SPHERES

Does your board understand everything AI can change in the company, and where it wants to get to?

> *"Companies do not lack AI use cases; they lack direction over them. A shared map turns a list of projects into board decisions."*

WHAT IT IS

A map of nine spheres

SPHERES places each use case on a common map. Four spheres create value (customer, product, people and operations); three condition it (data, knowledge and decision); one sets the boundaries (regulation, ethics and accountability), and the governance meta-sphere connects them. Opportunity, capability and accountability are seen together.

Implication: Can your board point to the spheres where it has no use case at all, and say whether that is a decision or inertia?

Risk: Without a map, the board receives technology lists it cannot prioritise and effort piles up where it is easiest to justify.

WHAT IT PROPOSES

Three levels of ambition

Each use case is classified as Optimise (the same, faster or cheaper), Augment (people do what they could not do before) or Transform (what is offered or how the company competes changes). They are not a ladder: they are different bets, with different criteria. Five questions and evidence classify it; in case of doubt, the lower level.

Implication: How many of the use cases presented as transformation really change the offer or the business model?

Risk: Calling a well-presented automation a transformation is one of the most expensive and most frequent mistakes.

HOW IT IS CHECKED

Map, grades and conversation

The map is read in three steps: current situation, target ambition and portfolio. Regulation and governance do not use ambition levels: they are assessed by dimensions with four grades, from Absent to Advanced, with evidence. Each board session ends with a decision. The operational rules are in SEVEN-G, document 10.

Implication: What grade does your company have today in compliance and in AI governance structure, and what evidence supports it?

Risk: A session with no decision puts AI back on the agenda at the same point months later.

FOUR QUESTIONS FOR THE BOARD

1. **Do we protect the current product or build the next one?**
   A target ambition set for the product sphere, with the use cases that deliver it and their level.
2. **Do we know what data we have and whether we can use it?**
   A diagnosis of data, knowledge and decision made before setting an Augment or Transform ambition.
3. **What does AI decide alone and what is never delegated?**
   For each system that acts, what a person validates, who can stop it and whether what it recommended and what was decided can be reconstructed.
4. **Does AI replace, augment or reorganise work?**
   A board position on people, with the training and role changes that go with each bet.

WHAT FAILS IF IT IS NOT GOVERNED

WHAT FAILS	LEVEL	WHAT TO DO
Portfolio concentrated on optimising by inertia	HIGH	Set the target ambition for each sphere
Transform bet on weak enablers	HIGH	Diagnose data, knowledge and decision
Systems with no regulatory classification	HIGH	Classify each system under the AI Act
Ambition level assigned by technology	MEDIUM	Classify with the five questions and evidence
Nobody can stop a use case that does not work	MEDIUM	Appoint a committee able to stop cases
Board session that ends with no decision	MEDIUM	Draft the decision before the session
Dependence on a single unassessed provider	LOW	Assess dependence on model providers

FURTHER READING

What SPHERES is and what it is for
Document 00 · nine spheres and three levels

Map of spheres and ambition levels
SEVEN-G document 10 · operational rules

Conversation with the board
Document 05 · script and questions by sphere

European Artificial Intelligence Act, Regulation (EU) 2024/1689
European Parliament and Council of the EU · 13-06-2024

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