

ADAPTIVE THINKING REFLECTION

When Rational Decisions Create Irrational Organizations

What *The Devil Wears Prada 2* accidentally tells us about AI, efficiency, and the way modern organizations are managed.

By [Tomasz Mazurkiewicz](#) | Adaptive Labs

| The Core Premise

"We have become very good at finding shortcuts — and increasingly bad at understanding where they lead."

— TOMASZ MAZURKIEWICZ

| Experience vs. Vision

Beyond Competence

In the movie, Miranda lets Emily go not because she lacked competence or experience, but because she lacked **Vision**—the capacity to see beyond the existing system.

Experience without adaptability becomes a boundary. Yet replacing human experience with technological shortcuts introduces an opposite, dangerous extreme.



| Framing the Technology Question

Augmentation Mindset

"What can AI help us do better?"

Focuses on expanding human judgment, deepening context, improving creative synthesis, and elevating decision quality across complex domains.

Replacement Mindset

"What can AI replace?"

Focuses strictly on cost elimination and shortcuts.
Generates thousands of outputs without understanding why one of them should exist in the system.

| The Spreadsheet Fallacy

100%

Rational on Paper

Local Logic, Systemic Failure

Cutting drivers, switching to Uber, automating creative steps, and replacing senior staff each yield defensible Excel rows and consultant benchmarks. Yet, when every individual decision is rational in isolation, their combination frequently yields a completely irrational organization.

| What Local Cuts Erase

 **Organizational Memory:** Tacit knowledge disappears when experienced roles are treated strictly as overhead cost lines.

 **Relational Capital:** Deep trust between functions and external partners that quietens friction during crises.

 **Intuitive Judgment:** The rare ability to spot a cascading operational risk long before it surfaces in a monthly KPI dashboard.

 **Systemic Glue:** Apparently "expensive" slack that actually holds complex corporate structures together.

Organizations Are Systems

They are not collections of independent cost lines. Change one element in a spreadsheet, and the consequences reverberate across culture, capability, and performance.

| The Adaptive Thinking Mandate



Map the System

Understand where real value originates and how operational feedback loops operate before dismantling structures.



Strategic vs Baggage

Distinguish genuine strategic capabilities from historical baggage, ensuring core strengths aren't cut for speed.



Shared Understanding

Connect siloed functional perspectives so finance, ops, HR, and IT share a unified picture of reality.

No Function Sees the Whole Alone

Functional Lens	Primary Metric Focus	Systemic Blindspot
Finance	Cost & EBITDA lines	Erosion of tacit capability
HR	Headcount & payroll	Loss of organizational memory
IT & AI	Tool deployment & speed	Operational context & ethics
Consultants	External benchmarks	Unique systemic interdependencies

The Leadership Imperative

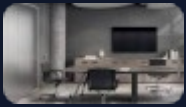
"Perhaps the biggest management risk of the AI era is not that machines will start thinking for us. It is that we will stop thinking because machines can."

Adaptive Thinking

Designing business systems capable of continuous adaptation.

Tomasz Mazurkiewicz | Founder, Adaptive Labs

| Image Sources



<https://www.frezza.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/semplificita-ed-eleganza-idee-e-ispirazioni-per-un-arredo-ufficio-in-stile-minimal-min-2000x1100-c-center.webp>

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