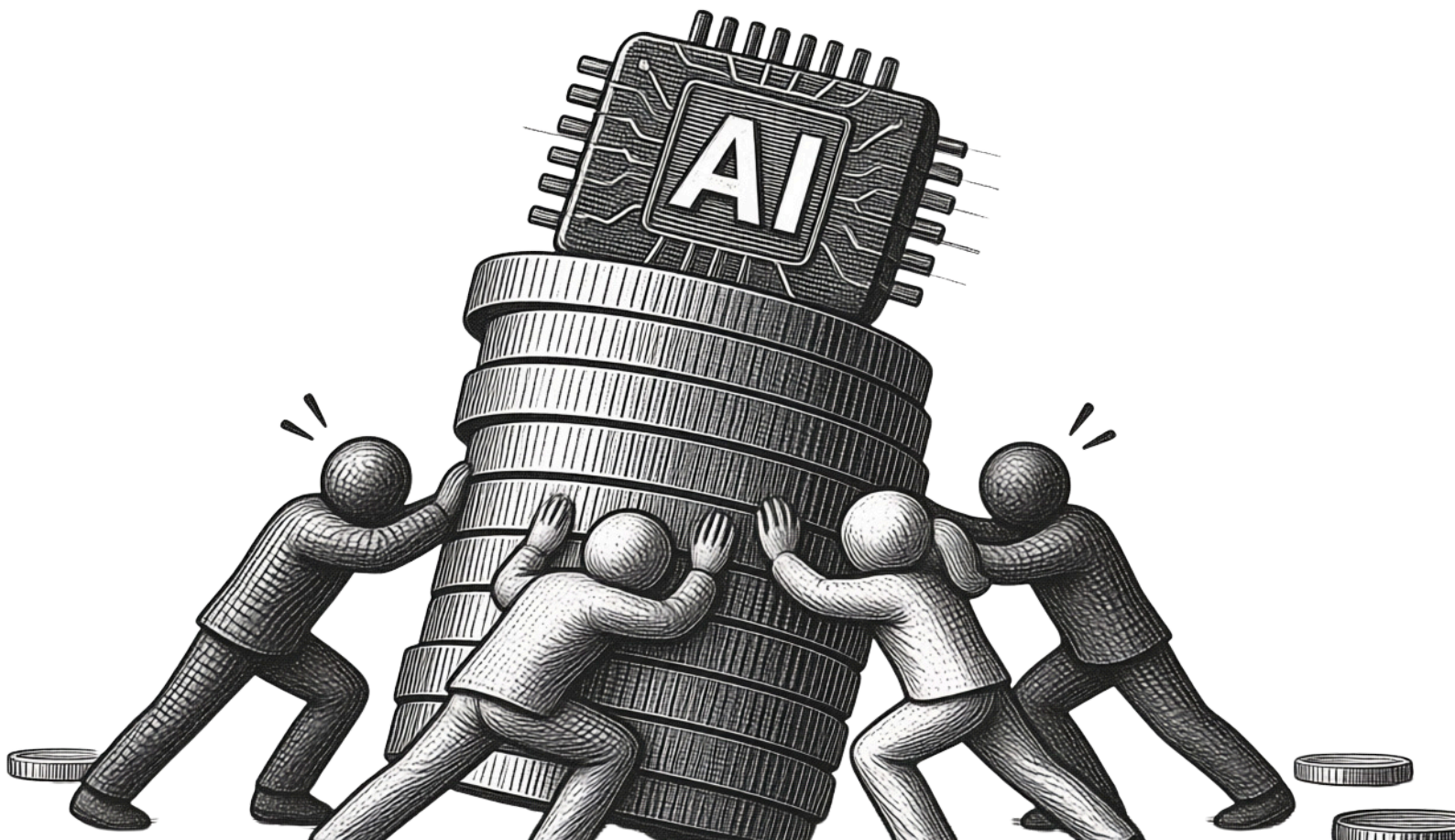




Co-Exponential
For Enterprise Leaders

AI Makes Bad Teaming More Expensive

Four teaming failures that turn faster output into rework,
conflicting decisions, and avoidable risk.



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Four teaming failures that turn faster output into rework, conflicting decisions, and avoidable risk.

AI can lower the cost of producing work. Poor teaming can make the consequences of that work more expensive.

A team can generate a strategy, build a campaign, and draft a customer proposal faster than before. But has it become better at deciding which strategy to pursue, which customers to target, or which promises the business can keep?

Those are not simply technology questions. They are questions of collective judgment.

When people fail to challenge weak assumptions, pursue competing priorities, or leave ownership unclear, AI can help them scale the wrong work. It can reduce the cost of producing each output while increasing the amount of work exposed to one bad decision.

The leadership question is not just, “What can AI help us do?” It is, “**What will our current way of working cause us to scale?**”

The Productivity Paradox: More Output, Not Always Better Outcomes

Time saved on a task is not automatically time saved for the business.

An hour saved drafting a proposal is no gain if it creates three hours of correction, internal disagreement, and customer clarification. A campaign produced faster is not more effective if it reaches the wrong audience.

The distinction matters: individual productivity and collective performance are not the same thing. AI can help improve both. But measuring how much work people produce will not tell you whether they are making better decisions or delivering better results together.

Four recurring teaming failures explain how that gap develops.



1. Poor Challenge: An Untested Assumption Becomes A Plan

Consider a leadership team using AI to develop a customer acquisition strategy. The analysis identifies an attractive customer segment. The team accepts the recommendation without testing whether the data reflects current buying behavior or whether those customers are profitable to serve. AI then helps generate the campaign, outreach sequences, and supporting materials. Multiple activities now depend on the same untested assumption.

The problem is not a shortage of ideas. It is the absence of meaningful challenge before an idea becomes a commitment.

The revealing question: What evidence would make us reject this recommendation?

If the team cannot answer, it has not adequately tested its reasoning. A polished presentation is not a substitute for that test.

The leadership move: Make constructive challenge part of consequential decisions. Ask what supports the recommendation, what is missing, and what would change the team's mind. People need permission to question the conclusion, not just improve the presentation.

2. Premature Decisions: A Fast Solution Replaces Diagnosis

Customer cancellations are rising. AI generates retention offers, marketing prepares the campaigns, and the team moves into execution.

But what is causing customers to leave? If the cause is service delays, product problems, or unmet expectations, a discount may address the symptom while leaving the problem intact. The team has chosen an intervention before establishing what is causing the problem.

The revealing question: What evidence connects this action to the cause of the problem?

The leadership move: Agree on the problem, examine the evidence, and define the intended outcome before choosing a solution. Use AI to explore options, not to bypass diagnosis.

A readily available answer is not necessarily an answer to the right question.



3. Misalignment: Functions Hit Their Targets While The Business Misses Its Goal

Marketing uses AI to expand demand. Operations reduces costs. Sales pursues a different customer segment. Each function may have a defensible plan. Together, those plans can produce demand the business cannot serve and promises it cannot consistently deliver.

AI can accelerate all three. It does not automatically resolve the trade-offs between them.

The revealing question: Which shared outcome takes priority when our functional targets conflict?

“Growth” is not a sufficient answer if teams disagree about which customers, at what margin, and within which delivery constraints.

The leadership move: Agree on the customer, intended outcome, constraints, and trade-offs before scaling activity. Make explicit what each function must protect and where it may need to compromise for the overall result.

Alignment is not everyone endorsing the strategy. It is people making compatible decisions when the strategy meets reality.

4. Execution Gaps: Everyone Contributes, But No One Owns The Result

An AI-generated proposal contains outdated pricing, but sales, finance, and operations each assume someone else verified it. Without clear ownership of final validation, incorrect information reaches the customer.

The revealing question: Who is accountable for the final output, and what must they verify before it is used?

The leadership move: Specify who validates critical information, who approves the decision, and who monitors the result. Put checkpoints where errors could materially affect customers, finances, compliance, or reputation.

Shared responsibility for success does not remove the need for explicit ownership of decisions and handoffs.



Teamitis Is An AI Readiness Issue

These are not four unrelated problems. They are patterns of ineffective teaming: capable people working hard without reliably turning their combined expertise into results.

At Co-Exponential, we use Teamitis™ as a lens for examining those patterns, including unproductive conflict, competing priorities, delayed decisions, unclear accountability, and gaps between strategy and execution.

The distinction between an isolated mistake and a recurring pattern matters. Correcting one proposal fixes that document. Understanding why nobody owned its validation addresses the conditions that could produce the next error.

A leader saying “everyone knows who owns this” does not establish that responsibilities are clear. The test is whether the people involved describe the same responsibilities.

Test this on one live decision. Ask each person involved, independently, to name the intended outcome, the decision owner, and the trade-off that takes priority. Compare the answers before proceeding.

This does not replace technical expertise, reliable data, AI governance, or appropriate risk controls. It addresses a different part of the problem: how people coordinate the judgment and accountability that surround the technology.

Individual Growth, Collective Performance, and AI Must Connect

Three dimensions need attention together.



Individual growth:

Can people evaluate AI outputs, exercise judgment, and recognize when human expertise is needed?



Collective performance:

Can they challenge assumptions, resolve trade-offs, make decisions, and take responsibility for results together?



Agentic AI:

When AI takes action within a workflow, are its authority, limits, and human accountability clear?

Developing individual skills without improving how the team works leaves coordination problems intact. Improving team practices without defining AI boundaries leaves important controls unspecified. The objective is not simply more capable individuals or more capable technology. It is a **more capable system of work**.



What Leaders Can Do Now

Start with one workflow where rework, delays, conflicting decisions, or unclear ownership already affect results. Make the changes concrete enough to test.

1. Diagnose recurring teaming patterns.

Identify where work repeatedly stalls or returns for correction. Distinguish the visible error from the decisions, assumptions, or handoffs that produced it. Create a short list supported by actual examples.

2. Clarify decision rights.

Document who recommends, who contributes expertise, who decides, and who approves the final output. Check that the people involved understand their responsibilities in the same way.

3. Build in constructive challenge.

Before consequential recommendations become commitments, test the evidence, missing information, assumptions, and risks. Make this a defined step, not a hope that somebody will speak up.

4. Align before automating.

Write down the intended outcome, customer, constraints, trade-offs, and success measures. Resolve conflicting expectations before making the workflow faster.

5. Measure the result, not just the output.

Establish a starting point for the measures that matter in that workflow, such as rework, errors, delays, or customer impact. Review what changes and assign ownership for the next adjustment.

The goal is not more meetings or approval layers. It is to identify problems earlier and make the necessary decisions at the right point in the work.

Better Teaming Is An AI Advantage

AI can help teams improve decisions and coordinate execution. It can also help them move faster without resolving the problems that undermine both. The difference is not simply how much work the technology can produce. It is how effectively people direct that capacity toward a shared result.

Before scaling AI-assisted work, examine what your team's current habits will scale with it.



What Is Your Team Scaling With AI?

Bring one AI-assisted workflow where rework, delayed decisions, conflicting priorities, or unclear ownership are affecting results.

In a conversation with us, we will examine where the work breaks down, what that costs in time, rework, or customer impact, and whether the problem is isolated or part of a recurring teaming pattern.

We will then discuss whether the Teamitis™ Diagnostic is the right next step. It combines every team member's assessment with confidential one-to-one debriefs to identify where perspectives differ and what needs attention.

Before making the workflow faster, understand what keeps making it harder.

[Book a conversation with Co-Exponential](#)



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