A MANIFESTO

The Coaching Model Is Broken.

And it’s the best opportunity business coaches have had in decades!

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AiMS-HQ™

THE COACHING MODEL IS BROKEN.

Technology has fundamentally changed the way we live, work, communicate, and run our businesses over the past decade, and the advances in artificial intelligence over just the past two years (and even the last 2 months) have accelerated that change in ways few of us could have imagined.

We're now able to access information, analyze complex problems, develop plans, and accomplish work in minutes that previously required hours, days, or even weeks. Knowledge and expertise that were once difficult or expensive to access are becoming available to almost anyone, and the implications for how businesses operate and the outside expertise they rely on are enormous.

Yet many of the business models built around delivering that expertise have changed very little.

And business owners and executives are beginning to question whether those models still make sense.

Consider what business leaders are telling us:

WHAT BUSINESS LEADERS ARE TELLING US

81%

say consulting services must change to remain relevant to their organizations.

68%

say current coaching and consulting delivery models are too costly and inefficient.

Source: IBM Institute for Business Value, October 2026, research involving 1,700 C-suite executives.

Now consider what AI is making possible for the people delivering those services.

WHAT AI IS MAKING POSSIBLE

25.1%
faster on suitable tasks

12.2%
more tasks completed

40%+
higher-quality results

In a study involving 758 Boston Consulting Group consultants, researchers found that those using AI completed suitable tasks 25.1% faster, completed 12.2% more tasks, and produced results rated more than 40% higher in quality.

Source: Harvard Business School / Boston Consulting Group, Navigating the Jagged Technological Frontier, 2023.

And that research was conducted three years ago, before many of the AI capabilities we now take for granted were available. The number for completing tasks is more likely around **50% or even higher** today.

There's an important tension emerging here.

> **Business leaders are questioning the cost and efficiency of traditional consulting models at precisely the moment AI is making consultants more productive.**

And while these studies examined the broader consulting industry rather than business coaching specifically, the implications for coaches and management-system implementers are significant.

For decades, coaches have built their businesses around helping companies implement management frameworks and disciplines through strategic planning workshops, quarterly sessions, and ongoing coaching. Many pay substantial certification, licensing, or franchise fees to access and deliver those frameworks and methodologies.

That model has created tremendous value for businesses, and I'm a strong believer in the importance of both management disciplines and experienced human coaching.

But the assumptions on which that model was built are changing.

Coaches can now use AI to prepare workshops, analyze business information, develop planning exercises, create scorecards, document decisions, and provide implementation guidance much more efficiently than they could just a few years ago.

And their clients have access to the same technology.

A business owner can increasingly use AI to understand management frameworks, develop plans, clarify responsibilities, and work through operational challenges without relying on a coach to explain or facilitate every step.

This doesn't mean coaches should automatically charge 25% or even 50% less because AI allows them to complete certain tasks more efficiently. In fact, great coaches may become more valuable than ever as they spend more of their time on work that genuinely requires their experience, perspective, and human judgment.

But some coaches should also be genuinely concerned about what AI means for their future.

If the primary value you bring to a business is your ability to teach a management framework, facilitate its exercises, and guide a leadership team through a prescribed implementation process, you're increasingly competing with technology that can make much of that knowledge and guidance available to anyone, at any time, **for a fraction of the cost.**

The coaches who have spent years running businesses, leading people, making difficult decisions, or working alongside business owners through real challenges bring something much harder to replicate. They've developed the judgment to recognize when the framework isn't enough, the experience to understand what's happening beneath the surface, and the ability to help leaders work through situations where there isn't an obvious right answer.

And these coaches have **an extraordinary opportunity ahead of them.**

They've developed their own zone of genius, something that goes well beyond their ability to teach or facilitate a particular methodology. AI now gives them the opportunity to spend less time administering that methodology and more time applying their experience, judgment, and perspective to the challenges that matter most to their clients.

For coaches whose primary value has been their ability to deliver someone else's framework, the future may be considerably more challenging. As AI makes that knowledge and implementation guidance increasingly accessible, they'll need to find new ways to differentiate themselves. That might mean developing deeper expertise in a particular area, or adopting a more modern management approach that allows them to offer something substantially more valuable than framework implementation alone.

That's one of the opportunities we've been developing with AiMS for a while now. We've built AiMS-HQ, a capacity-building management system that allows coaches to help businesses accomplish more, without requiring those coaches to develop an entirely new methodology or AI platform themselves. And we're preparing to make it available beyond our existing clients.

> **AiMS-HQ runs the system - so you get to sell what only you can bring.**

The platform delivers the framework, so your time goes into your own expertise, your judgment, and your relationships.

The market for traditional framework facilitation will come under increasing pressure, while the demand for coaches who can bring differentiated expertise and help businesses build lasting capability has the potential to grow.

And it raises an important question for small businesses and the business coaching industry:

> **If the framework itself is becoming increasingly accessible, what is the value and unique genius a coach brings that the client is paying for?**

The answer isn't to charge less for delivering the same methodology. It's to fundamentally improve the value businesses receive, while allowing coaches to focus more of their time on the work that makes them truly valuable.

If AI is allowing coaches to accomplish substantially more in less time, shouldn't businesses expect more access, more support, greater progress between sessions, and ultimately better outcomes?

And shouldn't coaches be able to spend more of their time helping leaders think through difficult decisions, navigate complex situations, develop their people, and accomplish things they couldn't accomplish on their own?

This is precisely the value proposition business owners and executives are beginning to evaluate. They're not necessarily looking for cheaper coaching or consulting. They're questioning whether the value they're receiving justifies what they're paying, particularly when technology is making much of the traditional work faster and more accessible. **Owners aren't saying coaching is worth less. They're rethinking what they're paying for.**

And the research points to something even more important about what businesses now expect from outside expertise.

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT FINDING OF ALL

84% **say consultants need to help build organizational capability, not simply provide answers.**

Source: IBM Institute for Business Value, October 2026.

To me, this is the most significant finding of all.

Because it suggests the future value of coaching won't be determined by how efficiently we deliver our expertise or how effectively we help companies implement management frameworks.

It will be determined by how effectively we help those companies develop the collective capacity to accomplish more as they grow.

> **The opportunity isn't to use AI to deliver the same coaching experience more efficiently. It's to use those efficiency gains to deliver a fundamentally better experience, while helping businesses build the capacity to run, improve, and grow.**

And that requires us to rethink something even more fundamental than economics.

We need to reconsider what a management system is ultimately supposed to accomplish.

We've been confusing the framework with the outcome.

For decades, management systems have helped businesses establish the disciplines required to operate more effectively.

Clear strategies, defined responsibilities, meaningful scorecards, productive meetings, and the ability to make and follow through on commitments all matter. I wouldn't want to run a business without them.

But I've also seen companies implement these disciplines successfully and still struggle with many of the same challenges that caused them to seek outside help in the first place.

The owner remains involved in too many decisions. Important issues continue finding their way back to a handful of senior leaders. People understand their responsibilities but hesitate to exercise judgment beyond them. The leadership team gets better at following the management system, but the business doesn't necessarily become more capable of operating without them.

The disciplines are in place, yet the capacity of the organization hasn't meaningfully changed.

Through our 12 years of work at AiMS, I've come to see this as one of the biggest limitations of traditional management systems.

They help businesses establish the structures and practices required to run effectively, but they don't necessarily develop the collective ability of the people within those businesses to make decisions, solve problems, pursue opportunities, and continuously improve.

And in today's world, that distinction matters more than ever.

The pace of change, the complexity of business, and the amount of information required to make good decisions have all increased dramatically. No single business owner, leadership team, or outside coach can reasonably know enough to keep up with everything.

The people closest to the work have knowledge, experience, and perspectives that those leading the business simply cannot have.

That doesn't mean those people individually have all the answers. It means better answers emerge when we deliberately bring different perspectives together.

When people participate in understanding the challenges facing the business, recognizing its strengths, exploring opportunities, shaping its aspirations, and defining what meaningful results look like, something important changes.

They begin to see the business differently. They develop a greater understanding of where it's going, why certain things matter, and how their own knowledge, experience, and contributions can help move it forward.

This is central to the work of Dr. Jackie Stavros, creator of the SOAR framework (and owner and advisor at AiMS). Her research and latest book, *The SOAR Effect*, demonstrate the importance of making strategy something people create together rather than something developed by a few and handed down to everyone else.

When people help shape the direction and the plans to get there, they're no longer simply being asked to execute someone else's decisions. They develop a sense of ownership because they've contributed to the thinking, understand the reasoning, and have a meaningful role in making it happen.

But the real opportunity goes beyond creating a better strategic plan.

When we establish management disciplines that continually bring people together to plan, make decisions, act on commitments, and learn from what happens, we're developing something that becomes more valuable over time. People become better at understanding the business, recognizing opportunities, exercising judgment, and working together to accomplish things they couldn't accomplish individually.

We're no longer simply implementing a management framework.

We're building the collective capacity of the organization to run, improve, and grow.

And this is exactly where the consulting and coaching industry needs to go. In fact, I've been going there for the past decade with amazing results.

But today, the greatest opportunity I see - is that AI makes an entirely different management system like this, not just possible but also a requirement.

Until recently, there were practical limitations to how we could support businesses in building this kind of capacity.

A coach could only be in so many places and spend so much time with each company. So we built a delivery model around scheduled workshops, quarterly planning sessions, and coaching calls, relying on leadership teams to maintain the management disciplines between visits.

AI has changed what's possible.

Imagine a business where the management system doesn't disappear when the coach leaves.

Where the people responsible for running the business have access to its strategy, priorities, responsibilities, measures, and commitments whenever they need them, along with an AI guide that understands both the methodology and the context of their company.

Where someone preparing for a meeting can get help thinking through the right questions. Where a team working on a quarterly priority can get support developing its plan. Where people facing an issue can work through it together rather than waiting for the next coaching session.

And where the coach can remain connected to what's happening in the business, understand where the team is making progress or getting stuck, and spend their time helping with the situations where their experience and judgment will make the greatest difference.

That's a fundamentally different model from one built around implementing a framework through a series of scheduled sessions.

It makes the management system continuously accessible to the people doing the work, while creating an opportunity for coaches to have a greater impact without necessarily spending more time with each client.

And it changes the role of the coach.

Instead of being the person responsible for bringing the management system into the business, the coach becomes someone who helps the business develop the capacity to use it, improve it, and ultimately become less dependent on outside intervention.

> **I don't see that as reducing the value of coaching.**
> **I see it as elevating it.**

The next evolution IS about building capacity.

This is what we've been working toward at AiMS.

Our approach is built on more than 35 years of research and practical application in Appreciative Inquiry, brought into the everyday disciplines of managing and leading a business.

At the centre of AiMS is a simple idea:

01 **Bring more people in.**

02 **Plan together.**

03 **Execute together.**

04 **Learn together.**

THEN REPEAT.

Over time, the business develops greater shared understanding, shared ownership, and shared momentum.

The management disciplines still matter. Strategy, people, data, and operating rhythms remain essential parts of running a successful business.

But the way those disciplines are developed and used is fundamentally different.

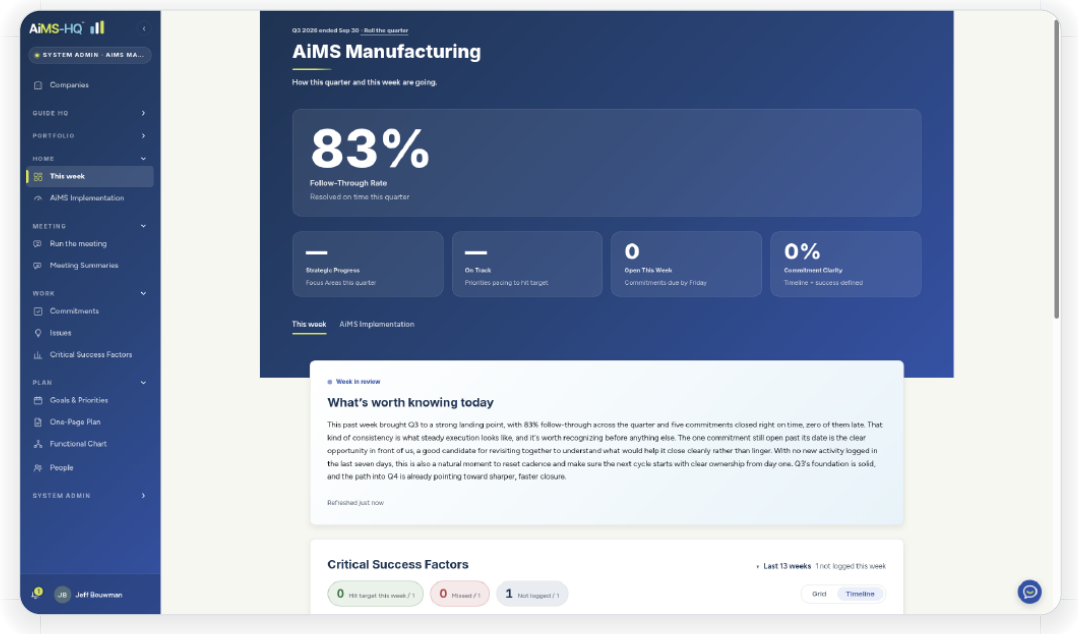
Rather than a small leadership team creating plans and expecting everyone else to execute them, we deliberately involve more people in understanding the business, identifying opportunities, shaping decisions, and taking ownership of meaningful work.

The objective isn't simply to get better at running meetings or tracking commitments. It's to help the organization become increasingly capable of running, improving, and growing without everything depending on the owner.

And with **AiMS-HQ (our new AI-based platform)**, we've made that approach available to our current clients as an always-on management system.

AiMEE, our AI guide, helps people throughout the business put the approach into practice, whether they're preparing for a meeting, developing a quarterly plan, working through an issue, or learning how to lead more effectively.

The system doesn't disappear between quarterly sessions, and its value isn't dependent on having a coach in the room.



AiMS-HQ: the always-on management system, with AiMEE, our AI guide, built in.

But the coach remains an important part of the equation.

In fact, the combination of an always-on management system and experienced human coaching creates the opportunity to deliver substantially more value than either could on its own.

> **Make the system always-on. Make the human work premium.**

That's the model we've already built and tested with our clients.

And we're about to make that available to other coaches and business owners too.

The Economics Need to Support a Different Outcome.

If the way we deliver management systems is changing, the economics should change as well.

Why should an experienced coach need to make a substantial upfront investment simply to gain access to a methodology?

Why should their ability to grow their practice remain so closely tied to the number of days they can personally spend with clients?

And why shouldn't coaches benefit when the businesses they've helped continue using the management system, even if those businesses eventually no longer need the same level of direct coaching support?

These are some of the questions we asked as we built AiMS-HQ.

Our model makes the methodology, technology, and ongoing support available to coaches through a monthly subscription of $1,250, rather than requiring a significant upfront certification investment.

The companies they work with can subscribe to AiMS-HQ for **$50 per user per month**, and the more people who use it, the smarter the company gets.

Think about what the owner gets back. Instead of paying their coach to spend time tracking accountability, training the team, or teaching the model, those coaching hours go into the things only the coach can bring. And every person on the team gets an always-on system and AiMEE every day - not just the leaders once a month.

And pricing comes down as more of the team comes in. Your first 10 users are always $50 per user per month. Each user beyond 10 pays the rate for your team's total size:

FIRST 10 USERS	TEAMS OF 11-20	TEAMS OF 21-30	TEAMS OF 31+
$50	**$30**	**$25**	**$20**
per user / month, always	per user / month beyond 10	per user / month beyond 10	per user / month beyond 10

For example, 25 users is $875 a month (10 x $50, plus 15 x $25). Pay annually and save 20%.

And no - this isn't designed to charge you more as you grow. The more people you bring in, the less each one costs.

But here's where it gets better.

When a coach introduces a company to the platform, they receive a credit equal to **20% of that company's subscription** against their own monthly fee.

And because coaches can serve more clients using this AI-powered platform, they can reach a point where the subscription credits from the companies they've introduced completely offset their own monthly fee.

If a company eventually decides it no longer needs to work directly with the coach but continues using AiMS-HQ, the coach can continue receiving that credit as long as they remain an active subscriber and user of the platform.

We've designed it this way intentionally.

A coach shouldn't have to choose between building a great business and helping their clients become more independent.

In fact, the economic model should encourage the very outcome we're trying to create.

Coaches should be rewarded for helping more businesses build capacity, not for keeping those businesses dependent on them.

And companies should be able to maintain access to their management system regardless of whether they're currently engaging an outside coach.

This isn't simply a less expensive way to access another management framework.

It's a different relationship between the coach, the company, and the management system itself.

The future of coaching is more human, not less.

There's a temptation to look at AI and immediately focus on everything it might replace.

And there's no question that some of the work coaches have traditionally been paid to do will become easier for businesses to accomplish themselves.

But that doesn't mean the opportunity for great coaches is shrinking.

It's expanding.

Because the more accessible management knowledge and tools become, the more important the things that can't simply be delivered through a framework become.

Experience. Perspective. Judgment. Trust. The ability to recognize what's really happening within a team, ask questions that challenge people's thinking, and help leaders navigate difficult situations.

These are the things that make exceptional coaches exceptional.

And there's an enormous opportunity to build a business model that allows us to spend more of our time doing precisely that work.

I've always believed that the purpose of coaching isn't to make people better at following our process. It's to help them become more capable of accomplishing what matters to them.

That means we should be proud when a leadership team starts making decisions without us, when people throughout the company begin taking greater ownership, and when the owner discovers that the business can keep moving forward without their involvement in everything.

> **We should want our clients to become less dependent on us.**
>
> **And we should build coaching businesses that thrive when they do.**

An invitation to rethink what's possible.

I know there are many exceptional coaches working within EOS, Scaling Up, and other management systems. There are also experienced business leaders considering entering the coaching industry, and independent coaches who have developed tremendous expertise through years of working with business owners.

I’m not suggesting any of them should abandon the knowledge, experience, or relationships they’ve spent years developing.

Those things are about to become more valuable.

But I would encourage them to question whether the model they’re operating within is the best way to use those strengths in the years ahead.

The evidence is increasingly difficult to ignore.

Business leaders are questioning the economics of traditional consulting. AI is changing how professional expertise is delivered. And executives are telling us they want consultants who help their organizations build lasting capability, not simply provide answers.

The business coaching industry has an extraordinary opportunity to respond.

Not by defending the old model or using AI to deliver it more efficiently, but by fundamentally improving what businesses receive and what coaches are able to accomplish.

A management system that’s always available to the people doing the work, combined with experienced human coaches who focus on helping those people develop the judgment, confidence, and capability to accomplish more together.

That’s the next evolution of management systems.

And it’s the category we’ve built at AiMS.

Because the future doesn’t belong to the coaches who can explain a framework better than anyone else. It belongs to those who can help businesses accomplish things they never thought possible, and develop the capacity to keep doing so long after the coach has left the room.

The world has changed. It’s time the business coaching model changed with it.

Jeff Bouwman

CEO, The AiMS Institute

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

About Jeff

Before co-founding The AiMS Institute, I spent 13 years in manufacturing, including helping lead a company with approximately $200 million in annual revenue and 600 people. That experience gave me a firsthand appreciation for both the importance of strong management disciplines and the limitations of relying on a small group of leaders to make the decisions required to grow a business.

Since then, I've run over 300 workshops and coached more than 30 companies (and hundreds of leaders), working alongside business owners and leadership teams as they've navigated growth, complexity, and the challenges of building organizations that can operate more independently.

Through AiMS, our focus has been on bringing more than 35 years of research and practical application from Appreciative Inquiry into the everyday way businesses are managed and led, helping organizations develop the collective capacity to run, improve, and grow.

RESEARCH AND SOURCES

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