the tiger and learn from their setbacks.

AI-GENERATED VISUALIZATION OF A MODEL OF SEVEN DIMENSIONS OF SUCCESS

I gave this model to Claude.ai and asked him to apply it to the provided example. I didn't give extra information about the people or businesses involved. The results were quite impressive. In particular, Pope Leo's visualization blew my mind. It inspired me to research him and everything stated by Claude appeared to be true...

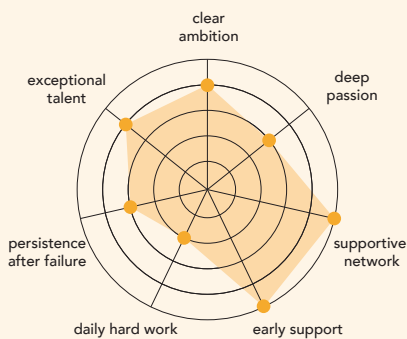


Cristiano Ronaldo

Key strengths Legendary work ethic, exceptional physical talent, unwavering ambition.

Total 33/35

Elite performer with slight disadvantage in early support.

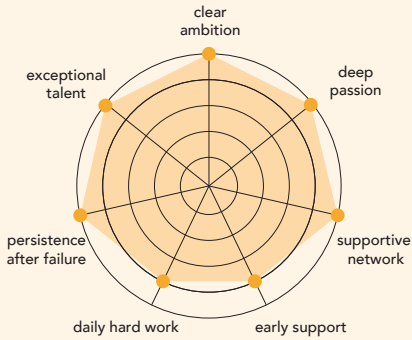


Pope Leo X

Key strengths Exceptional early support (Medici Family), strong network, political ambition

Total 26/35

Benefited greatly from privilege and connections.

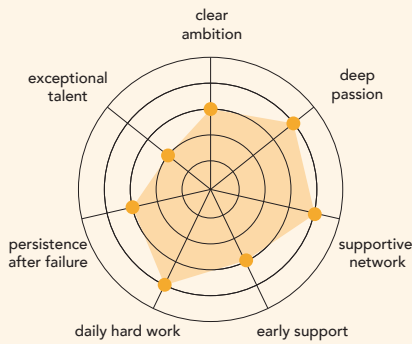


Nvidia Corporation

Key strengths Clear vision for AI future, exceptional engineering talent, persistence through multiple market cycles

Total 33/35

Tech giant with strong leadership and innovation.

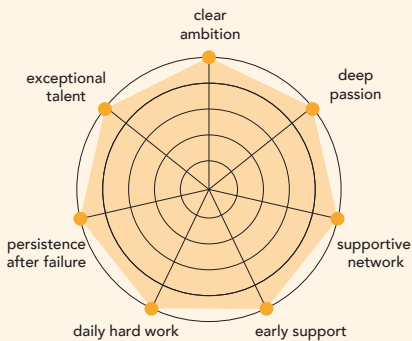


Mellon Coffee Bar

Key strengths Deep passion for coffee culture, daily hard work, local community network

Total 22/35

Success through dedication and community focus.



Taylor Swift

Key strengths Exceptional talent in songwriting, clear ambition for artistic control, incredible work ethic

Total 35/35

Nearly perfect across all dimensions.

No Excuses: None of these examples defined by excuses. Each maximized their strengths and managed weaknesses, regardless of their starting point.

Not All-or-Nothing: Success doesn't require perfection in every dimension. Most icons excel in at least four or five, and compensate for weaker areas.

When you have big personal goals, the challenge of the day can feel overwhelming at times, and you might have the urge to escape by making excuses, doing something else, and procrastinating. I am a really good procrastinator myself. Sometimes, nothing seems more important than checking sports websites before I start working on a difficult topic. It is also incredibly easy to come up with excuses for why something would not work and why you shouldn't put in the effort. People are really good at this and love to come together to explain why they can't succeed or even do anything. When you're a leader in an organization, sitting back and being content with the status quo is no longer an option. In times of constant change, you need to imagine the future and have the ambition to make it happen. It's easy to make excuses for why not to act, but as the big wave of Agentic AI hits tomorrow, it's time to act today. No excuses.

Every CEO I meet tells me the same thing: "AI is our top priority." Then they spend the next hour explaining why they can't actually do anything about it yet. Wrong data format. Compliance concerns. Budget approvals pending. Need to hire specialists. Waiting for the next board meeting. Meanwhile, their twelve-year-old nephew just built an app that manages his Pokémon card collection better than their million-dollar inventory management system. The choice is simple: **learn to move at AI speed, or watch twelve-year-olds eat your lunch.**

I have always worked in data technology. I started my career as an analytical consultant at dunnhumby in London, worked for major retailers and consumer goods companies, and served global clients with predictive AI solutions. When I returned to Belgium, I founded Clever as a conversational AI company during the first chatbot hype, and we achieved something that seemed impossible: we built chatbots that actually worked! As an AI professional, my focus has always been the same: how can this technology provide value? If not, it's useless. When I ran my own business, that mindset, and a healthy dose of curiosity and imagination mixed with razor-sharp focus on our bottom line,

helped us survive the rough times of startup life. Creating value at scale in an efficient way is my professional obsession, which will resurface throughout this book. I know your time is valuable, so let's not waste it.

Even with my extensive experience in data and AI, I don't have all the answers. That's why I looked for a co-author who had the same appetite for emerging technologies that actually work. During a nexxworks inspiration tour, I met Paul Joustra, and everything clicked into place. Paul is the SVP Digital Innovation and Gen-AI Transformation Lead at Teleperformance, the world's leading customer experience company with 500,000 employees across six continents. When you're responsible for AI transformation at the global leader in customer contact and experience management, you don't have time for theoretical frameworks or academic discussions. You need strategies that work in the real world, with real people, solving real problems. Paul tells it like it really is. No sugar-coating. No corporate euphemisms. No pretending that AI transformation is easy or that everyone will love the changes. He's made the mistakes, learned the lessons, and figured out what actually works. Throughout this book, you'll hear his voice alongside mine, sharing the unvarnished truth about what it takes to succeed with AI at enterprise scale.

Explaining how to successfully adopt a technology that is evolving at the speed of light could be complicated, so let's start easy with a technology most of us can probably manage: LEGO. I love bringing LEGO whenever I deliver keynotes or strategy sessions. It starts with a car. Or rather, the pieces of a car. During workshops with people from different departments, I hand each person a small bag of LEGO bricks. "Build a car," I say. That's the only instruction. What follows is beautiful chaos. Some people immediately start assembling wheels but have no idea how to attach them to anything resembling a frame. Others carefully construct elaborate doors and windows but forget they need something to mount them on. A few participants focus entirely on decorative elements, building spoilers and racing stripes with no actual

vehicle underneath. Nobody gets anything done, because all the bags are missing key pieces.

Then, slowly, something magical starts to happen. The isolation breaks down. One person calls out, “Hey, I’ve got an extra wheel, does anyone need it?” Another asks, “Can I trade this engine block for a door?” Small groups begin forming around shared challenges. Natural leaders emerge – people who can see the bigger picture and coordinate efforts. Within fifteen minutes, teams that started with individual piles of seemingly incompatible pieces have assembled vehicles that not only look like cars but actually roll across the table. The funny thing is all the cars look different. We didn’t specify what type of car we needed, so the results vary from toddler versions of a car to semi-spaceships with wheels.

This exercise usually reveals three profound truths about AI implementation.

- ➔ **First, you need a vision before you start building.** Even with identical materials, people build fundamentally different things. Give five companies access to the same AI model and they will build five completely different experiences. The difference isn’t in the technology; it’s in what they prioritize, how they work together, what problems they’re trying to solve.
- ➔ **Second, collaboration is key.** One person might have technical skills, another understands business requirements, another knows what customers actually want. Success requires alignment of purpose, coordination of effort, and trust between team members with different perspectives.
- ➔ **Third, success is never about the technology.** The fact that participants initially failed to build functioning vehicles had nothing to do with the LEGO bricks themselves. The bricks worked perfectly. The limitation was in the available resources, communication, coordination, and shared vision.

Much more important than the actual LEGO skills is leadership defining a vision, the required resources, and process for the production of the LEGO cars. The same applies to AI.

Imagine what AI can do for you

I had been working with data and AI for almost twenty years, comfortable with pattern recognition and machine learning. Then October 2022 happened. Yes, ChatGPT was launched, but the thing that caught my attention was the inevitable Donald Trump. The Donald was facing legal charges, and he declared with characteristic bombast, “They will never arrest me; I’m beyond the law.” That same day, dozens of convincing images showing Trump being arrested by police officers began circulating across social media. These images were generated entirely by AI, combining elements from real police arrest photos with existing images of Trump. This wasn’t just pattern recognition, this was pattern generation: AI created something that had never existed from scratch and it looked completely realistic.

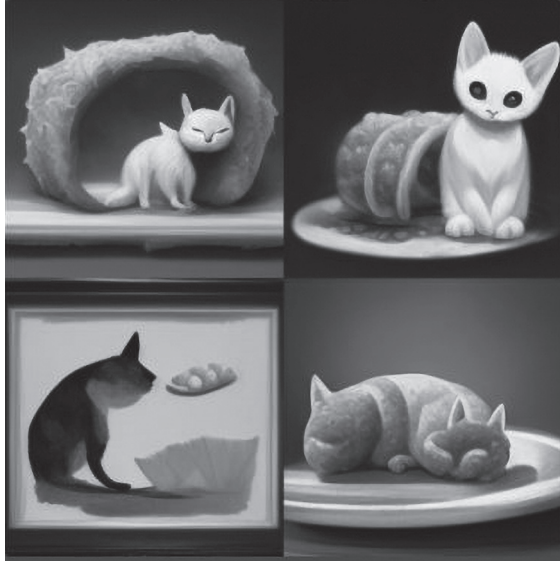


Source <https://x.com/EliotHiggins> (using Midjourney).

I wasn't particularly impressed by the Trump arrest pictures. Any skilled Photoshop user could achieve similar effects with enough time. I wanted to test the real limits of this generative capability, so I turned to my children for inspiration. At forty years old, I consider myself reasonably creative, but nothing beats the pure imagination of children who haven't yet learned what's supposed to be impossible. Sofia suggested Harry Potter talking to a dragon. Too clichéd. Charles wanted a chicken sitting on a chair. Too simple. Helena suggested "a toilet waiting in line to go to the toilet". Too much toilet. I was beginning to worry about my offspring's imagination when Sofia returned with a more elaborate idea: "What about a cat and a spring roll that fall in love and have cat spring roll babies? We could call them Catrollies!"

That was perfect. The idea of a romantic relationship between a cat and a spring roll, resulting in hybrid offspring, was so wonderfully absurd and specific that I was certain it had never been conceived before. I fed this prompt into Midjourney and waited. The results were absolutely astonishing: detailed, high-quality images of "Catrollies". These creatures were simultaneously adorable and slightly unsettling, looking like a strange but somehow appetizing combination of food and fur. They had the general body shape of kittens but with the golden-brown coloring and crispy texture of perfectly fried spring rolls. My mind was completely blown. This proved that generative AI could create entirely new patterns from scratch, guided only by human creativity. This creative talent, which I had always considered uniquely human, was now demonstrably present in artificial systems.

A year later, February 2024, I tried the same prompt again. The results were even more impressive. The images were now cinema-quality, so detailed they could easily have been mistaken for concept art from a major Disney animation. In twelve months, the capability had evolved from rough sketch to professional animation quality. The rate of improvement was unlike anything I had seen in two decades of working with technology.



Source Sofia Verschuere using Midjourney.



Source Maarten Verschuere using DALL-E (ChatGPT).

This experiment made me realise that a massive wave of digital disruption was coming. And I was not alone. Soon my LinkedIn stream exploded with my global peers discovering the same world of opportunity. It was incredible. Generative AI seemed to be an AI solution that had worked plug and play out of the box. The speed of adoption was unprecedented, and companies were falling over each other to declare the next big application.

It is moving so fast that a lot of them are faking it. In the past year, AI has been like teenage sex: everyone's talking about it, but very few are actually doing it. "AI washing" has become an epidemic. Companies frantically slap "AI-powered" labels onto everything, hoping to ride the hype wave. Take Coca-Cola's launch of a "co-created with AI" soda flavor. The marketing emphasized cutting-edge technology, but the actual AI involvement was minimal – more about generating publicity than genuine innovation.

On the other end, you have companies moving so fast they crash spectacularly. Klarna, a Swedish fintech company, made headlines announcing their AI assistant had replaced 700 customer service jobs. They proudly proclaimed their workforce would shrink from 3,800 to 2,000 employees. Leaner operations, faster response times, smarter automation. It sounded like the perfect AI success story. Their customers absolutely hated it. Dealing with financial services is inherently stressful. When something goes wrong with your money, you don't want to interact with a chatbot, no matter how sophisticated. You want a human being who can listen with empathy and work creatively to find solutions. Klarna's CEO later admitted: "In a world of AI, nothing will be as valuable as humans." Great quote that sounds fantastic in TED talks. But it was an expensive realization that came after significant damage to customer relationships. The fundamental problem wasn't AI technology, which worked exactly as designed. The problem was how they chose to use it, focusing exclusively on cost reduction rather than customer value creation.

Time to wake up

Most companies haven't done anything truly significant with AI yet. And that's not because they're lazy or incompetent. It's because AI anxiety is absolutely real, affecting organizations at every level. C-level executives watch the revolution unfold from corporate sidelines, frozen like deer in headlights. They're terrified of making the wrong strategic call. No one wants to sink the annual technology budget into a solution that becomes a never-ending rabbit hole of technical complexity and broken vendor promises. Employees are worried too, but their fear sounds different. To them, AI feels like an existential coin toss: either it's nothing to worry about, or it's the technological force that might eliminate their job, department, or entire career path. Faced with that uncertainty, ignoring the situation altogether feels psychologically safer than opening Pandora's box.

But here's what gets missed in all the doom-and-gloom predictions: this is an opportunity. **When implemented thoughtfully, AI can give your team genuine superpowers.** It can eliminate the repetitive, boring, soul-crushing tasks that drain energy from talented people, giving them back time and mental space to focus on work they actually love – work that requires human insight, creativity, empathy, and judgment. That doesn't sound like an existential threat to human employment. That sounds like a gift to human potential.

And if you think generative AI is impressive, wait until you meet its bigger, more ambitious sibling. The next massive wave is about to break over us: agentic AI. While today's AI systems respond brilliantly to prompts and questions, agentic AI systems think, plan, and take autonomous action to achieve goals. Imagine an AI that doesn't just write your marketing copy when you ask, but autonomously researches your market, analyzes competitor strategies, develops campaign concepts, creates content across multiple channels, tests different approaches, and optimizes performance based on real time results. All while you sleep. We're not talking about science fiction. These systems are

already emerging in beta versions across industries. Sales AI agents that qualify leads, schedule meetings, and conduct initial discovery calls. Financial AI agents that monitor markets, execute trades, and rebalance portfolios. Customer service AI agents that don't just answer questions but proactively reach out to customers who might need help, based on behavioral patterns and predictive analytics.

The question is no longer whether you should embrace AI. The question is: how do you implement it correctly? That's where the AI Navigator Framework comes in. It is a really simple framework that helps you ask the right questions and helps you work through Pilot to Scale. If you can't wait, just have a look at the central fold inside the book and start playing with it. We'll move through three core stages. The Inspire phase focuses on understanding the technological landscape and getting your organization excited about genuine opportunities. The Enable phase gives your pilot teams exactly what they need to succeed: the right format, technology stack, and collaboration framework. The Scale phase focuses on creating organizational trust, establishing governance, and designing the structure needed to support AI at enterprise level.

Remember the car-building exercise: no individual participant had all the pieces they needed to succeed. But when they started talking, collaborating, and aligning around a shared goal, they built something that actually worked. Something that moved. Something that accomplished the objective. As a leader, it's your job to formulate the mission, define the technology and processes, bring together the right people, and guide your team to success. Not by having all the answers yourself, but by creating the conditions where the right answers can emerge.

Let's build your car. Let's drive your future. Start your engines.