A PRACTICAL CONVERSATION FOR CONSEQUENTIAL WORKFLOWS

Put the decision before the agent.

Before an AI workflow takes a consequential step, make its organizational context, decision authority, permitted actions, and evidence visible to the people accountable for the work.

ILLUSTRATIVE WORKFLOW / INVOICE EXCEPTION

An agent reads an invoice, its purchase order, and the current payment policy, then prepares a proposed payment update. The team decides what the agent may inspect, what it may recommend, and which action must wait for an authorized reviewer.

FOUR QUESTIONS THAT BELONG IN ONE DESIGN

1 CONTEXT
Which policy, record, and version apply?

→

2 AUTHORITY
Who owns the decision and its limits?

→

3 ACTION
What may the agent do, and what must wait?

→

4 EVIDENCE
What shows what happened and why?

Start with a real decision, then ask what must be true for a person to govern it.

USE THIS BRIEF TO LEAVE WITH

A decision boundary, named owners, an intervention path, and a test plan. The map is a conversation aid - it does not establish that any architecture is compliant, validated, or ready for delegation.

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02 / HUMAN OVERSIGHT

Make human oversight usable.

A person can influence an AI workflow only when the right evidence, authority, time, and enforceable intervention meet at the decision point.

HITL / HUMAN-IN-THE-LOOP

A specified decision waits for human input before the relevant action proceeds.

HOTL / HUMAN-ON-THE-LOOP

Activity continues inside authorized boundaries while a person supervises and can intervene before the prevention window closes.

FOR THE REVIEWER TO DO A REAL JOB

EVIDENCE

See the proposal and the context behind it.

AUTHORITY

Have a clear right to approve, hold, or stop.

COMPETENCE + TIME

Know the workflow and have time to assess it.

ENFORCEMENT

The system honors the decision and its conditions.

TEST THE OVERSIGHT PATH END TO END

01 DETECTION
Is the material condition noticed?

→

02 NOTIFICATION
Does the right person learn in time?

→

03 UNDERSTANDING
Can they see evidence and context?

→

04 DECISION
Can they choose a meaningful response?

→

05 ENFORCEMENT
Does the system honor that response?

A STOP REQUEST IS NOT THE TEST

Check whether the signal arrives, the reviewer understands the situation, and the intervention changes execution. For HOTL, measure the full path against the time available to prevent the action - including workload, queueing, and fallback coverage.

Try: a missed signal / unclear evidence / a hold that the system ignores

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03 / DECISION DESIGN CANVAS

Make the boundary specific.

Use one consequential decision. Write down the operating assumptions before they become permissions or informal expectations.

1 Decision and stakes

Name the exact decision or action and its accountable owner. What could go wrong? Can the action be reversed? Which step must wait for a person?

2 Context and authority

List the authoritative sources, their owners, and effective versions. What may the agent read, draft, recommend, or execute? Where does authority change?

3 Intervention and evidence

Who can hold, stop, or roll back the action? What is the latest safe intervention time? Which source, tool call, decision, and result must be recorded?

WORKING RULE

An unanswered question remains an assumption to test. Do not treat a blank field as authorization.

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04 / TEST BEFORE DELEGATION

Make the boundary observable.

Exercise ordinary failure conditions in a controlled workflow. Agree beforehand what the system should do, then record what it actually does.

FOUR SCENARIOS FOR A WORKING SESSION

SCENARIO	EXERCISE	OBSERVE / RECORD	ACTION OWNER
Stale policy	Present an older version beside the current one.	Which version is used? Is the effective date visible? What happens if status is unclear?	**Policy owner**
Conflicting authority	Make an instruction conflict with an approval rule.	Which source governs? Does the action route to the named decision owner?	**Process owner**
Tool failure	Make the approval or execution tool unavailable mid-flow.	Is the failure visible? What happens while the result is unknown? Record hold and retry behavior.	**Tool owner**
Missed or late intervention	Delay the alert or place it near the action deadline.	Record detection-to-action time, queue age, and whether the intervention takes effect in time.	**Operations owner**

LEAVE THE ROOM WITH

01 Decision boundary

02 Named owners

03 Intervention rule

04 Next test and date

CONTINUE WITH THE SOURCE MATERIAL

Human oversight · CTRS framework · Enterprise Digital Twin guide

Discuss a working session with Ajith Vallath Prabhakar:

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Use your workflow. Test locally.

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