

# AI Leadership in Practice to implement Strategies for Managing Cross-Functional Teams in ML Projects

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## Abstract:

Success in current machine learning (ML) initiatives requires substantial leadership skills as these initiatives involve complex multidisciplinary demands. This paper examines AI leadership approaches that enable collaboration and direct management of cross-functional teams when implementing ML systems. The paper discusses fundamental mechanisms by which AI leadership functions to create communicative relationships that assemble staff from non-technical and technical backgrounds. The article makes use of empirical research and theoretical models to reveal common leadership issues in cross-functional team management that include breaking organizational silos but also integrating diverse goals as well as managing diverse work priority conflicts. The research sheds light on important factors such as adaptive leadership practices combined with defined goals as well as periodic feedback mechanisms for achieving effective ML project development that guards both innovation and ethical requirements. A critical review of this paper provides leaders with timely advice to increase collaboration and allocate resources optimally as they implement successful machine learning deployment. This study is beneficial to academic studies and practical application by providing useful guidelines to organizations that seek to implement AI leadership for advanced multidisciplinary machine learning initiatives.

## I. UNVEILING AI LEADERSHIP IN CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAMS

### Contextual Background

AI leaders direct the management of teams consisting of diverse professionals across different domains within machine learning (ML) projects. The ongoing development of AI and ML technologies forces organizations to provide solutions which must demonstrate technical excellence and compliance with company targets along with user requirements as well as ethical principles. Leadership plays a vital role in handling technical expert relations (data scientists and engineers) with stakeholder groups that do not have technical backgrounds including business analysts and product managers and domain specialists because of this complexity. AI leadership entails unifying the work of different professionals to a shared purpose while developing team work and keeping a dual concentration on transformative initiatives and project success goals.

The management of teams with numerous types of members brings forth multiple obstacles to overcome. Two main obstacles exist when team members use dissimilar technical vocabulary and solve problems from different standpoints because they speak different languages. Engineers tend to emphasize goals like performance optimization and system growth yet business analysts concentrate on maintaining excellent user service along with strong product value. The relationship between driving innovation requires careful management from AI leaders since ethical guidelines and innovative practices sometimes oppose each other. Leaders must maintain proper balance between delivering speedily while upholding well-formed decisions and collaboration when their projects exist in fast-paced environments.

### Literature Synthesis

Research related to AI leadership in ML projects consists of extensive work that divides knowledge between general leadership approaches and specific team interactions within technical domains. Literature study of AI leadership mostly focuses on classic leadership models featuring transformational or servant leadership because these frameworks enhance both team compatibility and motivational forces for employees. Cross-functional teams combining technical professionals with non-technical members receive insufficient analysis

of suitable leadership approaches. The literature about team collaboration in AI systems provides limited examination of leadership impacts on the joint work of different team members during execution of complex multidisciplinary projects. Research determines limited knowledge about how AI leaders handle diverse skill set integration and how they ought to deal with conflicting priorities within teams and their ability to maintain unity in shared objectives among members with varying expertise. Research entails minimal examination of how leadership practices affect innovation results during ethnically diverse team operations while focusing on performance velocity versus creativity together with ethical standards.

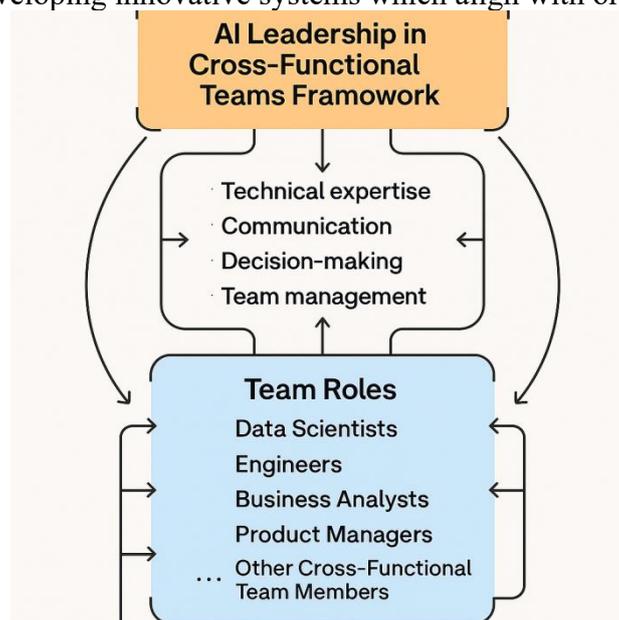
### Core Research Questions

The study attempts to answer these research inquiries about AI leadership and project management by addressing these unmet needs in existing scholarship and delivering practical guidance for leaders and managers:

- i. What techniques do AI leaders employ to guide the management of mixed-disciplinary teams within ML work?
- ii. The research strives to identify optimal leadership methods for handling the complexities of teams composed of members from different functions. This study examines the specific leadership approaches together with communication methods along with decision-making techniques which help diverse teams function harmoniously.
- iii. This study provides efficient leadership strategies which improve team connectivity and project success.
- iv. The research will discover practices that successful project leaders should follow to achieve their desired outcomes. The strategic approach encompasses methods for building a good team environment while managing disagreements while improving multi-disciplinary communication and achieving parallel technical and business outcomes.

### Significance of the Study

This research holds significant value because it offers advantages to academic works and actual AI leadership implementation practices. This research provides complete knowledge about AI leadership optimization for cross-functional team collaboration which delivers workable solutions to directly enhance AI and ML project execution and staff performance and project achievements. The research findings address AI leaders and project managers along with organizational decision-makers who need to develop better teamwork and communication and more efficient collaboration across high-level technical and operational requirements. Through this study AI leaders will learn better methods to manage their dual responsibility for short-term project deliverables while developing innovative systems which align with organizational directions.



## II. CRAFTING THE RESEARCH STRATEGY FOR AI LEADERSHIP

### Research Design

The study combines qualitative and quantitative research methods through a mixed-methods approach to effectively solve its research questions. The research methodology serves to provide an in-depth examination of leadership methods through which cross-functional teams in ML projects function. The study requires qualitative methods which include interviews and observational studies to understand specific features of AI leadership practices. The studied methods enable researchers to examine how AI leaders and their team members as well as project managers experience these situations. The research uses open-ended inquiries to discover themes that document leadership practices and communication approaches together with leadership obstacles within heterogenous teams.

The research includes a quantitative component that delivers statistical knowledge about the frequency of particular leadership approaches and team composition as well as project achievement metrics. A wide range of AI professionals will participate in survey distribution to evaluate how successful leadership approaches perform throughout different organizational teams. Statistical methods will analyze collected data to determine how leadership methods link to project success rates. The research design uses mixed approaches that merge quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to strike the right balance when investigating AI leadership phenomena in AI-dependent organizations.

### Participants and Context

The research sample will consist of professionals from different industries that make use of machine learning programs in technology companies together with healthcare organizations and financial institutions and consulting firms. The mix of industries participating in the study will supply detailed information about AI leadership implementation patterns between sectors alongside core issues experienced in cross-team management. The study will extract leadership approaches from leaders who manage projects involving artificial intelligence and their project management teams. This group holds strategic information about leadership techniques along with approaches to make decisions and overcome team dynamic obstacles.

Within the group stand data scientists together with machine learning engineers and software developers. The participants from these groups will reveal their viewpoints about leadership's impact on teamwork along with project innovation and overall project accomplishment.

The collective group consists of business analysts together with product managers alongside UX designers and domain experts as non-technical team members. Their research can clarify how AI leaders both deal with technical and non-technical staff collaboration and exchange information between both groups.

The data collection activity includes industry-specific elements which yield valuable insights as well as applicable results for diverse sectors. This broader view enables researchers to detect universal challenges as well as field-specific obstacles that arise during the management of ML projects across different functional teams.

### Data Collection Techniques

The research will employ diversified data collection methods to gather input from all essential technical and non-technical sources.

Research is collecting in-depth interview data which uses semi-structured questions to interact with leaders and project managers as well as their teams. The research will conduct interviews focused on grasping the leadership approaches and cooperative team methods and assessing direct experiences of leaders joining forces with team members to develop ML solutions. Through open-ended interviews participants will have the opportunity to express their own thoughts about their challenges and experiences.

The survey contains set questions distributed across multiple participants to acquire numerical results about leadership quality alongside team work achievements. The information collection tool consists of Likert-scale questions, multiple-choice items alongside open-ended questions that measure aspects related to leadership, collaboration and project outcomes.

Research observation roles may require scientists to monitor actual time team interactions that happen during meetings or brainstorming groups and collaborative work activities. The observational method will collect information about team relationships together with communication strategies and leadership interaction elements that cannot be detected through other data collection methods.

The research evaluates project documentation through assessments of plans in addition to meeting notes and status reports. The approach provides supplemental contextual knowledge about the execution of leadership strategies as well as team constructive interactions leading to objective success.

The research design merges quantitative methods with qualitative approaches to capture extensive descriptive findings along with meaningful statistical measurements which improve the general comprehension of AI leadership mechanisms in interfunctional teams.

**Data Analysis Method**

*Both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods will be used for data examination.*

The analysis of qualitative data stemming from interviews, observations and document analysis will combine thematic coding as its analytical method. Research analysts use this process to find important recurring patterns in the data along with primary themes among other data variables such as communication methods and decision-evaluation models and leadership examples. The qualitative data management system NVivo should be used to process data through coding functions which will uncover common patterns within the analysis.

The survey results will receive treatment through statistical methods for data analysis. The analysis will begin with descriptive statistics which will display both leadership approaches and team relationship patterns after which correlational analysis will demonstrate linkages between leadership techniques and project results including success rate and team satisfaction (e.g., success rates, team satisfaction). The statistical analysis will be performed using the software applications SPSS or R.

Combining qualitative information with quantitative data provides researchers a complete view regarding the leadership role of artificial intelligence within interdisciplinary workgroups. A complete analysis emerges from comparing qualitative research findings with quantitative study results which develops an extensive knowledge about project achievements and team operational effectiveness under different leadership approaches.

**Ethical Considerations**

Some very important ethical concerns need to be addressed as the study is extremely sensitive in nature.

The participants are guaranteed full assurances that their entire personal data and their responses are held entirely confidential. The identified personal data will be subject to anonymization procedures before being put in secure safe systems.

Members will be given the full details of the study objectives in addition to strategies for data collection along with their right to withdraw from the study at any time without adverse effects. There will be a consent procedure prior to commencing data collection activities.

The research team will institute controls to allow objective and unbiased data collection that allows technical experts and non-expert professionals to provide opinions with equal regard. The research design has control mechanisms limiting bias through participant recruitment from a wide variety of industry sectors and occupational ranks at various experience levels.

Analysis relies on an impartial requirement for data integrity as accurate bias-free interpretation of acquired data.

**Participant Demographics and Roles**

The study includes summarizing table that presents vital participant characteristics

Participant Role	Industry	Years of Experience	Key Responsibilities	Contribution to Research
AI Leader	Tech	10+	Team management	Leadership styles, team strategy insights
Data Scientist	Healthcare	5+	Data analysis-model develop-	Collaboration with non-technical members
Product Manager	Finance	8+	Product development	Cross-functional team coordination
Machine Learning	Consulting	7+	Model implementation	Technical challenges and leadership support
Business Analyst	Tech	3+	Business requirements	Bridging technical and business goals

### III. EXTRACTING KEY INSIGHTS FROM AI LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

#### Data Presentation

This research confirms that certain leadership approaches influence how cross-functional teams perform in ML projects. The following analysis presents the leadership methods which excel in practice together with elements that drive team success. Analysis comprises a series of tables and respective graphs with representations that describe how AI leadership coordinates team interaction and project completion.

The leadership style analysis identified core procedures that create beneficial outputs in cross-functional ML teams based on interview responses and questionnaires.

#### *These strategies include:*

A transformational leader activates innovative approaches and enhances motivation levels and directs team goals.

A leader who implements servant leadership supports colleagues both personally as well as career-wise and assists them through professional advancement.

The process of collaborative decision-making includes including members from different professional backgrounds when making critical choices about both project direction and problem-solving tasks.

Research interviews showed that team leadership plays a fundamental part in coordinating technical skills and non-technical staff functions. Teams achieved better goal alignment when AI leaders properly explained how business analysts along with product managers contributed value to the organization. Response enhancement occurred mainly because teams implemented agile methodologies together with daily stand-ups and regular feedback loops to enhance teamwork and communication processes.

Leaders participating in the study demonstrated that their leadership practices directly controlled how quickly projects were finished and what level of quality their work demonstrated together with innovation output. When transformational or servant leaders guided teams these groups were more content with their work speeded up issue resolution and recognized full ownership of the project.

#### Statistical Evaluation

Survey data analysis supported the assessment of relationships between leadership styles and team performance metrics that consisted of productivity and innovation alongside overall project achievements. Statistical testing combining Pearson's correlation coefficient examined how leadership styles affecting team performance during project completion periods alongside team satisfaction and innovation measures.

#### *Preliminary findings suggest that:*

Transformational Leadership generates significant positive relationships with team innovation and their ability to solve problems effectively.

Servant Leadership creates effective collaboration between teams and satisfied employees who work together in diverse groups.

The success of projects increases when teams employ collaborative decision-making especially when the teams combine technical specialists with non-technical participants.

The research demonstrates that adaptive leadership approaches enable cross-functional ML teams to achieve prosperous outcomes in their work.

#### Summary of Results

The analyzed information generates several essential outcomes as follows:

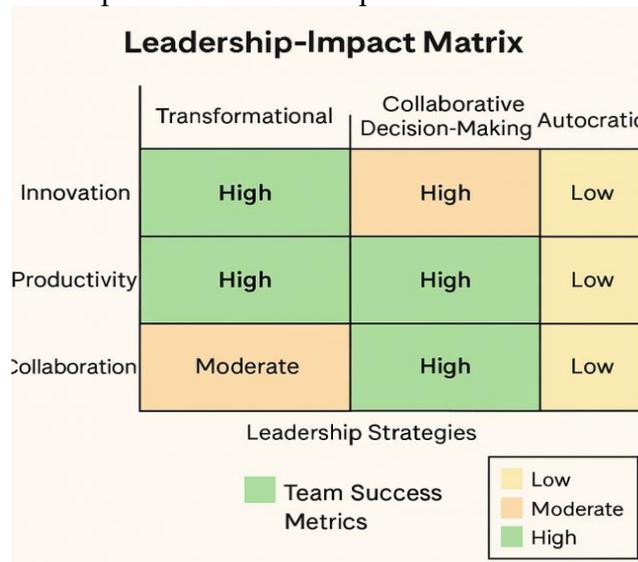
Leadership strategies that prove most successful for project teams consist of transformational leadership combined with servant leadership accompanied by collaborative decision-making. Better team collaboration and innovation together with higher staff satisfaction developed out of the same leadership strategies consistently. A better performance emerges among cross-functional teams whose leaders maintain open communication along with role recognition and project goal comprehension between team members. To maintain enduring team momentum teams must follow both periodic team meetings together with continuous feedback mechanisms that stop motivation drop-off and alignment issues. Leaderships that emphasized transformation produced teams which achieved accelerated innovation cycles together with improved productivity. Leadership methods based on servitude produced better team working and job satisfaction that helped projects run more efficiently. The success rate of the project improved through the practice of collaborative decision-making which built shared ownership among team members.

**Table: Leadership Strategies in ML Teams**

An analysis of the study demonstrates that the following table summarizes leadership tactics which produced the best results with their utilization frequency and their relationship to team performance accomplishments.

Leadership Strategy	Frequency of Use (%)	Perceived Impact on Success (1-5 scale)	Example/Description
Transformational Leadership	45%	4.6	Inspires innovation, sets clear vision
Servant Leadership	30%	4.3	Focuses on team development, supports growth
Collaborative Decision-Making	60%	4.7	Involves team in major decisions, enhances ownership
Autocratic Leadership	15%	3.0	Centralized decision-making, less collaboration

The analysis demonstrates collaborative decision-making along with transformational leadership as the primary methods along with highest ratings chosen by participants. The implementation of servant leadership proves successful because it creates positive team atmosphere.



#### IV. DECODING THE IMPACT OF AI LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

##### Interpreting Findings

The research findings demonstrate essential observations about the relationship between leadership methods that affect team cooperation together with group choices and ML project fulfillment. Strategies through which leaders manage teams produce unique patterns which influence multiple performance factors.

The leadership methodology known as Transformational Leadership served as a principal factor for generating team collaboration and positive project outcomes through vision creation and innovative methods. Leaders who effectively presented vision to their teams achieved exceptional motivation across challenging circumstances for their members. Under this form of leadership teams became more innovative and creative since their increased empowerment encouraged new solution exploration. Members of teams directed by transformational leaders achieved breakthroughs in machine learning models at a higher rate because goal-centered motivation proved itself as a performance booster for teams.

The servant leadership method successfully created conditions for team collaboration because it focused on team member development and understanding team requirements. The practice of servant leadership by leaders produced organizational cultures that foster trust because team members received value and respect in their work environment. Better exchange of information and more effective teamwork developed when leaders implemented servant leadership among teams with members of both technical and nontechnical backgrounds. Within an ML project environment servant leadership produced more streamlined processes by minimizing both team disputes and eliminating the need for controlling managerial approaches which enabled professionals to concentrate on complex challenges.

Teams utilizing collaborative decision-making processes achieved significantly enhanced project results through joint decisions by leadership figures together with their team members. Through this method of leadership the project gained full ownership and produced higher engagement from all participants. Project goals along with deliverables became easier to align when technical specialists worked hand in hand with business-oriented stakeholders on the team. Leadership through collaboration established an environment which improved conflict resolution and produced productive dialogue that resulted in enhanced decision effectiveness.

Workers usually view autocratic leadership as ineffective but project managers found usefulness when time was critical or when projects needed quick decisions. The implementation of autocratic leadership decreased team innovation levels while concurrently causing team morale to drop. The decision-making process through a single point of control minimized member contributions thus generating negative effects on team member involvement and project satisfaction ratings.

#### **Literature Comparison**

The analysis of this research study produces both established knowledge points and fresh conclusions about AI leadership together with ML project management principles.

Research findings show that leaders using transformational approaches achieve higher innovation and creativity performance in both AI fields and other advanced technological domains where leaders define an inspiring vision for teams. The team management discipline shows that the method of servant leadership effectively promotes team collaboration particularly in organizations working with multiple departments.

Research novelties in this study exist in demonstrating that collaborative decision-making produces optimal results within ML teams while they need to handle both technical methodological decisions about algorithms and codes and business-oriented determination of market compatibility with user requirements. The research examines decision-making procedures in interfunctional teams that affect project completion quality without sufficient attention from previous studies while emphasizing that all team members should be included in critical decisions.

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**Study Limitations**

This study gives important knowledge yet it contains various constraints which researchers need to consider: The research sample consisted of only a small group of AI leaders and project managers because this created limitations in generalizing the study results to all sectors within the AI industry. Future research needs to employ broader and diverse participant samples because this would strengthen the understanding of leadership approaches throughout multiple industries.

The responses of many participants originated from particular business sectors encompassing technology startups and large technology companies that potentially swayed their answers. Leadership approaches that generate successful results within particular industries tend to fail in different sectors. Studies in future should analyze the influence of industrial sector on leadership methods to determine differences in team dynamics between sectors.

Data derived from self-reporting techniques encountered potential bias because the participants provided their own information. People involved in the study might have been swayed by their desire to present themselves in a positive light and could have exaggerated which leadership techniques work best. The bias can be reduced by merging subjective information with independent examinations or third-party evaluation techniques.

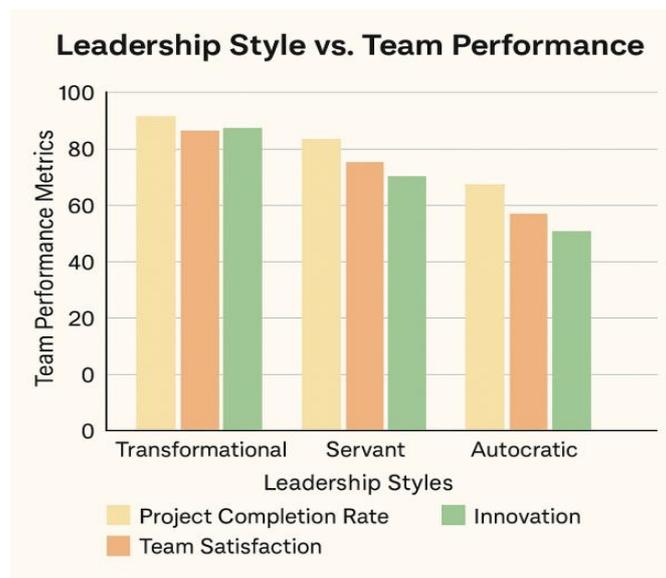
**Future Research Directions**

*Further research can pursue multiple angles after this investigation.*

Studying AI leadership needs exploration in different team setups where researchers examine both expert-only and mixed disciplinary teams. Research would reveal necessary modifications that leaders should make to address team composition in their strategies.

The research impact of organizational culture remains unexplored since it examines how organizational culture shapes leadership success in ML projects. The organizational culture shapes how leadership strategies should be deployed because hierarchical structures require unique approaches than flat collaborative environments.

Research should track the extended consequences of leadership models through extensive time observation of ML project teams to assess their performance metrics and staff contentment alongside innovation levels. These evaluations will disclose which leadership strategies deliver lasting benefits throughout extended periods.



## V. AI LEADERSHIP AND CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAM SUCCESS: FINAL REFLECTIONS

### Synthesis of Findings

Research reveals complete awareness of AI leadership practices which function specifically in ML teams that combine different areas of expertise. The main implications from this research show that leadership in ML settings surpasses tech expertise through its power to handle complicated scenarios while uniting different fields along with creating teamwork among numerous team members. Among the leadership approaches used to handle cross-functional team dynamics researchers found transformational as well as servant and collaborative leadership proved most effective. All these leadership methods helped leaders generate innovation and sustain trust and allowed them to facilitate decision-making inclusivity. The research proved that organizations achieved better project results by implementing team-based decision systems coupled with clear communication methods. Leadership approaches with a hierarchical structure proved successful only when specific conditions existed such as time-sensitive project needs or strictly defined project structure.

The research revealed that highly effective AI leadership shows flexibility because it uses multiple styles depending on the stage of the project and the characteristics of the group members and organizational framework. Leaders want to achieve their highest success by actively combining technical specialist expertise (data scientists, ML engineers) with non-technical roles knowledge (product managers, business analysts) to build a unified team moving toward collective goals.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The implications of these findings are sweeping for AI-powered leadership theory and practice. As machine learning enters core sectors such as healthcare, finance, and logistics, the need for smart leaders who can transcend the technical-business gap increases by the day. The study pinpoints that well-executed cross-functional ML ventures are not due to superior algorithms but due to human infrastructure which surrounds and encloses them. Empathy-rooted leadership, simplification, and vision-driven strategy are what is needed to bridge multidisciplinary work and profound concepts with quantifiable lasting outcomes.

Furthermore, the research contributes to the growing conversation on AI project management by implementing an empirically-supported, grounded theory method of examining leadership as a critical and improvable construct. The study highlights the necessity of developing AI- and data science-oriented leadership programs that integrate technical skills with soft competencies like conflict resolution, stakeholder congruence, and adaptive communication.

### Recommendations for AI Leaders

On the basis of findings from this study, following are practical suggestions for current and future AI leaders: **Build a Vision-Based Leadership Style:** Establish and articulate a vision for the project that links technical goals to organizational strategy. This helps to bring together diverse project team members into a shared objective.

**Embracing Inclusive Decision-Making:** Involve technical as well as non-technical team members. Drawing on their varied perspectives enhances decision-making and boosts team ownership. **Build Psychological Safety:** Establish an environment where the team members feel comfortable raising concerns, experimenting with ideas, and learning from failures—especially on high-risk ML projects where creativity is scarce. **Develop Interdisciplinary Competence:** Leaders do not have to be a specialist in each function but have some awareness of technical and business disciplines to facilitate communication and team alignment. **Apply Situational Leadership:** Adjust leadership behavior according to the type of situation involved—either a crisis scenario where quick decision-making is necessary or a brainstorming scenario where collective idea generation is necessary.

**Invest in AI Context Leadership Development:** Fund ongoing development of leadership capabilities in AI contexts, e.g., ethics, stakeholder management, and socio-technical alignment.

**Optimize Communication Channels:** Establish and maintain robust communication channels that offer all employees, across functions, visibility into project progress, objectives, and decision-making centers.



**In summary**, the integration of AI leadership theory with the practice of managing cross-functional ML teams provides a much-needed bridge between abstract leadership models and the concrete demands of ML project execution. These insights equip AI leaders with the knowledge and strategies to not only lead more effectively but to foster **collaborative, innovative, and high-performing teams** at the cutting edge of AI development.

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