

Leadership Heed

POWERED BY MALUNGANI HOLDINGS GROUP

LEADING THROUGH
RADICAL UNCERTAINTY

AI FOR ACCELERATED
R&D AND DISCOVERY

DECENTRALIZED
DECISION-MAKING AND
EMPOWERED
EXECUTION



DR MARK NASILA
AUTHOR OF AFRICAN
ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE AND
MASTERING
SOVEREIGN
ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE

CITY OF JOHANNESBURG: A HUB OF LEADERSHIP

Exclusive: Innovators & Trailblazers

THE LEADERSHIP HEED

Masthead & Contents

PUBLICATION

The Leadership Heed

PUBLISHED BY

Malungani Holdings Group

EDITION

September — Spring Edition

VOLUME

Volume 2

FREQUENCY

Monthly

LANGUAGE

English

DISTRIBUTION

Digital Magazine Platform

WEBSITE

malunganigroup.com



Malungani Holdings Group

Creating solutions

Inside This Issue

A foreword from our founder, plus four conversations on leadership at the edge of a decentralised, AI-accelerated economy.

•	Foreword: The Cultural Shift	04
—	Foreword: A Journey of Shared Vision and Synergy Anthony Malungani, Founder & Director of Malungani Holdings Group, on building the future together rather than waiting for it.	05
★	Cover Feature: Dr Mark Nasila on Africa's AI Revolution Africa's AI revolution expert on the future of work, his advisory practice, and the two books reframing the continent's AI strategy — plus a 12-question Q&A.	06
★	In Conversation: Winston Sibanyoni on Strategy & Scale An EY Partner on leading IT advisory across Africa, India and the Middle East — and the leadership lessons he had to unlearn to get there. A 10-question Q&A.	10
01	Beyond the Output Metric: The New CEO Scorecard Why the executives who thrive in the next decade will be judged less on volume of output and more on the quality of their judgement — and their willingness to take the harder, more honest path.	14
02	Building Trust, Transparency, and Safety As intelligent systems move deeper into decision-making, trust becomes the scarcest — and most valuable — organisational asset. A look at what it takes to earn and keep it.	17
03	From Task Assigner to Ecosystem Orchestrator The middle manager's job is being rewritten. As routine coordination is automated, the value of the role shifts to coaching, context-setting and connecting people across a widening web of human and machine capability.	19
04	Digital Sovereignty & Modern Governance: Leading Beyond the Vendor Loop A candid look at what it means for African institutions to own their data, their models and their destiny — rather than renting intelligence from someone else's cloud.	22
•	Partner Feature: Dell 16 Premium AI Laptop	25
•	Brain Teaser: Leadership & Transformation Word Search	27

From the Editor's Desk

Leaders getting ahead of the shift: CEOs redrawing "good work," managers becoming coaches. — *The Leadership Heed Editorial Team*



FOREWORD

The Cultural Shift

SPRING'S AWAKENING

*The crisp white frost begins to yield,
As morning light warms hill and field.
The winter sleeps, the silence breaks,
And under sun, the earth awakes.*

*A blossom bursts through hardened soil,
A quiet end to winter's toil.
With golden light and skies of blue,
The world begins its life anew.*

Welcome to the latest edition of *The Leadership Heed*. Just as nature shakes off the cold quiet of winter to step into the vibrant promise of spring, the global business landscape is undergoing a profound, irreversible awakening. We are standing at the centre of a monumental cultural shift — a new season defined by rapid structural change, evolving organisational systems, and the unprecedented integration of advanced machines and intelligent technology into the heart of our workplaces.

Transitioning into a new season requires adaptable thinking. As intelligent systems redesign traditional workflows and dynamic business models redefine leadership roles, staying stationary is no longer an option. Recognising the magnitude of this transition, we curated this edition to offer critical insights, strategic frameworks, and a deep view for navigating this new era of business.

Winter has officially passed. The old ways of operating are giving way to new possibilities, fresh strategy, and dynamic growth. As we step into this season of renewal, we invite you to embrace the shift, cultivate new perspectives, and lead with vision into the future.

— *The Leadership Heed Editorial Team*

A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER

A Journey of Shared Vision and Synergy

Anthony Malungani

FOUNDER & DIRECTOR, MALUNGANI HOLDINGS GROUP



When we look across the landscape of modern leadership — especially across Africa and its neighbouring regions — one truth becomes clear: the challenges and opportunities ahead cannot be met through isolated efforts or conventional approaches. The future belongs to those who build together.

This initiative began with a fundamental question: how do we create true synergy between organisations and their leaders to intentionally build the future we wish to see?

The answer lies in open dialogue, deep collaboration, and above all, a commitment to changing the narratives that define our collective destiny. For too long, the stories surrounding our growth, capacity, and future have been written by external observers. Today, we are taking ownership of that narrative, shifting the focus from surviving disruption to actively authoring a prosperous, self-reliant, interconnected future.

To our current clients: thank you for your trust, your courage, and your unwavering commitment. You are not simply partners in business; you are co-creators of this vision. By walking alongside you and building new frameworks together, you demonstrate what genuine leadership looks like in an era of rapid change.

"The future is not something we wait for; it is something we design, dialogue by dialogue, narrative by narrative."

To our future clients: we extend an open invitation to join this conversation. You do not have to build in isolation — our work helps align your organisational purpose with broader societal impact, so that as your enterprise grows, it lifts our region with it.

This project is a meeting point for minds, where leaders convene to challenge old paradigms and build new models of excellence together. Thank you for being part of this vital work.

"Let us continue to build it together."

Anthony Malungani

FOUNDER & DIRECTOR, MALUNGANI HOLDINGS GROUP

Dr Mark Nasila: Africa's AI Revolution Expert on the Future of Work

From pioneering AI at FNB, boardrooms and Singularity summits to keynote stages, Dr Mark Nasila has become one of the continent's clearest voices on what artificial intelligence means for African institutions — and why the future of work here cannot simply be imported from elsewhere.

COVER STORY · THE LEADERSHIP HEED DESK



Dr Mark Nasila, author and advisor on sovereign AI and Africa's digital transformation.

Dr Mark Nasila does not open his talks with a slide about chatbots. He opens with a map — a reminder that the systems now being trained on the world's data were, for the most part, never trained on Africa's. Different languages, different infrastructure constraints, different economic realities, and, he argues, a different set of questions about who owns the intelligence being built and who it is ultimately built for.

It is a theme he has spent the better part of a decade making unavoidable in rooms that would rather not think about it. As a keynote speaker at digital and AI summits across the continent and beyond, Nasila has built a reputation less as a technologist selling automation and more as a translator — moving between the language of machine learning engineers, of regulators, and of executives working out what any of it means for their workforce next quarter.

That translation work is also, increasingly, the subject of his writing. Nasila is the author of two books that have become reference points for African leaders navigating the AI transition: *African Artificial Intelligence: Discovering Africa's AI Identity*, and its follow-up, *Mastering Sovereign Artificial Intelligence: Owning and Shaping the Future in the Age of AI*. Together they form something close to a two-part argument — first, that Africa needs its own AI identity rather than an imported one; second, that owning that identity requires owning the infrastructure, data and governance underneath it.

"The future of work conversation in Africa keeps borrowing its assumptions from elsewhere," Nasila

has said of the thinking behind his work. "We talk about automation and job displacement using labour-market data from economies with completely different structures. The starting point has to be our own realities — our informal sectors, our infrastructure gaps, our languages — not a retrofit of someone else's forecast."

That insistence on specificity runs through both books, and through the advisory work he does alongside them with governments, financial institutions and large enterprises building their first serious AI strategies. The pitch is not that Africa should reject the frontier — it is that the frontier has to be rebuilt, in places, to actually fit.

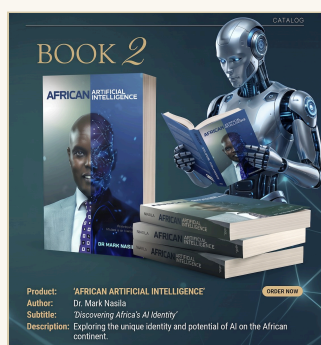
HIS BOOKS



Mastering Sovereign Artificial Intelligence: Owning and Shaping the Future in the Age of AI

CORE THEME: DATA OWNERSHIP, AI SOVEREIGNTY, NATIONAL SECURITY AND STRATEGIC CONTROL OVER AI TECHNOLOGIES

Expands into global AI geopolitics and the case for Sovereign AI — nations, organisations and businesses owning and governing their own data and models. Offers a practical framework for building AI infrastructure and governance that preserves cultural and ethical alignment while developing the workforce to run it.



African Artificial Intelligence: Discovering Africa's AI Identity (2024)

CORE THEME: TAILORING AI TO THE AFRICAN CONTEXT RATHER THAN IMPORTING OFF-THE-SHELF WESTERN MODELS

Traces the rise of AI across healthcare, agriculture, crime prevention, policy and finance, arguing that meaningful socio-economic impact requires reworking AI systems to align with African languages, realities and challenges — part roadmap for regional adoption, part call for digital self-reliance.

Getting to Know Dr Mark Nasila

Twelve quick, unscripted questions on boardrooms, bias, empathy and the limits of the machine — answered in his own words.

1 **The Boardroom Paradox: What is the single biggest misconception corporate executives have about what AI can — or should — do for their business?**

The most dangerous misconception is viewing AI as a plug-and-play technology or a magic wand that instantly generates revenue. Many executives treat it like a traditional software upgrade, expecting immediate quarterly returns. In reality, AI is a foundational transformation. A bank might buy a state-of-the-art generative AI tool to automate customer service, only to see it fail because its underlying data is still siloed across fifteen legacy systems. The tool does not fail because of the AI; it fails because the business was never rewired to be data-driven. AI should not just automate what you already do — it should reimagine how you create value.

2 **Developing World Advantage: How can African and emerging-market organisations leverage AI uniquely compared to Western implementations?**

Emerging markets have the ultimate advantage of a blank canvas. We are not burdened by decades of rigid legacy infrastructure. Instead of copying Western models, African organisations can use Sovereign AI to leapfrog — the way mobile money platforms like M-Pesa bypassed traditional banking entirely. An African agri-tech startup does not need to copy Western industrial farming software; it can use local satellite data and soil sensors to build a model optimised specifically for smallholder farmers and local micro-climates. By prioritising our own indigenous data, we become architects of our own digital destiny.

3 **The 'Human-in-the-Loop' Reality: Where is the line between healthy AI automation and risky over-reliance when scaling high-stakes decisions?**

The line is drawn at accountability and context. Healthy automation handles the heavy lifting of pattern recognition and probability. Risky over-reliance occurs when we outsource the final moral or strategic judgement to a machine. A credit-risk model might flag an informal trader who lacks a formal history but has consistent daily mobile-money cash flow as a statistical risk. The human in the loop understands the local informal market dynamics and approves a micro-loan the algorithm alone would blindly reject. Humans must remain involved to apply contextual wisdom.

4 **Data Quality vs. Big Data: What is the most overrated data metric businesses waste time collecting?**

Sheer data volume is the ultimate vanity metric. As I outline in *African Artificial Intelligence*, the obsession with "Big Data" often leads organisations to simply hoard digital noise. The most overrated metric is total data captured — we must shift our focus to Smart Data. A telco collecting terabytes of raw location data gains very little strategic value; but if it contextualises and filters that data to understand commuting patterns and offer targeted, relevant services, it solves an actual business problem. Quality and context will always beat sheer volume.

5 **The Ethics Reality Check: What is a dilemma you've faced where the mathematically optimal answer clashed with the human or societal one?**

In financial risk modelling, the mathematically optimal answer often suggests excluding marginalised groups because historical data shows them as higher risk — the trap of historical bias. A credit-scoring algorithm might optimise for zero default risk by effectively redlining rural or low-income areas based on past data. Mathematically, it minimises risk. Ethically, it perpetuates exclusion. The dilemma is actively choosing to override the "optimal" output to build inclusive models that look at alternative data — like utility payments — so we participate in upliftment rather than reinforcing old inequalities.

6 **The Un-AI-able Skill: What uniquely human trait or job skill will AI never master?**

Moral courage and contextual empathy. An AI can mimic polite conversation and calculate the safest course of action based on historical precedent, but it takes moral courage to make a difficult, unprecedented decision because it is the right thing to do. An AI can write a technically perfect restructuring plan that saves a company twenty percent in operating costs. But looking an employee in the eye, understanding the impact on their family, and communicating that change with genuine compassion is a distinctly human capacity no neural network will ever replicate.

7 *The Personal AI Assistant: What mundane personal task would you offload to it first?*

"Digital noise filtering." I would want my AI to read, categorise and prioritise my communications — instantly declining generic webinar invites and drafting polite responses to low-priority emails. By the time I sit down to work, I am only presented with high-level strategic decisions or messages from key stakeholders and family members that deserve my genuine, undivided attention.

8 *The Time Capsule Question: What about today's AI output would look the most embarrassingly primitive in fifty years?*

Future generations will laugh at our current models' massive energy inefficiency and their lack of true reasoning. Today's generative AI essentially acts as a highly sophisticated autocomplete, predicting the next word based on statistical likelihood. In fifty years, they will look at how we built billion-dollar data centres, consuming the energy of small cities, just to have a model generate a recipe in the style of Shakespeare or hallucinate a false fact with total confidence. Using such brute computational force for tasks lacking fundamental reasoning will seem incredibly archaic.

9 *Myth-Busting Sci-Fi: What depiction of AI makes you cringe, and which one got it right?*

The instant, malevolent super-intelligence of *The Terminator* always makes me cringe, because it distracts from the real, immediate risks — the constant vulnerabilities of "jailbreaking" models to bypass safety guardrails, or recent warnings from ex-industry researchers about misalignment risk. Conversely, the film *Her* got it surprisingly right. It captured the subtle, psychological integration of AI into daily life, and how algorithms might evolve to shape human emotional dependencies.

10 *Moving Beyond ROI Hype: What is the biggest flaw in how boards evaluate AI projects?*

Treating AI like a traditional IT rollout and demanding immediate, direct revenue within a few quarters. Boards should evaluate AI as a strategic lever, balancing three layers: AI-assisted work (a person writing a report with a copilot), AI-powered systems (automated fraud detection running in the background), and AI-native models (entirely new offerings built on AI principles). Rather than asking "Did this chatbot save us \$10,000 this month?", boards should be asking whether an AI-native workflow let them launch a product in two days instead of two months.

11 *Up-skilling Business Leaders vs. Technologists: What does that up-skilling path look like in practice?*

We do not need to teach our CEOs to write Python. The path involves creating "AI translators" by teaching business leaders the art of problem framing. Rather than sending a Chief Marketing Officer to a coding bootcamp, up-skilling means teaching them to translate a business problem — like customer churn — into a machine-learning problem, giving them the vocabulary to brief the data science team, ask the right ethical questions, and confidently interpret outputs to drive strategy.

12 *Preserving Human Empathy: How do you prevent digital channels from losing the empathy and trust that human interactions provide?*

The goal of AI in customer service is not to replace humans but to empower them. We prevent the loss of empathy by automating the purely administrative and transactional tasks. In banking, an AI can process a lost-card replacement or password reset in seconds — but when a customer calls because they have been the victim of sophisticated identity theft, the AI routes them straight to a human specialist. Because that agent isn't bogged down resetting passwords all day, they have the cognitive space to provide the reassurance and nuanced problem-solving that preserves trust.

Winston Sibanyoni: Strategy, Precision, and Leading EY Across Africa, India & The Middle East

As an EY Partner steering IT advisory across three regions and two decades of market cycles, Winston Sibanyoni has built a career on a simple discipline: technology follows the business problem, never the other way around.

IN CONVERSATION · THE LEADERSHIP HEED DESK



Winston Sibanyoni, EY Partner, on leadership, transformation and the discipline of scaling trust.

Winston Sibanyoni has spent more than two decades leading IT advisory through market cycles, regulatory upheaval and the rise of generative AI — first as a hands-on delivery leader, now as a Partner responsible for scaling both client trust and a business across Africa, India and the Middle East. His view of technology is unfashionably plain: it is a means, never the message.

In the conversation that follows, Sibanyoni speaks candidly about the leadership lessons he has had to unlearn, the overhyped promises he refuses to sell to boards, and the "boring" foundations — workforce capability, governance, trust — that he believes will decide which institutions actually benefit from the AI era, and which merely spend on it.

1 *Looking back from 2035, what is the one human skill you'll be proudest that you protected and nurtured in your people?*

Looking back from 2035, I would be most proud of having nurtured and developed young talent. By helping people discover their strengths, realise their potential, and learn from both success and failure, I hope to have empowered a generation of professionals to achieve more than they thought possible.

2 *Having led IT advisory across multiple economic shifts over two decades, what core principle guides your leadership today when helping CFOs and CTOs allocate technology capital during periods of extreme market and regulatory volatility?*

My guiding principle is that technology should always be an enabler of business outcomes, not the starting point. When advising CFOs and CTOs, I first focus on ensuring there is clear alignment on the underlying business challenges that need to be solved.

Too often, organisations perceive their biggest challenges as technology problems, when in reality they stem from process inefficiencies, operating-model constraints, or a lack of business ownership. Sustainable transformation requires business leaders to lead the change, with technology serving as the catalyst.

My role is to help CFOs and CTOs prioritise investments that deliver measurable value, align stakeholders around strategic objectives, and establish strong executive ownership from the top — so organisations are better positioned to navigate volatility and maximise the return on their technology investments.

3 *Lending and treasury operations are traditionally risk-averse legacy environments. When pitching a comprehensive transformation to a traditional banking board, how do you balance the promise of disruptive technology against their appetite for regulatory safety?*

My guiding principle is simple: regulatory compliance and risk management must always come first. While technologies such as generative AI and real-time cash forecasting offer real opportunities, those benefits can never come at the expense of compliance or operational resilience.

I position innovation as a controlled, governed enabler of value rather than a disruptive force. Every initiative should begin with a thorough assessment of regulatory, operational, cybersecurity and reputational risk, so the board understands both the benefit and how it will be mitigated. Security, governance and compliance must be embedded into the design from the outset — technology only progresses to production once it has passed rigorous risk and controls testing.

Innovation and regulatory safety are not competing priorities. The most successful transformations achieve both, pursued with discipline, within a secure and well-governed framework.

4 *Looking out three to five years, what do you see as the single most critical structural shift in corporate treasury that financial institutions are currently underinvesting in or ignoring?*

The most critical shift being underinvested in is workforce enablement and human capability in the age of AI. Organisations are investing heavily in generative AI and automation, but many overlook equipping their people with the skills and confidence to actually adopt these tools.

Technology alone does not deliver transformation; people do. Without adequate investment in training, change management and digital literacy, organisations risk low adoption and limited returns. The treasury functions that outperform will be those that invest not only in platforms but in building a workforce capable of leveraging them — the future is about smarter, AI-enabled teams, not just smarter technology.

5 *From your vantage point as an EY Partner, what is the most overhyped trend in treasury or lending right now, and what boring but critical foundational piece should banks actually be focusing on instead?*

The most overhyped trend is the belief that AI will replace human judgement in critical banking decisions. AI cannot replace the experience, accountability and judgement required in credit approvals, risk assessment and complex lending decisions, which involve nuanced due diligence and ethical considerations technology cannot fully absorb.

The less exciting but far more critical focus is investing in people — upskilling employees to work alongside AI, interpret its outputs, challenge them, and make informed decisions. The future of treasury and lending is not about removing humans from the process; it is about building AI-enabled professionals, strong governance, and sound decision-making discipline.

6 *With fintechs and non-bank lenders continually shrinking time-to-market for credit products, what core architectural or cultural transformation must traditional tier-1 banks undergo to remain competitive?*

The most critical shift is moving from legacy, product-centric operating models to agile, customer-centric digital enterprises. As the saying goes, you cannot pour new wine into old wineskins — incremental improvement is no longer enough.

Architecturally, banks need to modernise core platforms and create a single, integrated view of the customer across channels. Culturally, they must embrace agility and faster decision-making — traditional approval cycles often slow the introduction of new products. The competitive advantage will come from combining modern digital capability with customer-centric thinking and operational agility, not technology alone.

7 *A successful transformation requires a blend of deep quant skills, cutting-edge engineering, and traditional management consulting. How do you lead and bridge communication gaps between such vastly different talent profiles?*

A successful transformation is ultimately about building and leading a successful team. The real challenge lies in aligning quant, engineering and consulting talent behind a common vision. My approach begins with understanding each individual's strengths and motivations — clarity of purpose and accountability creates the foundation for collaboration.

Bridging communication gaps means translating complex concepts into language each discipline understands, creating an environment where different perspectives complement rather than compete. If the team understands the vision, the journey and the expected deliverables, half the battle is won — the other half is managing people dynamics and client expectations.

8 *As a Big 4 Partner, you aren't just managing delivery; you are scaling a business. How do you coach senior managers and directors to transition from technical experts into commercial rainmakers?*

It starts with alignment — being clear that the objective is moving beyond delivery excellence to becoming a trusted advisor who identifies opportunities and builds long-term value. I encourage senior leaders to contribute ideas, share accountability and engage directly with clients.

One of the most effective tools is exposure: I involve senior leaders in C-suite engagements so they can practise communicating with executives and positioning solutions in language that resonates with business leaders, not just technical teams. Equally important is emotional intelligence — trust, credibility and the ability to manage difficult conversations with empathy. Becoming a rainmaker is not learned in a classroom; it comes through practical experience and progressively increasing responsibility.

9 *In the hyper-competitive consulting landscape, how do you transition a client relationship from a transactional vendor-buyer dynamic into a deeply trusted, long-term strategic partnership?*

It requires becoming a genuine problem-solving partner rather than a vendor. Today's clients are highly informed, so trust is earned through consistent value delivery, not promises. Clients do not buy services; they buy outcomes — I focus on insight-led thinking and options that let clients make informed decisions.

Trust is also built through accountability: celebrating wins together, and when we fall short, taking ownership and resolving issues transparently. The transition from vendor to strategic partner happens when clients view you as an extension of their leadership team, built through thousands of small interactions where actions align with words.

10 *Reflecting on your journey to becoming an EY Partner, what is one leadership philosophy you held early in your career that you had to actively unlearn to drive large-scale transformations?*

I had to unlearn the belief that if you want something done right, you should do it yourself. Early on I took pride in being hands-on and personally driving outcomes — effective at a small scale, but a real limitation when leading large, complex transformation programmes.

I learned that transformational success is not achieved through individual effort but through empowering teams — trusting people, delegating effectively, and creating room for others to take ownership. The moment I shifted from being the person who had to do everything to the leader who enables others to excel was the moment I became more effective at driving large-scale transformation.

Beyond the Output Metric: The New CEO Scorecard

For a generation, the executive's chief instrument was throughput — more product shipped, more revenue booked, more decisions made per quarter. As intelligent systems absorb the burden of volume, a different question is emerging as the true test of leadership: not how much did you produce, but what did you refuse to compromise on to get there.

LEADERSHIP & STRATEGY DESK

For decades, the executive suite ran on a simple, seductive logic: more was better. More output, more markets entered, more initiatives launched, more meetings held to keep it all moving. Growth was measured in volume, and volume was measured in activity. A CEO's worth was, in no small part, a function of how much organisational motion they could generate.

That logic is starting to break down, and not because ambition has gone out of fashion. It is breaking down because volume is no longer a scarce or differentiating capability. When intelligent systems can draft the report, model the scenario, summarise the market and generate the first ten versions of almost anything in seconds, the sheer quantity of output an organisation produces stops being a meaningful signal of leadership quality. It becomes table stakes.

What remains scarce — and what is quickly becoming the real test of an executive — is judgement. The ability to look at ten plausible options generated in an instant and choose the one that is right for this business, in this market, with these people, at this moment in history. That is not a task that can be outsourced to a model. It

requires context, accountability, and a willingness to be wrong in public.

Alongside judgement sits something harder to name and harder still to teach: moral courage. As decision support becomes more powerful and more persuasive, the temptation to defer entirely to the recommendation of a system, a dashboard or a consensus view grows stronger. The leaders who will matter most in the next decade are the ones prepared to depart from that recommendation when their understanding of people, culture and consequence tells them the model has missed something the spreadsheet cannot see.

"The question a board should ask a CEO is no longer 'how much did you get done' but 'what did you say no to, and why?'"

This shift changes what boards should be asking in the room. Instead of interrogating throughput, boards are increasingly probing for evidence of discernment: which recommendations were overridden this quarter, and on what grounds?

None of this makes output irrelevant. Organisations still need to ship, sell and deliver. But output has become the floor, not the ceiling. The differentiator now sits one level up — in the willingness of leaders to bring conscience and accountability to decisions machines can inform but never make alone.

For CEOs navigating this transition, the practical implication is clarifying: build the muscle of scrutiny before you need it. Reward the manager who flagged the flaw in the plan as visibly as the one who shipped it on time.

There is a temptation, in moments of technological acceleration, to treat leadership itself as a solvable optimisation problem — to believe that with enough data and enough automation, the right call becomes obvious. History suggests otherwise. The organisations that stumble hardest during periods of rapid change are rarely the ones that moved too slowly. They are the ones that mistook speed and volume for wisdom, and let the two drift apart without anyone in the room willing to say so.

That is the quiet responsibility now sitting with every chief executive: to be the person in the organisation whose job is not to produce more, but to decide, with clear eyes and full accountability, what is worth producing at all — and to have the courage to say so even when the easier, faster, more automatable answer is sitting right there on the screen.

"Volume is what a system can give you. Judgement — and the courage to act on it — is what only a leader can."

The leaders who internalise this earliest will not be the ones who resist the tools reshaping their industries. They will be the ones who use those tools precisely so they can spend more of their finite attention on the decisions that genuinely require a human being to own them — decisions about people, about values, and about what the organisation is willing to sacrifice growth for. That, increasingly, is the real job.

The New CEO Scorecard, Visualised

A multidimensional performance framework for balancing profit and purpose — replacing a single throughput number with five weighted dimensions of executive judgement.



FIGURE 1

Financial performance, strategic execution, stakeholder engagement, governance and ESG, and innovation and growth — five dimensions the modern board now weighs alongside, not instead of, the numbers on the income statement.

Building Trust, Transparency, and Safety

Intelligent systems now sit inside hiring decisions, credit approvals, medical triage and public services. The organisations that will be trusted with that responsibility are not necessarily the most advanced technically — they are the ones that can show their work.

GOVERNANCE & ETHICS DESK

Trust is unusual among organisational assets in that it is built slowly, in small deposits, and can be spent to zero in a single afternoon. That asymmetry has always made trust valuable. It has never mattered more than it does now, as automated systems take on decisions that used to require a human being to look someone in the eye and explain themselves.

The instinct inside many organisations has been to treat trust as a communications problem — something to be reassured into existence with the right messaging once the technology is built. That approach is backwards, and increasingly it is being recognised as such. Trust cannot be bolted on after the fact. It has to be designed in from the first decision about what a system is allowed to do, what data it may use, and who is accountable when it gets something wrong.

Transparency is the first and most practical expression of that design choice. It means an organisation can explain, in language a customer or regulator can actually follow, why a particular decision was made — not simply that a model produced a score. It means keeping a record of what data trained a system, what its known limitations are, and what human oversight sits above it. None of this is glamorous work. All of it is

now table stakes for any institution that wants its automated decisions to survive scrutiny.

"An organisation that cannot explain a decision has not built a system — it has built a liability."

Safety, meanwhile, has to be understood as an ongoing discipline rather than a one-time certification. Systems drift. The data they were trained on ages. The context they operate in shifts under them. A safety review conducted at launch tells an organisation almost nothing about whether that same system is behaving responsibly eighteen months later, after it has absorbed a hundred thousand new interactions the original designers never anticipated.

What this demands, practically, is a shift in how safety and trust get resourced. They cannot live solely inside a compliance function that reviews finished products at the end of a pipeline. They need a seat at the table when the product is still being designed, with the authority to say no — and leadership willing to back that authority even when it slows a launch down.

There is also a quieter, more human dimension to this work that is easy to overlook amid the technical governance conversation. Trust is not only extended to institutions; it is extended to the people inside them who are willing to raise a hand and say a system is not ready, or is behaving in a way nobody fully understands yet. Organisations that punish that kind of honesty, however subtly, will find that the warnings simply stop coming — right up until the moment they are needed most.

Building a culture where safety concerns travel upward quickly and without penalty is, in the end, a leadership choice as much as a technical one. It requires leaders to reward the employee who paused the rollout over the one who hit the deadline, and to treat every near-miss as a gift of information rather than an inconvenience to be minimised.

"The safest organisations are not the ones with the fewest incidents. They are the ones where every incident gets reported."

None of this is a call to slow innovation for its own sake. It is a recognition that trust, transparency and safety are not the tax an organisation pays for moving fast — they are the infrastructure that makes moving fast survivable. Institutions that treat them as such will find they can move with genuine speed, because they are not perpetually one incident away from losing the confidence of the people they serve.

From Task Assigner to Ecosystem Orchestrator

Decentralised decision-making only works if someone is holding the connective tissue together. That job increasingly belongs to the middle manager — reimagined not as a distributor of tasks, but as a coach, a context-setter, and a curator of the humans and systems around them.

ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN DESK

The middle manager has long carried an unglamorous but essential function: translating strategy from the top into tasks at the bottom, and reporting status back up the chain. It was coordination work, and for most of the last century it was indispensable, because information moved slowly and someone had to be the human router.

That routing function is precisely what automated systems now do well — often better, and certainly faster. Status updates, scheduling, first-pass prioritisation and routine task assignment are increasingly handled by tools that never sleep and never lose track of a thread. For a manager whose value was built entirely around being the hub of that traffic, this is a genuine identity crisis.

It is also, for those willing to make the shift, an opening. As decision-making decentralises — as more empowered execution happens closer to the work itself — the organisation needs something new in the middle: not someone assigning the next task, but someone who understands the full ecosystem of people, tools and partners well enough to know which combination will actually get a hard problem solved.

Call it orchestration. The orchestrating manager is less concerned with who is doing what today and more concerned with whether the right capabilities — human judgement, specialist expertise, automated support — are arranged around a problem in a way that lets each contribute what it is genuinely good at. That is a fundamentally different skill set from task assignment. It looks more like designing a team than running one.

"The manager's new question is not 'who can do this task' but 'what combination of people, partners and systems gives this problem its best chance.'"

The second half of this transition is, if anything, more consequential: coaching. As routine coordination is automated away, the time managers previously spent on status meetings and task lists becomes available for something organisations have chronically under-invested in — the sustained, individual attention that helps a person get genuinely better at their craft.

This is where the transition asks the most of managers personally, because coaching cannot be performed at scale the way task assignment could. It requires knowing individuals well enough to understand what is genuinely holding them back, and it requires a manager secure enough in their own value to spend time developing people rather than directing them.

Organisations that want this shift to succeed have to change what they measure and reward. A manager who once earned credit for how efficiently their team processed a queue of tasks needs to start earning credit for how their people are growing, how well cross-functional efforts they touch actually perform, and how effectively empowered decisions made three levels below them turn out to be sound.

"You cannot decentralise decision-making and keep centralised, task-by-task management. One has to give way to the other."

There is a training implication too. Many managers were promoted precisely because they were excellent individual contributors and reliable coordinators — not because anyone assessed whether they could coach, or read a system of people and tools well enough to orchestrate it. Closing that gap deliberately, through real investment rather than a single workshop, is now one of the highest-leverage things an organisation can do as it decentralises decision rights and pushes execution outward. The managers who make this shift will not just survive the transition. They will become the reason the rest of the organisation can move fast without falling apart.

The Orchestrator's View

The new manager's dashboard isn't a task list — it's a live view across urban infrastructure, clean energy, supply chain, data networks, financial systems and environmental monitoring, each one a stakeholder in the same decision.



FIGURE 2

Orchestration made visible: the manager's role is no longer to move information between systems, but to hold a coherent view across all of them — and to know which one needs a human decision right now.



DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY

Digital Sovereignty & Modern Governance: Leading Beyond the Vendor Loop

Every institution that runs its intelligence on someone else's infrastructure, trained on someone else's assumptions, is making a quiet bet about where control ultimately sits. For African institutions in particular, the governance conversation is starting to catch up to that bet.

DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY DESK

It is easy, and often sensible, for an institution standing up its first intelligent systems to reach for whatever capable platform is closest at hand. The vendor is credible, the tooling works, and the pressure to move quickly is real. What is less visible in that moment is how many decisions

are quietly being outsourced along with the infrastructure — decisions about what data leaves the country, what assumptions get baked into a model's defaults, and who ultimately has the ability to change course if the arrangement stops serving the institution's interests.

Digital sovereignty is the discipline of making those decisions consciously rather than by default. It does not require rejecting external partners outright, and it is not a call for every institution to build its own infrastructure from first principles. It is a governance posture: knowing precisely where dependency exists, what it would cost to change it, and ensuring the institution — not the vendor — retains the final say over data, models and the values embedded in how decisions get made.

For African institutions specifically, this conversation carries additional weight. Much of the data now training the world's most influential systems reflects contexts, languages and assumptions shaped elsewhere. Left unaddressed, that gap does not stay abstract — it shows up as systems that perform less reliably on local languages, local names, local patterns of behaviour, and local risk. Sovereignty, in this light, is not only a governance safeguard. It is a quality

and relevance issue with direct consequences for the people these systems ultimately serve.

"Sovereignty is not about building everything yourself. It is about never losing the ability to ask 'why' and act on the answer."

Modern governance has to evolve accordingly. Boards that once treated technology risk as an IT subcommittee agenda item are increasingly finding it belongs in the room where strategy, risk and national or institutional interest are discussed together. That means asking harder questions earlier: Where is our data actually stored, and under whose legal jurisdiction? What happens to our institutional knowledge if this vendor relationship ends? Do we have the internal capability to evaluate whether a system is behaving appropriately, or are we entirely reliant on the vendor's own assurances?

Leading beyond the vendor loop, in practice, tends to mean a handful of concrete commitments rather than a single dramatic move. It means investing in local skills and infrastructure even when an off-the-shelf alternative is cheaper in the short term. It means negotiating contracts that preserve exit rights and data portability rather than accepting default terms because the deadline is close. And it means building enough in-house technical literacy — at board level, not just in the engineering team — that leadership can ask an informed question rather than simply trusting the answer they are given.

This is, ultimately, a leadership responsibility rather than a purely technical one. The institutions that get it right will not necessarily be the ones with the largest budgets or the newest infrastructure. They will be the ones whose leaders understood early that dependency, left unexamined, quietly becomes

destiny — and who chose, deliberately and sometimes at real short-term cost, to keep the institution's hand on the wheel.

"An institution that cannot explain its own dependencies does not yet govern its own future."

As intelligent systems become as foundational to African institutions as electricity or telecommunications once were, the sovereignty conversation will only grow louder. The leaders who engage with it now — thoughtfully, and before a crisis forces the issue — will be the ones best placed to ensure that the next chapter of the continent's digital growth is authored locally, on terms that serve the people it is meant to benefit.



PARTNER FEATURE · DELL

What Leadership Technology Looks Like in 2026.

The tools leaders carry are starting to matter as much as the decisions they make. Built for the executives, analysts and creators driving the AI era, the Dell 16 Premium pairs data-centre-grade intelligence with a chassis light enough for the boardroom.



DELL 16 PREMIUM · 16.3" CORE ULTRA 9 285H · 32GB RAM · 1TB SSD · NVIDIA RTX 5060 · WINDOWS 11 PRO AI LAPTOP

- 01** Up to 2.36x boost in AI throughput
- 02** 4K OLED touch display
- 03** Up to 18% better graphics performance
- 04** Super-fast Wi-Fi 7 connectivity

Dell 16 Premium DA16250 AI PC

Speed, efficiency and critical qualities — in harmony. Engineered for leaders who need uncompromised performance in a chassis light enough for the boardroom.



DELL 16 PREMIUM · CORE ULTRA 9 285H · 32GB RAM · 1TB SSD · RTX 5060 · WINDOWS 11 PRO AI LAPTOP

PRODUCT TYPE

Laptop · Clamshell form factor

PROCESSOR

Intel Core Ultra 9 285H (Series 2)

PROCESSOR FREQUENCY

2.70 / 5.40 GHz · 24MB Cache · 16 Cores

NPU

Intel AI Boost, up to 13 TOPS

DISPLAY

16.3" (41.4cm) 4K UHD, 3840 × 2400

DISPLAY TYPE

Touchscreen, 48–120Hz, 400 nits, OLED, anti-reflective

MEMORY

32GB LPDDR5x-SDRAM, 7467MHz, soldered

STORAGE

1TB M.2 PCIe NVMe SSD

ON-BOARD GRAPHICS

Intel Arc 140T Graphics

DISCRETE GRAPHICS

NVIDIA GeForce RTX 5060, 8GB GDDR7, 45W

KEYBOARD

Backlit, Platinum keyboard, with AI Key

CAMERA

1080p FHD RGB IR

FINGERPRINT READER

Yes

OPERATING SYSTEM

Windows 11 Pro

MOBILE BROADBAND

Not supported

POWER ADAPTER

130W Type-C adapter

COLOUR

Platinum

WEIGHT

Starting at 2.11kg

WARRANTY

3-year ProSupport Onsite

PORTS & SLOTS

- 1x MicroSDXC v7.1 UHS-I/UHS-II card reader
- 3x Thunderbolt 4 (USB Type-C) with Power Delivery and DisplayPort
- 1x Universal audio jack

Contact Malungani Holdings Group for quotes.

Admin@malunganigroup.com

Leadership & Transformation Word Search

38 words hidden horizontally, vertically, and diagonally — forwards and backwards. Circle each one as you find it.

R	N	O	I	T	U	C	E	X	E	U	T	S	Y	N	E	R	G	Y	B	R	T	Q	E
N	M	R	O	F	S	N	A	R	T	I	I	P	W	J	I	P	I	N	S	P	I	R	E
G	P	L	C	T	P	H	Y	K	F	T	Y	F	S	T	R	A	T	E	G	Y	X	S	W
O	R	E	B	U	Q	K	Q	T	A	W	E	U	Y	E	M	P	A	T	H	Y	Z	G	Y
K	T	T	P	P	L	K	D	U	I	E	E	W	I	H	E	G	N	A	H	C	C	T	P
U	N	S	R	W	B	T	T	S	F	L	E	C	N	A	N	R	E	V	O	G	I	V	I
D	O	U	N	H	S	H	U	E	G	Q	I	S	A	V	J	N	K	A	Y	S	A	J	H
T	I	R	O	H	E	C	X	R	C	A	H	B	I	D	V	U	K	I	R	T	X	Q	S
E	S	T	I	N	M	A	D	K	E	N	M	L	A	E	A	D	I	E	E	Y	E	V	R
V	U	S	T	H	B	R	L	C	C	X	E	B	D	T	J	P	V	K	G	H	I	Q	E
I	L	I	A	U	B	E	O	L	A	C	E	I	I	M	N	I	T	L	A	X	U	W	D
S	C	H	R	M	D	S	V	T	K	I	A	H	L	T	D	U	Q	K	R	D	L	Z	A
I	N	Z	O	I	U	O	X	E	N	T	I	M	T	I	I	C	O	V	U	S	T	X	E
C	I	Q	B	L	P	P	S	N	R	E	M	J	H	W	S	O	U	C	O	J	R	E	L
E	B	T	A	I	Q	R	D	F	H	G	M	N	I	R	O	E	N	A	C	I	R	I	I
D	Q	I	L	T	P	U	I	N	T	E	G	R	I	T	Y	R	R	E	M	A	W	N	D
X	L	C	L	Y	U	P	I	N	N	O	V	A	T	I	O	N	G	R	L	R	T	F	R
Z	X	Q	O	V	S	A	T	J	O	V	E	K	C	A	B	D	E	E	F	E	P	L	C
S	E	V	C	G	P	N	E	G	O	T	I	A	T	E	Z	Y	K	L	J	F	U	U	E
Z	M	O	M	D	T	E	I	J	V	Y	R	A	N	O	I	S	I	V	V	Z	R	E	U
D	E	L	E	G	A	T	E	T	A	R	G	N	I	H	C	A	O	C	A	U	S	N	E
M	X	R	D	N	O	I	S	I	V	O	A	A	G	I	L	I	T	Y	Y	N	I	C	T
V	N	I	L	N	M	T	O	B	E	T	A	V	I	T	O	M	D	P	Y	B	D	E	U
W	W	A	Z	B	D	S	E	Q	Q	Y	L	R	I	Z	S	E	M	P	O	W	E	R	U

WORD BANK

ACCOUNTABILITY

ADAPT

AGILITY

AMBITION

AUTHENTIC

CHANGE

COACHING

COLLABORATION

COURAGE

CULTURE

DECISIVE

DELEGATE

DISRUPT

DIVERSITY

EMPATHY

EMPOWER

EXECUTION

FEEDBACK

GOVERNANCE

GROWTH

HUMILITY

INCLUSION

INFLUENCE

INNOVATION

INSPIRE

INTEGRITY

LEADERSHIP

MENTOR

MOTIVATE

NEGOTIATE

PURPOSE

RESILIENCE

STRATEGY

SYNERGY

TRANSFORM

TRUST

VISION

VISIONARY



Powered by Malungani Holdings Group

EDITORIAL

The Leadership Heed Editorial Team

FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS

Dr Mark Nasila — Author, African Artificial Intelligence & Mastering Sovereign Artificial Intelligence

Winston Sibanyoni — Leading EY Across Africa, India and the Middle East

DESIGN & ART DIRECTION

The Leadership Heed Studio

PUBLISHER

Malungani Holdings Group

THIS EDITION

September Edition · Spring Edition · Volume 2

WEB

malunganigroup.com

"The next issue lands when there's something worth heeding."

The Leadership Heed is published by Malungani Holdings Group for its portfolio leaders, partners, and boards. To suggest a subject, a contributor, or a correction, reach the editors through your usual Group contact.

For partnerships and sponsorships: Admin@malunganigroup.com