

PRICKLY TRUTHS



Leadership Readiness in the Age of AI

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YOUR SPEAKERS



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35+ years running contact center operations. Built QEval® — AI quality platform delivering 100% interaction coverage. CCW Advisory Board • ICMI Top 25 Thought Leader • CX Hall of Fame • Co-author, 5 books on CX and AI.

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The Risk of *Unsupervised AI*

THE MOMENT IT GOES WRONG



WHY HUMAN-IN-THE-LOOP IS NON-NEGOTIABLE

One uncalibrated AI can end the conversation before it starts.
One monitored system catches it in real time.

THREE IMPERATIVES

1

AI without oversight creates brand risk

The candidate did nothing wrong. The AI misread persistence as hostility and ended the call. This video went viral.

2

Calibration needs real data

The AI looped empathy scripts without progressing. Without evaluating actual conversations, failure patterns repeat at scale.

3

Monitoring is the product

Same principle as human QA: evaluate 100% of interactions, identify breakdowns, and feed corrections back before the next call.

"That silence is expensive."

*Show of hands: who implemented AI in the last 3 years?
Keep it up if it came in on budget, on timeline, on promise.*

\$2.3M

avg. cost of a failed
AI implementation

90%

of AI companies fail
within year one

THE VENDOR MIRAGE

THE DEMO

- ✓ 90-day implementation
- ✓ Vendor's best client results
- ✓ Controlled pilot team
- ✓ Clean test environment

VS

YOUR REALITY

- ✗ 9–12 months of chaos
- ✗ Your actual organization
- ✗ 47 supervisors, varying skill
- ✗ 180% budget overrun

40% abandon before completion · 180% budget overrun · 9–12 months without leadership prep

THE ICEBERG EFFECT

20% VISIBLE

Tech Stack · LLMs · Integrations · Training

← where 80% of budget goes

WATERLINE

80% UNDERWATER

Workflow Redesign

Change Resistance

User Adoption

Internal Chaos

Leadership Gaps

Every unanalyzed interaction = a missed coaching moment, compliance risk, or revenue signal.

Prickly Truths

Hosted By: **Melissa Wood**
*Global Dean of Leadership Development &
Effectiveness at Etech Global Services*



SAGUARO CACTUS

*Largest cactus in the U.S.-
3story building*

Protected species in Arizona

*Knows how to survive
tough conditions*

*Takes a long time to grow-
150 plus years*



A Number's Game



Step #1

Circle as many numbers *in order* as you can in 30 seconds.



Step #2

Fold your paper in half length-wise. Then, fold it again in half across, making four Quadrants.



Step #3

Repeat with the fold, and compare the difference.

Same Numbers.



Same Time.



Same Leaders.



\neq Different Result

Methods Matter

L

Lead the Culture First

E

Equip Your People

A

Adopt in Layers

N

Normalize the New

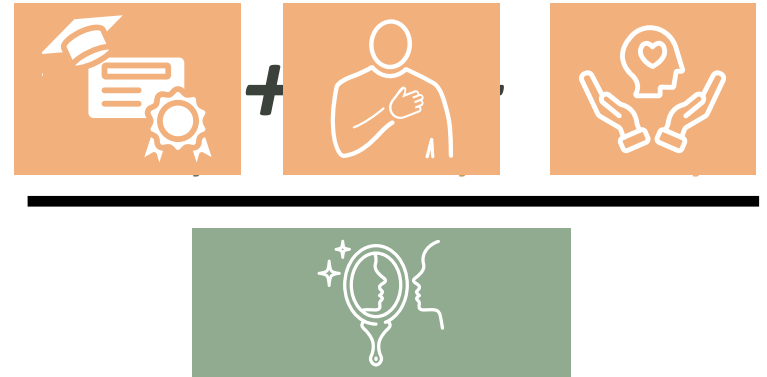




Prickly Truth #1

*Your leaders are waiting on someone else to set the tone for AI.
That someone else is THEM.*

T =





Prickly Truth #1

*Your leaders are waiting on someone else to set the tone for AI.
That someone else is THEM.*

$$T = \frac{C + R + I}{SO}$$

Credibility Reliability Intimacy

SO
Self-Orientation



Prickly Truth #2

You sent them to a 60-minute training and called it done. You exposed them. You did NOT equip them.

Leadership Readiness Quiz

1-Not Yet 2-Getting There 3-Yes

1. My leaders can clearly explain WHY we are adopting AI — not just what it cost or does.
2. I have personally modeled AI adoption. My team has seen me use it, learn from it, and talk about it..
3. My leaders have coaching skills— not just tool knowledge—to bring their teams through AI change.
- 4.** We are following a layered adoption plan. My leaders know exactly what phase we are in right now.
5. AI wins and lessons are part of our regular team rhythm—not a launch event we left behind.

Leadership Readiness Quiz

Score Yourself Not Yet- Getting There- Yes

1. My leaders can clearly explain WHY we are adopting AI — not just what it does.
2. I have personally modeled AI adoption. My team has seen me use it, learn from it, and talk about it.
3. My leaders have coaching skills- not just tool knowledge- to bring their teams through AI change.
4. We are following a layered adoption plan. My leader know the phase.
5. AI wins/lessons are part of our regular rhythm.

13-15: Strong roots. Deep trust. Your team is ready to bloom.

9-12: Good foundation. A few gaps. Close them before you scale.

5-8: Stop. The roots are not strong enough. LEAN is your plan.





Prickly Truth #3

You went all in on Day 1. You called the chaos a rollout. Your people called it something else entirely.

90-Day Adoption Model

Crawl

Days 1-30

- Pilot with your 3 strongest leaders.
- Learn what breaks.
- Fix it before you scale.

Walk

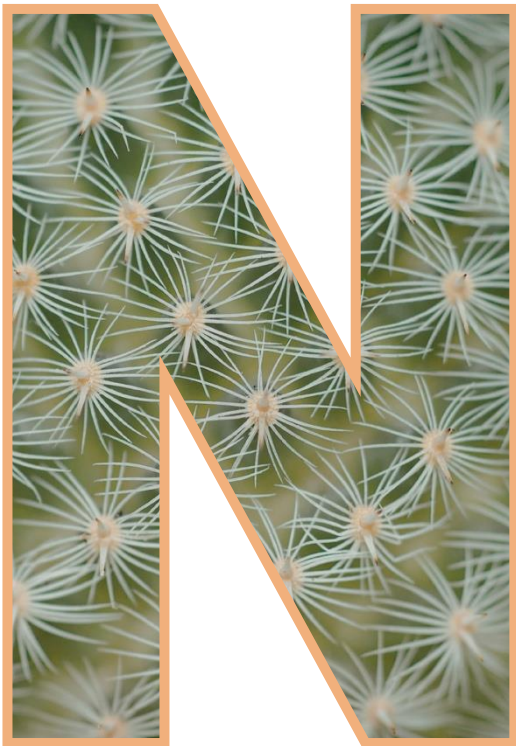
Days 31-60

- Expand to the next tier.
- Coach in real time.
- Celebrate small wins loudly.

Run

Days 61-90

- Full rollout.
- Your culture carries the momentum — not just you.



Prickly Truth #4

*You trained them once. Moved on. Resistance became the culture
— because you normalized quitting.*

1.

Model It Yourself First

If you're not using the tool, talking about what you learned, showing vulnerability — why would anyone else?

2.

Make it Part of the Rhythm

Put an AI win on your team meeting agenda every week. When it's on the agenda consistently, it becomes normal.

3.

Call Out Resistance with Grace

Not punishment — curiosity. 'Help me understand what's hard about this for you.' That defuses more than any mandate.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a light-colored top, is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is standing in a desert environment with various cacti and agave plants. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on her. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

Prickly Check...

Are you a leader others **LEAN**
on?



Go Bloom.

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× REPLACEMENT MINDSET

Headcount reduction.
AI versus agent.
Competitive.

27%

higher turnover

19%

lower CSAT

This is the most common approach. It's also the most expensive.

✓ AUGMENTATION APPROACH

Enhance human
performance.
AI amplifies.
Synergistic.

32%

higher CSAT

41%

lower turnover

The philosophy determines the outcome. Every time.

5 FAILURE PATTERNS

We've seen this fail. The same way. Every time.

01

Replacement over Augmentation

27% higher turnover · 19% lower CSAT · You chose the wrong war

02

Generic AI over Domain-Specific

65–70% generic accuracy vs. 94%+ with QEval™ · That gap is your liability

03

Data Overload Without Action

40% of supervisor time hunting coaching moments · Rich data. Zero direction.

04

Silos That Blind You

Conversation, CRM, quality — disconnected · 27% slower root cause identification

05

Launch Without Preparation

Vendor says 90 days · Your supervisors needed 6 months before day one

Most of you are here.

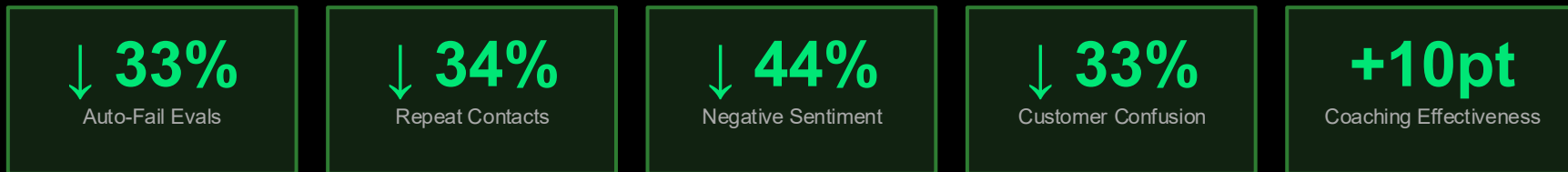
3% QA SAMPLING

And wondering why AI isn't working.

Let me show you what good actually looks like.

This is what happens when you stop listening to 3%.

Mid-size bank · \$2.8M annual savings · 3% sampling → 100% coverage



BEFORE

- 3% manual QA
- No root cause visibility
- Guessing on coaching

DURING

- QEval™ 100% coverage
- AI Scorecards + Deep Dive
- Multi-level driver analysis

RESULT

- \$2.8M savings
- 94%+ accuracy
- 9.3-month payback

The difference isn't technology. It's leadership.

This is what happens when you stop chasing false positives.

1,200 agents · 5 brands · \$6.1M annual value · keyword alerts → AI intelligence

↓ **85%**

Compliance Violations

6,000

Misrouted Calls Eliminated

11 → 0

Analysts Triaging Alerts

\$6.1M

Annual Value Created

5 / 5

Brands Improved

BEFORE

- Keyword-based alert triaging
- 11 analysts chasing false positives
- QA scores disconnected from CSAT
- No churn detection or intelligence

DURING

- QEval™ 100% coverage
- AI Scorecards + root cause analysis
- Churn detection + compliance monitoring

RESULT

- \$6.1M annual value across four categories
- 85% compliance violation reduction
- Contact center → strategic asset

When QA stops chasing noise, it starts driving the business.

This is what happens when agents see what good looks like.

Major telecom · ~\$6M documented savings · critical alerts cut in half



BEFORE

- 14+ minute average call time
- 2-minute average hold time
- 33% of calls triggering critical alerts

DURING

- QEval™ 100% coverage
- AI Scorecards + agent-level coaching
- Call-level driver analysis

RESULT

- ~\$6M in documented savings
- Critical alerts cut in half
- Quality scores up 15 points

Agents got better because someone finally showed them what good looks like.

QUESTIONS YOUR VENDOR DOESN'T WANT YOU TO ASK

- 1 What's your average cost overrun and timeline extension?
- 2 How many clients abandon before completion?
- 3 What capabilities separate your successes from failures?
- 4 Can I speak with three clients who didn't renew?

*Delayed implementation beats failed implementation.
Sometimes "not yet" is the right answer.*

WHAT YOU KNOW NOW THAT YOU DIDN'T AN HOUR AGO

01 Inaction is the greatest risk — AI is moving 10× faster. Waiting is not neutral.

02 Leadership gaps precede AI — Implementation exposes them. Address them first or pay later.

03 Domain-specific beats generic — 94% vs. 65–70%. That gap is your liability.

04 Augmentation beats replacement — 32% higher CSAT. 41% lower turnover. Philosophy = outcome.

05 80% is change management — Budget for leadership, not just technology.

You already know what to do. The question is whether you'll do it before your competition does.

**"THE OASIS IS REAL.
BUT THE PATH THROUGH
THE DESERT IS PRICKLY."**

Continue the journey with ETS Labs & QEval™

etslabs.ai

Your Tech Toolkit

Everything below lives at one QR code. Scan it before you leave.

1 Leadership Readiness Diagnostic

2 AI Vendor Evaluation Framework (QEval®)

3 GenAI White Belt Starter Pack

4 GenAI Green Belt Practitioner Pack

5 CX Maturity Assessment



Access The Toolkit

Literature Recommendations

- *The Trusted Advisor* - Green, Maister & Galford
- *Hyperadaptive* — Melissa M. Reeve (May 2026)