

Irina Mira

**THE END OF
PERFORMATIVE
MANAGEMENT**

This essay reflects personal observations about management and organizational structure during a period of significant technological transition. It does not represent the views of any current or former employer, client, or affiliated organization.

The ideas in this essay were shaped through work across AI operations, large-scale coordination systems, technology communities, and conversations with operators, researchers, founders, and engineers working across the field.

IRINAMIRA.COM

May 2026

Palo Alto, California

You can already see the shift inside companies.

Small teams execute workloads that previously required entire departments.

At first, this looks like another productivity improvement.

It is not.

AI is restructuring what organizations need from the people who run them.

For decades, organizations absorbed weak judgment through hierarchy, meetings, reporting chains, and coordination overhead. The cost of poor decisions moved too slowly and through too many layers to trace responsibility back to any individual person.

That environment produced a specific kind of management class.

The systems emerging now are far less forgiving.

Contents

Introduction 4

The fog protected weak judgment for a long time. The systems emerging now are far less forgiving.

I. Organizational Fog 6

Competence and performance looked identical inside organizational fog.

II. What AI Makes Visible 8

AI disrupts organizational fog by exposing what each person contributes.

III. The Accountability Frontier 9

Agentic systems increase the speed, scale, and consequences of operational decisions.

IV. Why Bureaucracy Cannot Compete with Execution 10

Organizations respond to pressure by adding process. Execution removes the need for much of it.

V. What Replaces It 12

Management becomes an operational discipline instead of a coordination function.

VI. The New Elites 13

Precision is all you need.

I. Organizational Fog

For decades, two types of people rose through management simultaneously.

The first mastered what they managed. They understood the systems, made the calls, and took responsibility when things broke.

The second mastered the organization itself. They spoke well in meetings, maintained visibility with the right people, navigated hierarchy, and protected their position inside complex structures.

In the environments that produced them, both looked identical.

Information moved through too many hands before anyone acted on it.

By the time outcomes arrived, the trail back to any individual judgment or low-resolution thinking was gone.

This was the organizational fog.

Other industries rejected this arrangement early.

Aviation, medicine, and nuclear operations decided that certain systems were too consequential to operate through social selection alone.

They built licensing systems, logged experience requirements, and direct accountability for outcomes.

A pilot who could not fly was discovered before the first flight.

Where organizations adopted the same standard, it worked. Most never did.

At the same time, organizations solved operational problems by adding more people rather than redesigning systems. A new issue appeared, so another layer was added. Another coordinator. Another individual contributor. Another approval chain. Another reporting structure.

Over time, organizations accumulated layers whose primary function was coordinating the fragmentation created by the organization itself.

Part of this was structural incentive design. Team growth became associated with importance, budget ownership, managerial influence, and promotion readiness.

Expanding headcount became more rewarded than simplifying systems.

Organizational complexity became a source of managerial power.

II. What AI Makes Visible

What once looked like a durable organizational structure was always a temporary workaround for the absence of better systems. Today, that workaround is becoming a trillion-dollar opportunity for technology companies.

Organizations built layers because they had no other way to maintain operational continuity at scale. AI is the first technology that disrupts this. Routing information, tracking decisions, coordinating updates: systems now handle much of this automatically.

What remains is a simpler question: what does this person contribute?

The rise of agentic systems changes more than workflow. It changes hierarchy, accountability, decision-making, and the relationship between knowledge and power inside institutions.

The systems now expose the difference between people who manage complexity and people who manage appearances.

III. The Accountability Frontier

Agentic systems now operate at a scale where a single bad decision can propagate through thousands of downstream actions.

A misconfigured workflow no longer stays isolated.

Previously, systems remained partially offline. Human checkpoints, disconnected processes, and analog components created natural friction that slowed failures and sometimes stopped them entirely. Interconnected agentic systems remove those buffers, allowing errors to compound continuously across the operational chain.

This creates a different category of organizational pressure.

Who approved the system. On what basis. Which model produced the output. What data shaped its behavior. Why the system acted the way it did. When a human should have intervened, and who that human was.

These questions all lead back to the same requirement:

The person responsible must understand the system they are operating.

IV. Why Bureaucracy Cannot Compete with Execution

Most organizations will respond the way they have always responded to pressure.

They will add more process around the problem that create the appearance of control without improving the quality of decisions being made.

They will add human-in-the-loop requirements staffed by people who do not understand the loop.

They will measure compliance rather than competence.

It will be the same organization with a larger technology budget and more sophisticated language for describing its own inertia.

But markets eventually apply pressure to organizational structure the same way they apply pressure to products.

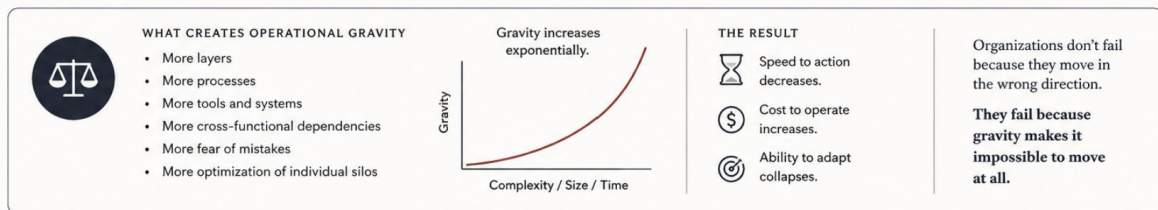
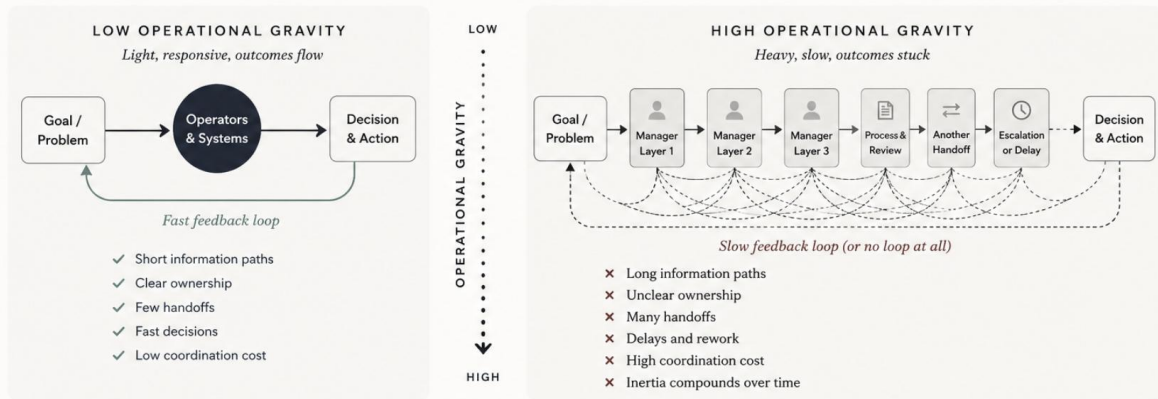
Operational gravity is what happens when processes become so heavy that they slow the organization down. Every additional approval layer, every redundant reporting structure, every coordination ritual that exists to manage the appearance of control adds weight. Over time, the organization moves slower than the environment it operates in.

Leaner systems built around faster feedback loops and stronger operators do not have that problem. That is not a fair fight.

Operational Gravity

The tendency of organizations to slow down, accumulate process, and resist change—no matter the cost.

Operational gravity is the invisible weight of complexity, coordination, and inertia that pulls organizations toward slower, heavier, more bureaucratic states.



To move faster, you must reduce operational gravity: shorten paths, remove friction, empower operators, and design for feedback.

V. What Replaces It

Management was always measurable. The problem was that organizational structures allowed performance to be interpreted through perception.

Certain certifications attempted to solve this. But they were designed for a world where the central challenge was coordinating human labor.

Understanding a Gantt chart is different from understanding why an agentic workflow is producing compounding errors three decisions downstream. As systems become more consequential, organizations will need better ways to verify who can operate these systems.

Once systems handle most information flow automatically, what remains is judgment, technical understanding, and the ability to think precisely.

The speed of these environments changes the standard of competence itself. The operator becomes closer to a pilot managing a live system composed of humans, PhD-level agents, models, workflows, and infrastructure moving continuously at machine speed.

The people who succeed in this environment are selected by capability rather than visibility.

That is the end of performative management.

VI. The New Elites

Leadership is fracturing.

Historically, a single leader (whether a founder, general, or trader) managed both strategy and operations. One mind could grasp the entire system because the scale was small enough to allow it.

Agentic infrastructure forces a divorce between these roles:

- Operators stay embedded within execution, managing systems that run continuously at machine speed.
- The non-operators exist entirely outside the loop, focusing on abstraction and ideation.

While elite leaders can still do both, this infrastructure shift fundamentally raises the bar for authority, much like the telegraph and the spreadsheet did before it. Agentic systems transform decisions into continuous, automated chains of action.

In a hyper-accelerated system, imprecision is too expensive. Relying on traditional trial-and-error is obsolete. Success now demands targeted decisions that anticipate second- and third-order consequences before they happen.

Precision is all you need.

This landscape selects leaders based on raw capability rather than visibility.