teamraderie

A Practical Guide to Team-Level AI Workflow Redesign

FROM EXPERIMENTATION TO OPERATING ADVANTAGE

2026

In January, your company participated in a research event alongside executives from 30 peer companies and faculty from Stanford University and University of California.

The group was introduced to new research showing practical steps leaders can take to rethink their work.

This document translates that research into a practical sequence of steps that a single team can follow to move from productivity experimentation to measurable operating improvement.

It is intended as a companion to the Teamraderie program — a working guide for teams that are taking action to rethink workflows.

Please read and enjoy; you will see the themes reinforced in your interactions with each other and Teamraderie over the coming months.

01

Stop Asking “Where Can We Use AI?”

→ Instead, ask “**Where does work stall?**”

Action to take:

1. Map one core workflow (not 10).
2. Identify:
    a. Where handoffs occur
    b. Where rework happens
    c. Where waiting time accumulates
    d. Where quality errors emerge
3. Quantify one friction point.

Research basis:

- “Visibility into coordination breakdowns reveals leverage points.” (Univ of California)
- “Performance gain comes from removing bottlenecks, not adding tools.” (Stanford)
- AI works best when inserted into well-defined task boundaries. (Wharton)

Example to illustrate how this works:

Commercial Operations (Enterprise SaaS)

A commercial operations team initially believes AI can "improve proposal quality." But workflow mapping reveals the real issue: coordination delays across Sales, Pricing, and Legal. Proposals average 12 business days, with multiple revision cycles.

The team reframes the problem: not better writing, but less rework.

They use AI to:

- Generate first-draft executive summaries
- Retrieve pre-approved legal clauses
- Assist with pricing scenario modeling

Roles shift:

- Sales curates AI output
- Legal embeds standardized language
- Pricing owns AI-enabled templates

The gain comes from *reduced coordination friction*, not time saved drafting.

02

Decompose the Work into Task Units

Most teams fail because they attempt to automate whole jobs.

Instead, break the workflow into:

- Judgment tasks
- Drafting tasks
- Synthesis tasks
- Retrieval tasks
- Coordination tasks

Ask for each:

- What must be human?
- What can be AI-augmented?
- What could be AI-first?

Example to illustrate how this works:

Product Development Team (Life Sciences)

A product development team wants to “use AI in R&D.” Initially, the conversation centers on whether AI can help scientists design experiments.

Instead, the team decomposes the workflow into task units:

- Literature review
- Hypothesis generation
- Experimental design
- Data analysis
- Internal review documentation

They realize AI is poorly suited for experimental judgment, but highly effective for synthesis and drafting.

They redesign the task allocation:

- AI synthesizes recent literature into structured summaries
- AI drafts first-pass internal memos
- Scientists focus on hypothesis refinement and experimental decisions
- Senior researchers review reasoning, not formatting

The breakthrough did not come from “AI designing experiments.” It came from *decomposing the workflow and reallocating cognitive effort where it mattered most*.

03

Redesign Roles, Not Just Tools

This is where some teams stop - but this step leads to change in what people do.

Research shows: If roles don't change, behavior doesn't change.
(Harvard Business School)

Action to take: For the selected workflow, define:

- Who owns prompting?
- Who validates output?
- Who integrates output?
- Who decides when AI is not appropriate?

You are redefining micro-accountabilities.
Example:

Before:

- Analyst drafts memo
- Manager edits

After:

- Analyst designs AI prompt and curates output
- Manager reviews judgment, not grammar

Example to illustrate how this works:

Finance Team (FP&A)

An FP&A team introduces AI to help generate monthly performance reports. Initially, analysts simply use AI to draft variance commentary — but nothing else changes. Managers still rewrite heavily, and cycle time remains flat.

The team realizes the issue isn't tool usage, it's role design.

They explicitly redefine responsibilities:

- Analysts become "AI supervisors," responsible for structuring prompts, validating assumptions, and flagging anomalies.
- AI produces first-draft variance narratives and scenario explanations.
- Finance managers shift from editing prose to challenging business interpretation and forward-looking implications.

Directors review risk framing and strategic recommendations, not formatting.

The reporting workflow is updated to include:

- A documented prompt template
- A required validation checklist
- A clear handoff point between AI-assisted drafting and human judgment

The performance gain did not come from faster drafting.
It came from clarifying who owns supervision, judgment, and decision quality in an AI-enabled workflow.

04

Define a Real Performance Metric (Not “Time Saved”)

→ Time saved ≠ value created

Instead, measure:

- Cycle time of the full workflow
- Error rate
- Throughput
- Quality rating
- Revenue conversion
- Speed to insight

Example:
Instead of “we saved 2 hours,” measure “Regulatory submission cycle reduced from 21 to 15 days.”

Now, the CFO cares.

05

Design a Bounded 30-Day Experiment

Stanford research emphasizes the importance of “Designing the First Experiments”.

Key principles:

- Narrow scope
- Clear hypothesis
- Reversible
- Small team
- Real work (not simulation)

Avoid:

- Enterprise rollout
- Steering committees
- 8-week planning cycles

Template:

Hypothesis: If we use AI to generate first-draft regulatory summaries, then total submission cycle time will drop by 20%.

We will test on:

- Next 3 submissions only.
- We will measure:
- Days to final sign-off.

Summary

AI adoption is not a technology problem. It's a:

- Coordination problem
- Accountability problem
- Role clarity problem
- Flow problem

The challenge for leaders and teams - who have the genuine expertise required to rethink work - is to do so with clarity and purpose, emphasizing the work (instead of the technology).