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AI TRANSFORMATION

What costs time and nerves. And what the opposite looks like.

Typical challenges of AI transformation — unguided and guided side by side

MLI Leadership Institut 2026

Two scenarios of a future world of work with people and AI: one actively led, one passively allowed to happen. The same technology, two directions — depending on whether leadership sets the course. None of the patterns on the left is a technology problem; behind each stands a leadership decision nobody has taken yet.

STRATEGY

UNGEFÜHRT

Cost and headcount savings in the foreground; employees are afraid. Plenty of activity, no focus on value. Pilots remain pilots: 95% of the GenAI-initiatives examined showed no measurable effect on results.¹

GEFÜHRT

A clear target picture of how humans and AI are to work together and where AI can create the greatest value. A few prioritized use cases at a time — employees see opportunities and prospects. Clear criteria for success and for stopping.

FRAMEWORK

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Shadow AI: many people use private AI for work as well, yet it is hardly discussed on the job. There is no shared framework, and no one knows which data flows where.

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Employees have AI support that goes beyond help with wording. Clear rules of play instead of bans, a deliberate time allowance and active enablement for case-based

experimentation and exchange.

QUALITY OF WORK

UNGEFÜHRT

People rely on AI and quickly produce fine-sounding documents that simulate work and create extra work for the recipient — workslop.² An inflation of documents, applications and concepts that no one can read anymore. Quality of work and focus decline.

GEFÜHRT

A manageable number of topic-specific AI assistants and agents that strengthen employees in a goal-oriented way. AI uses uniform standards; customers experience faster responses and better advice. User reviews and impact measurement are part of every use case.

DATA AND SYSTEMS

UNGEFÜHRT

Three departments, three figures for the same business transaction. The company becomes dependent on external vendors and settles for the standard product. The AI answers with complete conviction, and employees are busy mainly reconciling numbers.

GEFÜHRT

Business-critical terms are defined bindingly. Every agent is trained by experienced experts and accesses the right internal tools according to a consistent logic. Employees learn to lead AI — using AI becomes a matter-of-course skill in daily work.

PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATION

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People fear the future and are wary of AI. Customers are fobbed off with AI agents. Responsibility diffuses, the offering becomes interchangeable, the company unattractive as an employer.

GEFÜHRT

People work with AI in a natural way. Agents have a clear identity, their actions are traceable, and there is always a human who leads them and bears the responsibility. People gain time for the situations in which trust or creative ideas emerge.

Which of the two pictures is your company currently extending, and how can you tell?

¹ MIT NANDA, *The GenAI Divide: State of AI in Business 2025* — analysis of 300 public AI deployments, 150 interviews with executives. 95% of pilot projects without a measurable effect on operating results.

² BetterUp Labs and Stanford Social Media Lab, *Harvard Business Review*, September 2025 — survey of 1,150 employees in the US: 40% received workslop in the previous month, with an average of 1 hour 56 minutes of extra work per incident.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sebastian Morgner is Managing Partner of MLI Leadership Institut in Dießen am Ammersee, Germany. Before founding the institute in 2013, he spent fifteen years responsible for strategy and transformation in large corporations, most recently as Global Head of Marketing at UniCredit. Since then he has accompanied more than 150 leadership teams and more than 1,100 C-level executives.

He is co-founder of the Future of Leadership Initiative, host of the podcast *Tiefgang*, spokesperson of the Zukunftsallianz Mensch & KI (Alliance for People and AI) and author of *Expedition Zukunft*. The German business weekly Wirtschaftswoche counts him among the leading leadership coaches in the German-speaking world.

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