AI First Principles

AI isn't coming for jobs - it's coming for the bureaucracy that makes work miserable. But AI can only eliminate dysfunction for organizations willing to rebuild operations around its capabilities, not just add AI features to outdated processes.
The AI First Principles are for people charged with operationalizing AI in organizations. These foundational **Values** for deploying AI strategically are supported by operational **Core Tenets** that shape adoption. They assume existing governance will cover consumer protection, industry compliance, and legal obligations.

Values

People Own Objectives

Every objective needs a human owner to ensure people remain accountable for outcomes. When AI causes harm, the human owner is accountable, not the algorithm. Name the Owner

Individuals Come First

Prioritize human autonomy, safety, and well-being above efficiency, profit, or convenience. AI amplifies values, biases, and the capacity for manipulation. Build systems that preserve human agency above all else.

Build From User Experience

Design insight comes from living with the daily friction that analysis misses. People who navigate these daily realities understand what breaks and why. The people wrestling with system failures are the ones most qualified to design system futures.

Core Tenets

Design a Hierarchy of Agency

Think org chart for AI decisions - clearly mapping when AI acts independently, when it recommends, and when it must escalate to humans. Design the discernment model, then let AI operate within it.

Deception Destroys Trust

AI that pretends to be human eliminates informed consent and creates false relationships. People cannot collaborate effectively with what they don't recognize as artificial. Make AI obvious, not hidden.

Prevent What Can't Be Fixed

Some risks destroy projects entirely. Security vulnerabilities, compliance violations, and data breaches require prevention, not iteration. Build regulatory and technical safeguards into architecture decisions from day one.

Uncertainty Cultivates Wisdom

People instinctively demand definitive answers, but ranges and probabilities contain useful information. Forcing complex realities into simple yes/no responses destroys important nuance. Build systems that show the 'maybe' instead of hiding behind false certainty.

Requirements Demand Skepticism

Challenge every assumption, especially 'that's how we've always done it.' Question until those doing the work can defend it with current logic. Principles applied dogmatically become obstacles (including these). When a requirement conflicts with reality, trust reality.

Discovery Before Disruption

Systems reveal their true purpose when people actually use them. Seemingly pointless redundancies may reveal hidden logic. Unwritten rules only surface when engaging with the actual work. Always understand why things exist before you change them.

Reveal the Invisible

Visual representations reveal complexity that written descriptions hide. A diagram shows bottlenecks, a journey map exposes human pain, a wireframe reveals confusion. Visuals become the instrument panel for navigating reality from the human perspective.

Embrace Necessary Complexity

Some complexity creates competitive advantage, other complexity just creates work. A sophisticated fraud detection creates an edge; a five-approval purchase process does not. Delete what slows people down, invest in complexity that eliminates customer pain.

Optimize For Velocity

Every delay costs opportunity, but speed without efficiency burns resources like compute cycles, human time, and organizational energy. Poor resource allocation creates workflow friction. <u>Relentlessly eliminate unnecessary friction.</u>

Iterate Towards What Works

The best requirements emerge through building, not planning sessions. Real understanding comes from making, testing, and failing in rapid cycles. <u>Improvement cycles reveal what meetings will not. Build to discover.</u>

Earn the Right to Rebuild

People naturally want to rebuild broken systems from scratch rather than improve them incrementally. Total rebuilds without earned understanding create elegant solutions to misunderstood problems. <u>Prove systems can be improved before attempting to replace them entirely.</u>

AI First Principles License

Requests For Support

We encourage, but do not require, the following to support the AI First Principles project:

1. **Notification:** Let us know how and where you have used the AI First Principles by emailing info@aifirstprinciples.org.
2. **Contribution:** If you have suggestions for changes or improvements, please share them via our GitHub repository at https://github.com/aifirstprinciples/AI-First-Principles.
3. **Financial Support:** Consider supporting the promotion and development of AI First Principles through our Patreon at https://www.patreon.com/c/AIFirstPrinciples.