



The Biggest Issue

Leading Eng NYC · 17 Oct 2025

The Biggest Issue: AI & AI Strategy (30 mentions)

Some of what you're navigating:

EXEC EXPECTATIONS & HYPE

"There's **nowhere clear for AI to enable** eng work because we're still doing foundational...work to dig out from years of underinvestment ... that doesn't stop the CEO from **demanding it immediately**"

EXEC EXPECTATIONS & HYPE

"Why is there a **divide** between the **exec expectations** on the impact of AI, and the **practical impacts**"

DATA, INFRA, & RELIABILITY

"Building a series of agents to **automate** various processes in a **RELIABLE** way"

ADOPTION, TOOLING, & LEARNING

"Get my teams **engaging with ai tooling** and lose the skepticism, and **find the space to learn** how to make the most of them"

The Biggest Issue: Engineering Productivity (24 mentions)

Some of what you're navigating:

MORE WITH LESS

"Doing more with less and not feeling like we're trying to **squeeze more out of people** that are **already stretched thin**"

PROCESS OVER-COMPLICATION

"Moving faster. Our org is slow because we **overcomplicate everything**: product requirements, designs, and architecture"

TECH DEBT

"Addressing **technical debt faster**, to decrease cycle time and release faster and more often, with a **small team** and **leveraging AI**"

PREDICTABILITY IN CHANGE

"We are struggling in a world where I need to be **more predictable with delivery** with **ever changing priorities** while needing to also **improve quality** and **bug leak rate**"

The Biggest Issue: Leadership Misalignment (22 mentions)

Some of what you're navigating:

MANAGING UP

"Managing up and how to **effectively communicate** my concerns to my direct manager to come to a **shared agreement** and understanding."

MISALIGNED SENIOR LEADERS

"The two most senior leaders in engineering don't communicate well or **aren't aligned on many things.**"

CEO / FOUNDER INTERVENTION

"Dealing with an **anxious** and very caring founding CEO and preventing a culture where **everything is urgent.**"

TOXIC LEADERSHIP

"Backhand politics, **lack of transparency** from senior leadership, treating **people as "discardable"** and not really giving them a chance to learn..."

The Biggest Issue: Product Strategy (14 mentions)

Some of what you're navigating:

UNCLEAR STRATEGY

"**Keeping people** employees while company scrambles to redefine strategy"

PRODUCT TEAM CAPABILITY

"My **product team is weak**, the director never fully onboarded and hired three people who now also don't know how to function in the organization"

PARTNERSHIP

"Partnership **challenges with the product lead** in my organization"

PRIORITIZATION

"Ensuring that individual teams are all moving toward the same direction with **multiple competing 'must dos'**"

And so much more!

I'M ASKED TO SPIN UP **NEW TEAMS IN INDIA** EN MASSE **WITHOUT TIME OR RESOURCES** TO ONBOARD THEM

WIDESPREAD DISENGAGEMENT FROM ENGINEERS IN THE FACE OF THE **BROADER INDUSTRY CHANGES**

I DON'T KNOW **JACK SHIT** ABOUT AI 🤖

WE CANNOT COMPETE WITH BIG TECH ON **COMPENSATION**

I DESPERATELY NEED TO KEEP THIS JOB SO I CAN AFFORD MY MOM'S CARE

IS IT WORTH PUTTING **PLANS IN PLACE** WHEN YOU AREN'T SURE IF THERE WILL BE A ROUND OF **LAYOFFS** AND/OR A **REORG** IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS?

EXECUTIVE PANIC

FEELING **UNINSPIRED** AND **BURNED OUT**

The Biggest Themes

AI & AI STRATEGY

ENGINEERING
PRODUCTIVITY

LEADERSHIP
MISALIGNMENT

PRODUCT
STRATEGY

Cynefin

CLEAR

COMPLICATED

COMPLEX

CHAOTIC

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

COMPLICATED

COMPLEX

CHAOTIC

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

*e.g. following an
incident protocol*

COMPLICATED

COMPLEX

CHAOTIC

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

*e.g. following an
incident protocol*

COMPLICATED

**Knowable right
answer.** Requires
expertise and
analysis.

COMPLEX

CHAOTIC

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

*e.g. following an
incident protocol*

COMPLICATED

**Knowable right
answer.** Requires
expertise and
analysis.

*e.g. migrating legacy
systems*

COMPLEX

CHAOTIC

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

*e.g. following an
incident protocol*

COMPLICATED

**Knowable right
answer.** Requires
expertise and
analysis.

*e.g. migrating legacy
systems*

COMPLEX

**Cause-and-effect
in hindsight.**
Patterns emerge as
you experiment.

CHAOTIC

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

*e.g. following an
incident protocol*

COMPLICATED

**Knowable right
answer.** Requires
expertise and
analysis.

*e.g. migrating legacy
systems*

COMPLEX

**Cause-and-effect
in hindsight.**
Patterns emerge as
you experiment.

*e.g. rebuilding trust with
product team*

CHAOTIC

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

*e.g. following an
incident protocol*

COMPLICATED

**Knowable right
answer.** Requires
expertise and
analysis.

*e.g. migrating legacy
systems*

COMPLEX

**Cause-and-effect
in hindsight.**
Patterns emerge as
you experiment.

*e.g. rebuilding trust with
product team*

CHAOTIC

**No clear cause-
and-effect.** Action
required before
understanding.

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

*e.g. following an
incident protocol*

COMPLICATED

**Knowable right
answer.** Requires
expertise and
analysis.

*e.g. migrating legacy
systems*

COMPLEX

**Cause-and-effect
in hindsight.**
Patterns emerge as
you experiment.

*e.g. rebuilding trust with
product team*

CHAOTIC

**No clear cause-
and-effect.** Action
required before
understanding.

e.g. public data leak

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

*e.g. following an
incident protocol*

COMPLICATED

**Knowable right
answer.** Requires
expertise and
analysis.

*e.g. migrating legacy
systems*

COMPLEX

**Cause-and-effect
in hindsight.**
Patterns emerge as
you experiment.

*e.g. rebuilding trust with
product team*

CHAOTIC

**No clear cause-
and-effect.** Action
required before
understanding.

e.g. public data leak

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

*e.g. following an
incident protocol*

COMPLICATED

**Knowable right
answer.** Requires
expertise and
analysis.

*e.g. migrating legacy
systems*

COMPLEX

**Cause-and-effect
in hindsight.**
Patterns emerge as
you experiment.

*e.g. rebuilding trust with
product team*

CHAOTIC

**No clear cause-
and-effect.** Action
required before
understanding.

e.g. public data leak

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

*e.g. following an
incident protocol*

COMPLICATED

**Knowable right
answer.** Requires
expertise and
analysis.

*e.g. migrating legacy
systems*

COMPLEX

**Cause-and-effect
in hindsight.**
Patterns emerge as
you experiment.

*e.g. rebuilding trust with
product team*

CHAOTIC

**No clear cause-
and-effect.** Action
required before
understanding.

e.g. public data leak

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

*e.g. following an
incident protocol*

WHAT TO DO:
Follow **best
practices.**

COMPLICATED

**Knowable right
answer.** Requires
expertise and
analysis.

*e.g. migrating legacy
systems*

COMPLEX

**Cause-and-effect
in hindsight.**
Patterns emerge as
you experiment.

*e.g. rebuilding trust with
product team*

CHAOTIC

**No clear cause-
and-effect.** Action
required before
understanding.

e.g. public data leak

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

*e.g. following an
incident protocol*

COMPLICATED

**Knowable right
answer.** Requires
expertise and
analysis.

*e.g. migrating legacy
systems*

COMPLEX

**Cause-and-effect
in hindsight.**
Patterns emerge as
you experiment.

*e.g. rebuilding trust with
product team*

CHAOTIC

**No clear cause-
and-effect.** Action
required before
understanding.

e.g. public data leak

WHAT TO DO:
Analyze and
consult experts.

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

*e.g. following an
incident protocol*

COMPLICATED

**Knowable right
answer.** Requires
expertise and
analysis.

*e.g. migrating legacy
systems*

COMPLEX

**Cause-and-effect
in hindsight.**
Patterns emerge as
you experiment.

*e.g. rebuilding trust with
product team*

WHAT TO DO:
Experiment and
adapt.

CHAOTIC

**No clear cause-
and-effect.** Action
required before
understanding.

e.g. public data leak

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

*e.g. following an
incident protocol*

COMPLICATED

**Knowable right
answer.** Requires
expertise and
analysis.

*e.g. migrating legacy
systems*

COMPLEX

**Cause-and-effect
in hindsight.**
Patterns emerge as
you experiment.

*e.g. rebuilding trust with
product team*

CHAOTIC

**No clear cause-
and-effect.** Action
required before
understanding.

e.g. public data leak

WHAT TO DO:
Take **immediate
stabilizing action.**

Cynefin

CLEAR

Obvious
cause-and-effect.
Best practices.

*e.g. following an
incident protocol*

WHAT TO DO:
Follow best
practices.

COMPLICATED

**Knowable right
answer.** Requires
expertise and
analysis.

*e.g. migrating legacy
systems*

WHAT TO DO:
Analyze and consult
experts.

COMPLEX

**Cause-and-effect
in hindsight.**
Patterns emerge as
you experiment.

*e.g. rebuilding trust with
product team*

WHAT TO DO:
Experiment and
adapt.

CHAOTIC

**No clear cause-
and-effect.** Action
required before
understanding.

e.g. public data leak

WHAT TO DO:
Take immediate
stabilizing action.

SCARF

STATUS Feeling recognized, competent, and accepted.

CERTAINTY Predictability and confidence in the future.

AUTONOMY Freedom to choose.

RELATEDNESS Connection to others.

FAIRNESS Consistent treatment for everyone.

SCARF

STATUS Feeling recognized, competent, and accepted.

CERTAINTY Predictability and confidence in the future.

AUTONOMY Freedom to choose.

RELATEDNESS Connection to others.

FAIRNESS Consistent treatment for everyone.

SCARF: What to Do

STATUS

RISK: People may feel diminished

- **Acknowledge expertise**
- **Reinforce personal value**
- **Ask for participation early**
- **Celebrate effort, not just results**

SCARF: What to Do

STATUS

RISK: People may feel diminished

- **Acknowledge expertise**
- **Reinforce personal value**
- **Ask for participation early**
- **Celebrate effort, not just results**

CERTAINTY

RISK: Fear of the unknown heightens stress

- **Share what you do know**
- **Be honest about unknowns**
- **Anchor in stability**
- **Establish consistency**

SCARF: What to Do

Increasing certainty
where you can



The image shows an airport departures board with a yellow header and a black body. A red arrow points from the text 'Increasing certainty where you can' to a red circle on the board. The circle highlights a column of flight status updates for various destinations. The board lists flights with their times, destinations, flight numbers, and current status. The status column includes 'Flight closing', 'Boarding', 'Go to Gate', and 'Gate shown'.

Time	Destination	Flight Number	Status	Gate
08:05	Dusseldorf	LH5329	Flight closing	A26
08:15	New York	B62220	Flight closing	A18
08:25	Boston	B61621	Flight closing	A17
08:30	Toronto	TGS804	Boarding	B37
08:30	Frankfurt	OU5491	Gate shown 07:50	
08:30	Chicago	UA958	Boarding	B33
08:40	Zurich	AC6818	Go to Gate	A16
08:45	Hamburg	LH5337	Gate shown 08:05	
08:45	Derry	BA4002	Boarding	
08:50	Dublin	153	Gate shown 08:00	
08:50	Cologne	EW461	Gate shown 08:10	
08:55	Geneva	LX353	Gate shown 08:10	
09:00	Munich	LH2471	Gate shown 08:20	
09:05	Vienna	CA7066	Gate shown 08:25	
09:10	Stuttgart	AC6946	Gate shown 08:30	
09:20	Cork	EI711	Gate shown 08:20	
09:25	Singapore	SQ305	Gate shown 08:15	
09:30	Montreal	OS8231	Go to Gate	B39
09:30	Frankfurt	LH901	Gate shown 08:50	
09:50	Shannon	EI38		
09:55	Stockholm	SK5		
10:00	Houston	OS7		
10:15	Calgary	AC		
10:15	Warsaw	LO2		
10:20	Copenhagen	SK5		
10:25	Vienna	OS		
10:30	Frankfurt	LH		
10:35	Oslo	SK		
10:35	San Francisco	OS		
10:50	Munich	LH		
11:05	Irl West Knock	BA		
11:05	Brussels	NI		
11:05	Chicago	O		
11:20	Istanbul	TH		
11:20	Lisbon	S		
11:25	Singapore	S		
11:25	Denver	C		
11:30	Frankfurt	L		

SCARF: What to Do

STATUS

RISK: People may feel diminished

- **Acknowledge expertise**
- **Reinforce personal value**
- **Ask for participation early**
- **Celebrate effort, not just results**

CERTAINTY

RISK: Fear of the unknown heightens stress

- **Share what you do know**
- **Be honest about unknowns**
- **Anchor in stability**
- **Establish consistency**

AUTONOMY

RISK: Change can feel imposed, reducing control

- **Offer choice where possible**
- **Don't over-orchestrate**
- **Invite co-creation**

SCARF: What to Do

STATUS

RISK: People may feel diminished

- **Acknowledge expertise**
- **Reinforce personal value**
- **Ask for participation early**
- **Celebrate effort, not just results**

CERTAINTY

RISK: Fear of the unknown heightens stress

- **Share what you do know**
- **Be honest about unknowns**
- **Anchor in stability**
- **Establish consistency**

AUTONOMY

RISK: Change can feel imposed, reducing control

- **Offer choice where possible**
- **Don't over-orchestrate**
- **Invite co-creation**

RELATEDNESS

RISK: People may feel "us vs. them"

- **Create safe connection points**
- **Hold space for sense-making**
- **Reduce isolation**
- **Share stories**
- **Model vulnerability**

SCARF: What to Do

STATUS

RISK: People may feel diminished

- **Acknowledge expertise**
- **Reinforce personal value**
- **Ask for participation early**
- **Celebrate effort, not just results**

CERTAINTY

RISK: Fear of the unknown heightens stress

- **Share what you do know**
- **Be honest about unknowns**
- **Anchor in stability**
- **Establish consistency**

AUTONOMY

RISK: Change can feel imposed, reducing control

- **Offer choice where possible**
- **Don't over-orchestrate**
- **Invite co-creation**

RELATEDNESS

RISK: People may feel "us vs. them"

- **Create safe connection points**
- **Hold space for sense-making**
- **Reduce isolation**
- **Share stories**
- **Model vulnerability**

FAIRNESS

RISK: People suspect hidden agendas

- **Explain the "why"**
- **Be transparent**
- **Spread the load**
- **Slow the pace elsewhere**
- **Involve a cross-section of people**

What role *should* you play?

What role *are* you playing?

What role *should* you play?

What role *are* you playing?

1. Diagnose domain

CLEAR	COMPLICATED
COMPLEX	CHAOTIC

2. Notice what's threatened

STATUS	Feeling recognized, competent, and accepted.
CERTAINTY	Predictability and confidence in the future.
AUTONOMY	Freedom to choose.
RELATEDNESS	Connection to others.
FAIRNESS	Consistent treatment for everyone.

3. Act with agency

Trusted Trio

- **Small groups** of 3; 10 mins per person
- Join for the whole time — **get and give** support
- Share your challenge; get **ideas and perspectives** in your trio
- Simple, **structured**, and surprisingly effective

For more tips on
navigating
complexity:



Trusted Trio

- **Small groups** of 3; 10 mins per person
- Join for the whole time — **get and give** support
- Share your challenge; get **ideas and perspectives** in your trio
- Simple, **structured**, and surprisingly effective

For more tips on
navigating
complexity:



Trusted Trio

- **Small groups** of 3; 10 mins per person
- Join for the whole time — **get and give** support
- Share your challenge; get **ideas and perspectives** in your trio
- Simple, **structured**, and surprisingly effective

For more tips on
navigating
complexity:



frank & eddy

 www.frankandeddy.com

 [linkedin.com/company/frankandeddy](https://www.linkedin.com/company/frankandeddy)

Our Quarterly Newsletter:



WE'VE WORKED WITH LEADERS AT



and many more!

www.frankandeddy.com 