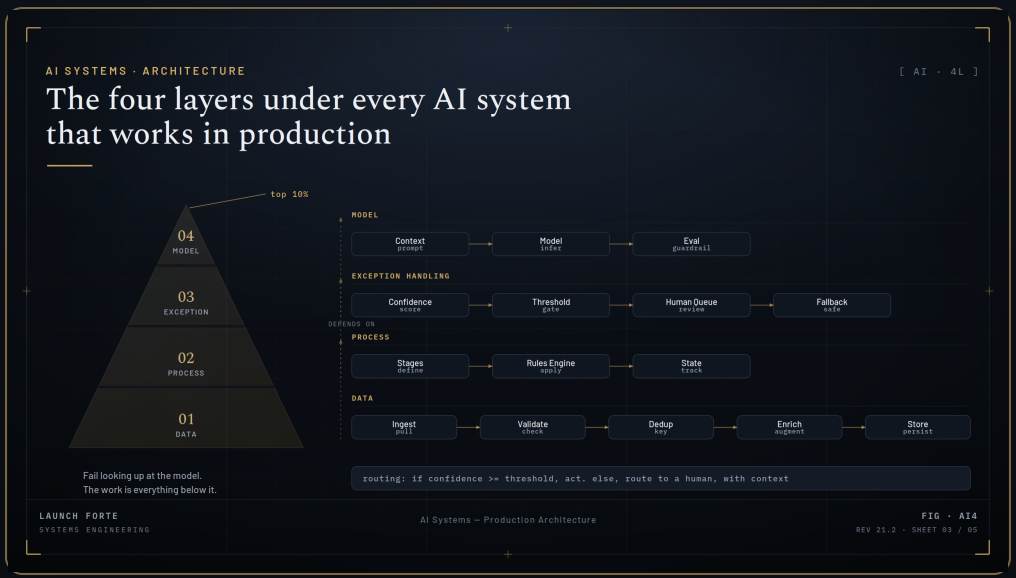
FREE GUIDE · LAUNCH FORTE

The Four Layers of a Working AI System

Why most AI projects fail, and the four layers the ones that work are built on.



THE FRAMEWORK

The same framework we apply inside a paid build.
Read it before you spend a dollar on a model.

01 · THE PREMISE

Most AI projects fail looking up

Most AI projects fail, and they rarely fail because the model was not smart enough. They fail because of everything underneath the model, the part nobody wants to talk about because it is not the exciting part.

An AI system is only as good as the data you feed it, the process you define for it, and the plan you build for the cases it gets wrong. The model sits on top, and it is the smallest piece. The first ninety percent of the work is the three layers below it.

> When an AI project fails,
> look down, not up.

HOW TO READ THIS

The next page walks the four layers from the base up. Then a short method for deciding whether the work even needs a model, and how to build it so it holds in production.

02 · THE FOUR LAYERS

The four layers, base to model

01

Data

Clean, structured, trustworthy data. The base everything stands on.

Where it breaks: Feed a model messy data and the smartest model gives you confident, well written, wrong answers. A model cannot fix bad inputs. It multiplies them.

02

Process

The defined steps, rules, and stages the work follows.

Where it breaks: A model does not know how your business runs unless someone defines it. Bolt AI onto an undefined mess and the output is unpredictable.

03

Exception Handling

What the system does when it is not sure. Act when confident, route to a human when not.

Where it breaks: No model is right every time. Without a plan for the cases it gets wrong, the system falls over the first hard week.

04

Model

The model itself, sitting on top.

Where it breaks: Rarely the model. Once the three layers below are solid, the model is the easy decision and close to interchangeable.

03 · THE METHOD

How to tell if your AI project will work

Before you build, ask whether the work even needs a model. The test is simple. Can you write down the exact steps to handle the task? If you can, you almost certainly do not need AI, you need a workflow that follows those steps, and it will be faster, cheaper, and more reliable. AI earns its place when the input is unpredictable and the steps change based on context you cannot write down in advance.

When you do build, design for the exception first. Set a confidence threshold. When the system is confident, it acts. When it is not, it routes to a person and shows them exactly why it paused.

THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK FIRST

01 Is the data underneath clean, structured, and trustworthy?

02 Have we written down the exact process the work should follow?

03 What happens to the cases the model gets wrong, and who sees them?

Fix the three layers under the model and an average model performs beautifully. Skip them and the best model on the market still fails in production.

NEXT STEP

Want the full diagnosis?

This guide shows the pattern. A Growth Systems Audit applies it to your business. A written diagnosis of what is worth fixing and what it is costing you, prioritized, with fixed pricing on every fix and credits toward your first build.

Book a Growth Systems Audit

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