COST EFFICIENCY · AI · TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

The silo tax

Why trust across executive teams belongs on the CEO's cost and AI agenda

By Jenna Lask, Executive Coach & Strategic Advisor · October 2026

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Silos in organizations are both a trust problem and a cost problem.
2. In the AI era, siloed leadership means siloed data, and stranded AI value.
3. Building trust across the leadership team reduces siloed behavior, improving information flow and decision quality.
4. Team coaching is one proven way to build that trust, when done at the right time and designed for the team's specific problem.
5. **Trust multiplies the hard cost levers; it doesn't replace them.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

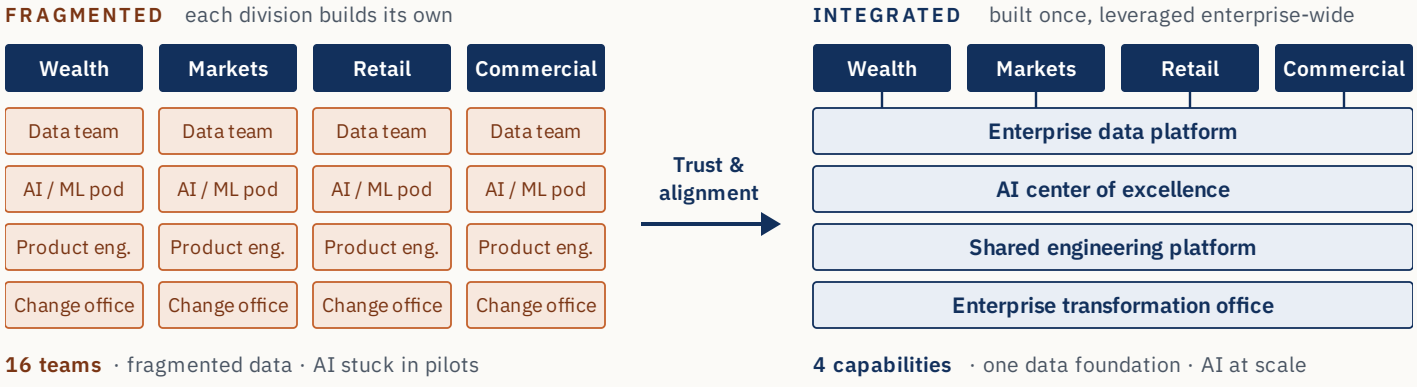
Cost reduction is a permanent fixture on the executive agenda, yet duplicated spend persists. The root cause is rarely analytical; it is relational.

When leaders lack confidence in their peers, they replicate capabilities (data teams, engineering, change resources) to retain control and speed. The result is a **silo tax**: capabilities built four or five times instead of once.

The stakes have never been higher. The decisions that now define competitive position, from AI adoption to data strategy and platform modernization, cut across every P&L. And AI delivers its full value only when divisions contribute to, and draw from, shared enterprise data. Trust and collaboration at the top are no longer soft virtues; they are prerequisites for execution.

In this article, I combine research on leadership teams and team coaching with current perspectives on organizational challenges and dynamics to offer a point of view on how CEOs can build trust across their leadership teams and reduce silos. Team coaching is one powerful way to get there, when it is done at the right time and in the right way.

EXHIBIT 1 **Fragmented vs. integrated operating model**



Illustrative. Integration trades some local speed and control for enterprise scale, which is why it only happens when leaders trust their peers to deliver.

WHY NOW

The AI era raises the price of silos

Every cost program involves trade-offs. Integration can cost local speed; modernization demands up-front investment. Both require executives to coordinate across functions and rely on peers to deliver. Three forces make that capacity more critical than ever.

01

Decisions are enterprise-wide

AI adoption, data strategy, platform modernization and regulatory change span every P&L. No single executive owns the outcome.

02

AI runs on shared data

AI delivers its full value only with access to enterprise data. When divisions guard their data, AI stays trapped in pilots.

03

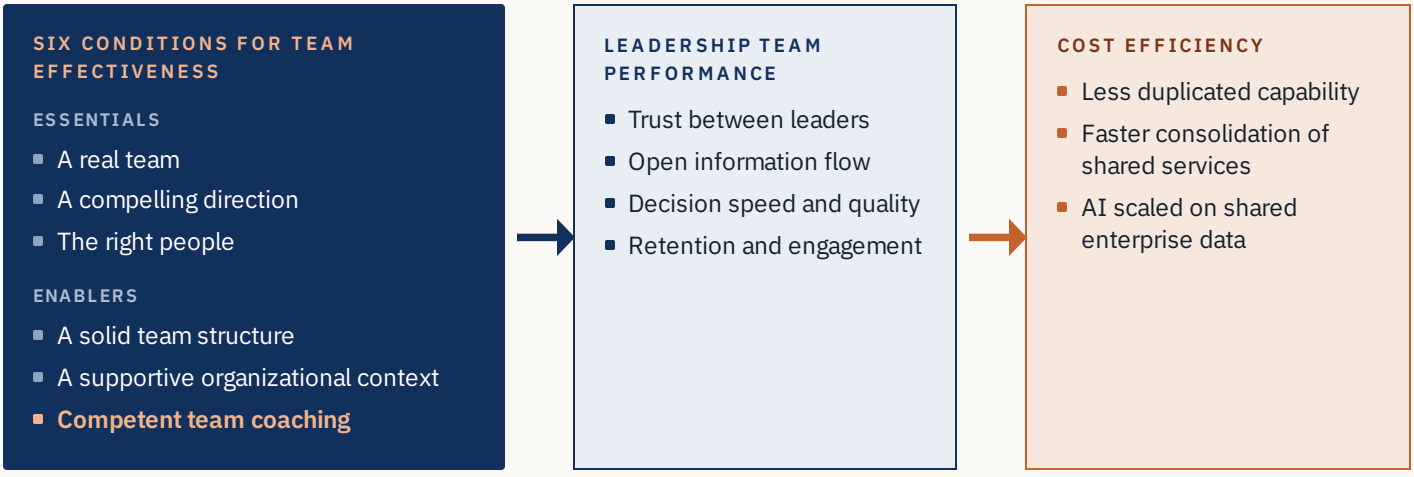
Speed is a competitive edge

Enterprise trade-offs must be made faster. Low-trust teams escalate, relitigate and delay, and the cost compounds.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT TEAM COACHING

It improves how teams work	A systematic review found team coaching generally improves team performance, satisfaction and learning, with the strongest effects on team processes. Traylor, Stahr & Salas (2020); Shuffler et al. (2018)
It builds trust and speed	Team coaching helps teams make things happen faster, through better trust and communication, and differently, through culture change. Clutterbuck (2009)
Design and timing decide impact	Coaching works best when the team is well designed, the focus is on the task rather than relationships, and it comes at the right moment in the team's life. Hackman & Wageman (2005)
Top teams need it most	High-pressure leadership teams, especially in periods of change, need the self-awareness, feedback and participatory decision-making that team coaching develops. De Haan (2025)

EXHIBIT 2 **The value pathway: the right conditions build trust, and trust drives efficiency**



Six conditions from Hackman & Wageman's research on leadership teams (Wageman, Nunes, Burruss & Hackman, 2008). Team coaching is one of the six, and works best when the other five are in place.

WHAT TO DO

Four imperatives for CEOs

Building the trust that unlocks enterprise efficiency, with team coaching as one way to get there.

1 Design the team first

Structure follows strategy. No amount of trust-building will overcome overlapping mandates and misaligned incentives. Define roles, decision rights and objectives first.

2 Time and tailor the coaching

Team coaching works best at the right moment, such as a newly formed team or a major transformation, and when it targets the team's real gap. Start with confidential interviews to pinpoint whether that gap lies in effort, strategy or skills (Exhibit 3), then design the intervention to close it.

3 Build trust on the real work

Executive time is scarce. Trust grows fastest when leaders solve live business problems together, then reflect on the dynamics they surface. The research favors task-focused over purely relational coaching.

4 Pair trust with the hard levers

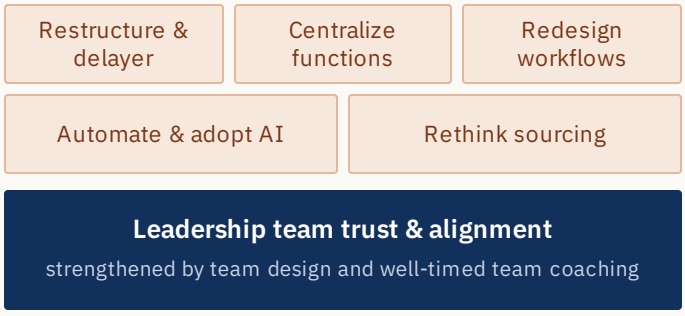
Trust multiplies restructuring, centralization and automation; it doesn't replace them. Leaders who trust one another share resources, sponsor shared platforms and hold together through disruptive change.

EXHIBIT 3 **Match the coaching to the gap**

GAP	WHAT YOU SEE	COACHING'S ROLE
Effort	Uneven energy and commitment	Motivate
Strategy	Unclear or contested direction	Spark fresh thinking
Skills	Capability gaps stall execution	Educate and develop

Based on Hackman & Wageman (2005).

EXHIBIT 4 **A foundation for the hard cost levers**



Trust doesn't replace these levers; it makes them stick.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Duplication is the visible cost of an invisible problem. Investing in how the top team works together isn't the soft option; it's what lets the hard options deliver, with better decisions, cohesion and retention along the way.



About the author. Jenna Lask is an executive coach and founder of Jenna Lask LLC. She spent two decades in management consulting (PwC, Accenture) and executive roles at UBS, and holds an MA in Social-Organizational Psychology and executive and advanced executive coaching certifications from Columbia University.
jennalask.com · jennalask@gmail.com

Sources. Clutterbuck (2009); De Haan (2025); Hackman & Wageman (2005); Shuffler et al. (2018); Traylor, Stahr & Salas (2020); Wageman, Nunes, Burruss & Hackman (2008).