
ROADMAP FOR PLATFORM ENGINEERING TEAMS FOR THE NEXT 12-18 MONTHS

Roadmap for the next 12–18 months

Surviving and thriving in this new landscape demands a deliberate strategy. Based on the trends and challenges we surfaced in our research, here are five high-level, actionable themes for your 12–18 month roadmap.

These five themes represent the critical strategic levers for success. While all are important, the right starting point and sequence will depend on your organisation's unique context, challenges and goals.

We encourage you to use this as a framework to build your own tailored, high-impact roadmap for the months ahead. (And as always, our team is available for a conversation if you need support).

THEME 1

Formalise AI Strategy & Governance

Move from human-enforced policies to a platform that enforces AI governance through its core technical capabilities.

KEY GOVERNANCE FEATURES**1****CENTRAL MODEL GATEWAY**

All calls to large language models (both internal and third-party) must be routed through a single, centrally-managed gateway. This provides a critical control point for logging all prompts and responses, enforcing content policies, managing costs, and preventing the leakage of sensitive data and intellectual property. Without a gateway, there is no observability and no control.

2**ZERO-HOP POLICY ENFORCEMENT**

Governance decisions must be enforced at the source, not after the fact. The platform must provide a "zero-hop" policy-as-code engine that can make real-time authorisation decisions for agents. For example, before an agent is allowed to access a production API, the policy engine should be able to instantly verify its identity and credentials without relying on slow, out-of-band approval workflows.

3**DYNAMIC TOOL DISCOVERY**

Agents should never have hardcoded access to tools or credentials. The platform must provide a dynamic, secure discovery service. When an agent needs a tool, whether it's a test environment, a deployment pipeline, or a database, it should query the discovery service, which then authenticates the agent and provides it with ephemeral, least-privilege access, strictly for the duration of the task.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The rush to adopt AI without guardrails creates new avenues for data leakage. For example, a post-breach analysis at one technology firm traced an incident to an employee's use of a non-approved AI summarisation tool, which resulted in sensitive intellectual property being sent directly to an unauthorised third party.

THEME 2

Invest in DevEx as an AI Force Multiplier

Optimise the entire development environment to reduce cognitive load and maximise the effectiveness of AI tools.

ACTIONS

1

MEASURE AND REDUCE COGNITIVE LOAD

Survey your developers to find the biggest points of friction in their day. Go beyond simple output metrics to understand the time they spend waiting for builds, debugging flaky tests, or navigating complex environments.

2

BUILD A WORLD-CLASS INTERNAL DEVELOPER PLATFORM (IDP)

Provide a seamless, self-service platform that abstracts away infrastructure complexity. A great IDP integrates AI tools in a consistent and low-friction way, making the golden path the easiest path.

3

TREAT DEVEX AS A PRODUCT

Appoint a product manager for your developer experience. Give them a dedicated roadmap and the authority to make improvements. Your developers are your internal customers; treat them as such.

THE CORE INSIGHT

The most effective way to counteract AI's toil-shift is to invest in world-class Developer Experience. AI amplifies everything, *including friction*. A high-friction environment with AI tools produces high-friction output faster.

THEME 3

Evolve QA into an Engineering Discipline

Evolve quality assurance from a manual, end-of-stage gate into a continuous, automated quality engineering discipline that's owned by the entire delivery team.

ACTIONS

1**EMPOWER ENGINEERS WITH AI-DRIVEN TESTING TOOLS**

Allocate budget for modern tools that provide autonomous test generation and self-healing capabilities and place them directly in the hands of developers.

2**DEVELOP FULL-LIFECYCLE QUALITY CAPABILITIES**

Upskill engineers to become curators of AI-driven testing strategies. The goal is to build team-wide skills in analysing complex failure patterns and improving the quality of the system, not just finding individual bugs.

3**MASTER NON-DETERMINISTIC VALIDATION**

Develop new skills across the team for testing and validating systems that rely on non-deterministic AI components. This is a new and critical engineering expertise.

THE CORE INSIGHT

The old model of QA as a safety net is fundamentally incompatible with the speed of AI-driven development. The focus must shift from finding bugs at the end to engineering quality in from the start.

THEME 4

Re-evaluate Architectural Principles

Make conscious, deliberate architectural decisions that leverage the speed of AI without accumulating massive architectural debt.

ACTIONS

1

STRENGTHEN ARCHITECTURAL OVERSIGHT

Ensure experienced architects are guiding the use of AI for code generation. Do not allow AI tools to make unsupervised architectural decisions. Their role is to provide leverage, not replace judgment.

2

EXPLORE HYBRID ARCHITECTURES

Re-evaluate your defaults. Patterns like the "modular monolith" may be more appropriate for stable, core functionality, while microservices remain the right choice for highly scalable or experimental components.

3

PROTOTYPE AND TEST FOR PERFORMANCE

For services that will use AI-intensive workloads, prototype and test different architectural patterns early to understand their real-world impact on latency, cost, and performance.

THE CORE INSIGHT

AI gives you the power to build faster than ever before. This is a double-edged sword. Without strong architectural oversight, you can create a distributed monolith at an alarming rate. Re-examine your architecture strategy for an AI-native world.

THEME 5

Operationalise Business Alignment

Create the systems and incentives to ensure AI-accelerated development delivers measurable business value.

ACTIONS**1****REDEFINE SENIOR ENGINEERING AND PRODUCT ROLES**

Explicitly shift the focus of your senior talent from tactical execution to strategic direction. Their job is to define the "why" and ensure that AI is being used to achieve it.

2**ALIGN INCENTIVES WITH OUTCOMES**

Stop rewarding teams for story points or lines of code. Link performance evaluations to business outcomes like feature adoption, customer satisfaction, or revenue impact.

3**IMPLEMENT VALUE STREAM MANAGEMENT**

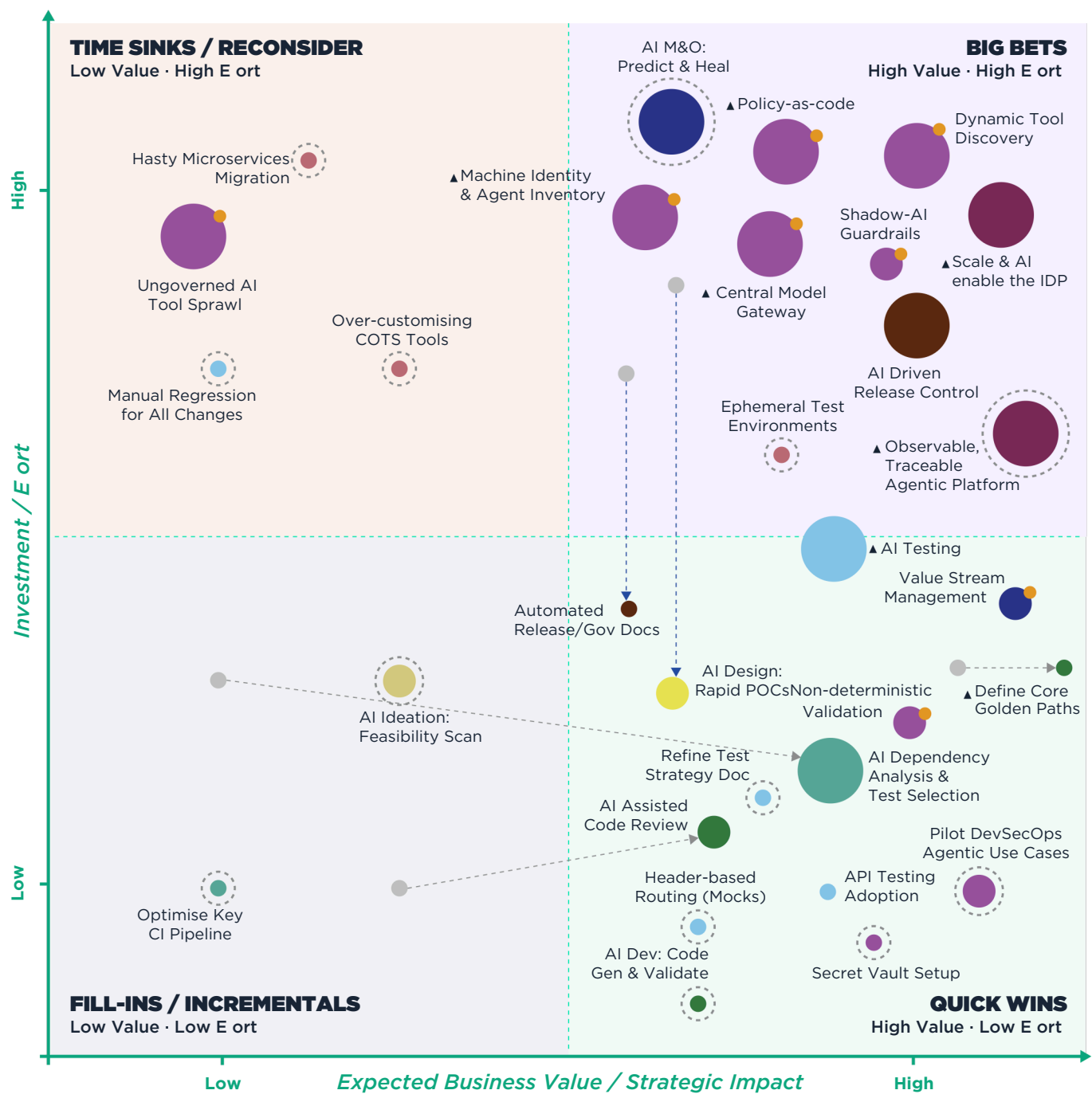
Use modern tools to gain visibility into the entire value stream, from idea to production. Use AI to help identify bottlenecks and forecast the value of work in progress, making it easier to make data-driven decisions about what to build next.

THE CORE INSIGHT

Velocity without value is a liability. In an AI-augmented world, the most important role for human leaders is to ensure that AI's power is focused on the right business problems.

ROUTE TO LIVE

INITIATIVE PRIORITISATION MATRIX



AI Integration (Size)



RtL Phase (Colour)



Status & Movement



WHAT WILL THE GREAT AMPLIFIER AMPLIFY?

THE CENTRAL QUESTION FOR EVERY LEADER IN 2026 IS, WHAT AI WILL AMPLIFY: THE FRICTION OF THE 80% PROBLEM, OR TRUE VALUE DELIVERY?

THE DATA PROVES THE DIFFERENCE IS NOT THE QUALITY OF THE AI TOOLS, BUT THE MATURITY OF THE DELIVERY ECOSYSTEM THEY PLUG INTO. IN ENVIRONMENTS RIDDLED WITH MANUAL PROCESSES AND LEGACY CONSTRAINTS, AI-DRIVEN SPEED SIMPLY POURS FUEL ON THE FIRE.

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