AI Leadership Decision Matrix

Five questions to choose the right AI leadership model for your company

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AI talent faces a 3.2-to-1 demand-supply gap. 85% of tech executives have delayed AI projects due to hiring challenges. 91% of employers anticipate hiring challenges in 2026. The right leadership model gets your AI program moving now.

Full-Time AI Executive

$350K–$600K+ / first year

- 3–6 month recruiting + ramp-up
- 40+ hours/week, employment agreement
- Best when AI is your core product

Consulting Firm

$50K–$200K / project

- Weeks to months per engagement
- Project SOW, senior sells / junior delivers
- Best for defined, one-time scope

Fractional AI Director

$60K–$120K / year

- Results in 2–4 weeks, no ramp-up
- 10–20 hrs/month, month-to-month
- Best for ongoing strategy + implementation

Score Your Situation

For each question, check the column that best describes your company. The column with the most checks is your recommended starting point.

Question	Full-Time	Consulting Firm	Fractional
01 How many hours per week does your AI initiative need?	☐ 40+ hours per week of dedicated leadership	☐ Varies by project deliverable	☐ Under 20 hours per month
02 What role does AI play in your business?	☐ AI IS our product or core revenue driver	☐ One-time project or specialized analysis	☐ AI supports and improves existing operations
03 What is your total AI budget for the next 12 months?	☐ $250K+ (can support a senior executive)	☐ $50K–$200K for a defined project	☐ $100K–$250K for leadership + implementation
04 Do you need someone to build, advise, or both?	☐ Dedicated team leader managing daily operations	☐ Expert analysis and recommendations	☐ Strategy AND hands-on building, one accountable leader
05 Can you wait 3–6 months for results?	☐ Yes, willing to invest in recruiting + onboarding	☐ Project has a defined timeline and end date	☐ No, need first wins within 2–4 weeks
Your Total	____ / 5	____ / 5	____ / 5

Your Recommended Path

- **Mostly Full-Time** → Recruit a dedicated AI executive. Your AI workload justifies a full-time leader in the room every day.
- **Mostly Consulting** → Engage a firm for your defined project. Make sure your team can maintain what gets built after the engagement ends.
- **Mostly Fractional** → Start with a fractional AI director. Senior strategy and hands-on implementation at a fraction of full-time cost.
- **Mixed or Unsure** → Start fractional. You'll know within 3 months if full-time is needed based on actual demand.

Transition signal: If your fractional engagement consistently exceeds 20 hours/month for 3–6 months, that's when to hire full-time. By then you'll have a proven roadmap, measurable results, and a job description written from real experience.

Ready to choose your AI leadership model?

Free AI Readiness Assessment: jonathanlasley.ai/assessment
Book a free 30-min strategy call: jonathanlasley.ai/call

FREE ASSESSMENT

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