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To those who hold the gates of the frontier AI field: *guidance from a mentor seeking nothing in return.*

Risks and relationships a gate may not see

Does yours face up? Who is holding it?

Every organisation in this field has a gate: the point where it decides whether a model, or the systems built on it, is trained, deployed or kept deployed. This letter is written to the people who hold those gates, across the field, as one. The same letter has gone, by post, to 28 organisations. I don't know where it will resonate, and I haven't tried to guess.

Three faces of a gate

The Romans gave their god of doorways two faces: one looking back at the road travelled, one looking forward along the road ahead. Ovid gave him a third gaze. Janus also kept the gates of heaven. He looked **up**.

Most gates face along the road. They check the work done and prepare the work to come. Fewer face up, to the programme, the enterprise, the society and the moment the decision sits inside. The risks a gate may not see gather there, above it, around it and at the gate itself.

What a gate is for

- **The integration point.** The one moment when every discipline, perspective and tier of the organisation meets the same decision.
- **Cross-tier by design.** Project, programme, enterprise, society, held together rather than traded off.
- **A catch, not only a check.** Under steady conditions a gate checks before release. Under VUCA conditions it also has to catch at the threshold, while the work is already moving.
- **Adapted vertically, not only faster.** The AI moment doesn't ask gates to run quicker. It asks them to hold more of the whole at once.

Frontier safety frameworks already acknowledge thresholds that evaluation cannot yet settle. That is where a gate earns its keep: deciding well when the evidence can't decide.

The risks a gate may not see

The pattern underneath them has a name: **tier-blind flattening**. Competent work at one level steadily thins the integrity of the level above it. Each step is locally sensible, and the loss is seen only afterwards. At the gate, it may show up as:

- **The model's frame passing unexamined.** Expert modelling, human or AI, is reviewed competently inside its own frame. Whether that frame is the right one isn't asked.
- **Ambiguity settled by default.** Where the evidence can't decide, the schedule or the competition decides instead.
- **The hesitant voice logged, not weighed.** Dissent is recorded. Nothing in the process gives it weight.
- **The receiving side out of view.** What the deployment does to the organisations receiving it sits above the gate, not in front of it.

None of this is negligence. It is how gates are built: the perspectives that would see these risks are rarely present in corporate gate rooms, and external review by other experts brings in a different institution, not a different frame. *One of many examples:* The Post Office Horizon case ran for two decades before its failure was named. Each gate it passed faced along the road.

With AI agents now acting with growing autonomy, and enterprise deployment under way at scale, the coming year is when defaults get set.

Where a gate is held

A problem named on its own invites alarm. This one comes with part of its answer.

In 1903 the best-funded attempt at powered flight fell twice into the Potomac. Nine days after the second fall, two bicycle makers from Ohio flew. They had not found more power. They had found control: a machine that could be balanced and steered by the person flying it. The decisive problem was the relationship between the machine and the one riding it.

The field's momentum is towards agents that need less of that relationship. A gate's integrity may depend on more of it. The working relationship between people and the AI they work with is where a gate is held, decision by decision, and it is largely absent from the published frameworks – a blind spot perhaps?

The findings in this letter did not come from desk research. They came out of a sustained, documented partnership between me and an AI, working under explicit disciplines: naming the working mode at every turn; an honest edge in both directions, with the AI catching my overclaims as I catch its; and holding a decision until it is ready rather than when the schedule wants it. That partnership is the gate practised at its smallest scale. It faces back, forward and up in every exchange, and I think it surfaced the pattern above because it practises the discipline whose absence the pattern describes. These findings are on the website, to inspect rather than to take as proof. Whether the partnership form holds beyond one partnership is an open question.

Two ways to find out whether yours faces up – contrast against our findings.

- **Cross-discipline engineering scrutiny.** Can your gate catch at the threshold, not only check before it? Can a review pass by stopping?
- **Scrutiny from advisors and coaches working with developmental psychology** (Torbert, Cook-Greuter, integral). Which perspectives and tiers are actually present at your decisions, and which are absent, including the advisors' own?

Neither needs anything from me. Both are offered as a response to the AI moment.

What is available

- **Free, at the website:** a demonstration of the partnership form at work, including artefacts written by the AI from inside it; the gate reclamation report (*The Unnamed and Hidden Risks*); the Enterprise Risk Card and Addendum; the Engineering Summary; and *The Pathfinders' Walk*, a public series working through this year's events one term at a time.
- **If it's of interest:** the AI-Partnering operating system that grew out of the partnership, with transfer support. Details are on the website.

About me

I am a published author, former Chartered Engineer, with thirty years' research and practice in applied systemic coaching and specialist consulting in engineering and PMO-type organisations. My natural home is the integration function: where risk, training, transformation, organisation development, relationships and engineering meet at the gate. I offer this as a mentor and advisor, not as an implementer.

One question, if I may leave you with it: *when the pressure is highest at your gate, does the voice that holds the whole in view get louder, or quieter, and does it land?*

Yours sincerely,

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P.S. This letter was written within the partnership it describes.