

GIVE AI A BADGE, NOT A MASTER KEY

The plain-English guide to putting AI to work in your business without losing control of it

Here's the conversation happening in every leadership meeting this year:

"We need to be using AI." "For what, exactly?" "...Everything? Everyone says we're behind."

And here's the fear sitting underneath it, usually unsaid: **once we let this thing in, do we still run our own business?**

That fear is reasonable. Most AI is being sold to you as magic — and you can't manage magic. You can't audit it, you can't limit it, and you definitely can't fire it.

So don't buy magic. Hire an employee.

THE EMPLOYEE TEST

Think about how you'd onboard a capable new hire you don't fully know yet. You would never say "here are all the keys, the bank logins, and the client files — go do whatever seems best." You would give them:

A job description. Written down, specific, bounded. This is what you do. This is what you don't touch.

A badge — not a master key. Access to the rooms their job requires. Nothing else opens.

A supervisor. For anything consequential — money out the door, a message to a client, a change to a record that matters — they bring it to someone who signs off.

A logbook. What they did is on the record. Not because you distrust them — because that's what a well-run business looks like.

A review. Periodically, you look at the work and decide: more responsibility, or less.

A way to part ways. If it isn't working, the badge is deactivated and access ends. Today.

Every one of those is normal. Nobody calls it paranoid. It's just management.

Now hold AI to the same standard. An AI agent in your business should have a written job description you can read. Permissions scoped to its job — enforced by the same access rules your people follow, so it *cannot* do what a person in that role couldn't. A log of every action. A human sign-off on the big stuff. And an off switch that works instantly, even on work already in progress.

If a vendor can't give you those six things, they're not offering you an employee. They're asking you to hand a stranger the master key and hope.

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

A governed AI agent in a mid-sized business does the work nobody misses doing:

- Triage the intake queue and drafts the response — **a person hits send.**
- Reconciles the orders that match and flags the ones that don't — **a person decides the exceptions.**

- Watches for the contract renewal, the compliance deadline, the inventory threshold — **and files evidence of everything it saw and did.**

The pattern: the AI does the volume, the human keeps the judgment, and the logbook keeps everyone honest. Boring? Slightly. But "boring, bounded, and on the record" is exactly what you want from anything that touches your operations. Excitement is for demos.

THE ONE-SENTENCE POLICY

If you take nothing else from these two pages, take this sentence to your next leadership meeting:

"We will treat every AI in this company like an employee: a written job, limited keys, a logbook, a supervisor, and a working off switch — or it doesn't get hired."

That sentence doesn't slow you down. It's what makes it safe to speed up.

Slingr builds custom business software where AI works exactly this way — your rules, your permissions, your logbook, your off switch. You own your work outright. The AI just works there. slingr.io