

The AI Authority Framework

From Information to Impact — A Clearer Way to Decide What AI Can Do

AI can be a helpful assistant or an autonomous actor. The difference is authority.
This framework shows the common stages of AI authority, with examples and the key questions to ask at each stage.



Lower Authority → Higher Authority

Key Questions (Controls)

	Access What can it reach?	Approved information sources only.	Relevant internal data and templates.	Broader internal context as needed.	Specific systems and data required for the task.	Systems, data, and external destinations needed to complete the action.
	Scale How much can it do before someone stops it?	Low volume, no automation.	Limited drafts.	Individual recommendations.	Defined transaction and volume limits.	Strict limits and additional approvals.
	Oversight Where does a person review or approve?	Not usually required.	Review before use.	Review before decision.	Approval before action on sensitive items.	Explicit approval for external, legal, financial, or high-risk actions.
	Reversibility Can we stop or undo it?	Low risk, easy to discard.	Easy to revise or discard.	Decision not finalized.	Can usually be paused or rolled back.	Harder to reverse — requires strong controls and recovery plan.