

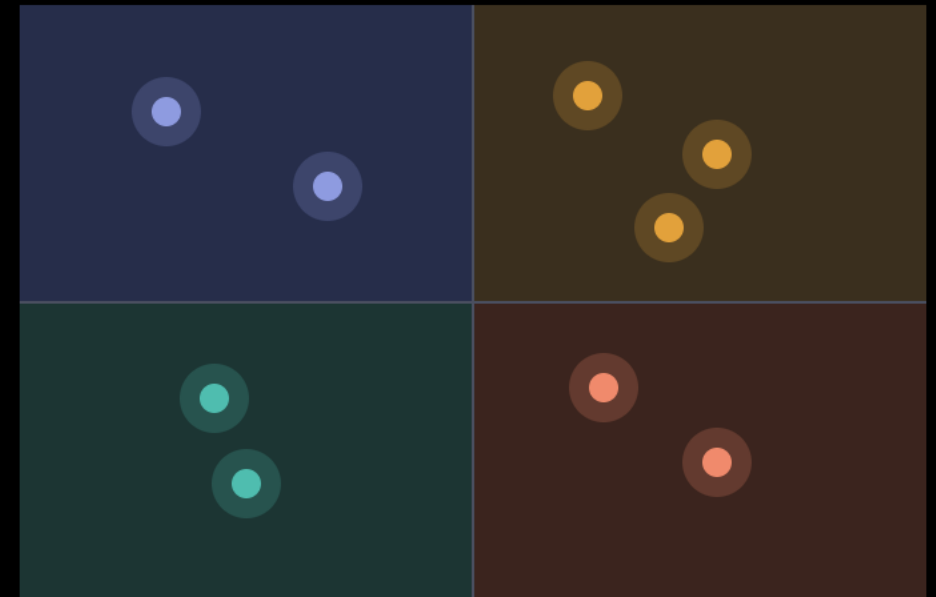


1North · Version 1.0 · October 2026

AI Resistance

A Practical Guide to Managing Resistance to AI in Organizations

Nine ways organizations say “not yet” to artificial intelligence



Residual · Dominant · Disruptive · Emergent

There isn't one kind of resistance to AI: there are at least nine

01

Each one fears losing something different

A job, data, budget, control or the quality of the work.

02

Stances, not people

The same person can take different stances depending on the topic or the day.

03

Almost all of them have a point

If you treat them as excuses, the resistance doesn't go away: it goes underground.

04

Caution is the most accepted "no"

"Not yet", "not without safeguards", "show me the return".

05

What's said in the corridor counts

Change is working when objections leave the corridor and get discussed openly.

Three sentences that don't mean the same thing

"AI kills critical thinking"

A concern backed by research.

"AI is going to take my job"

Fear.

"That's for low-level work"

The opposite of fear: playing AI down.

Where the map comes from

Nine stances observed in real organizations

When

July–October 2026

The fieldwork period.

How

Interviews and projects

Interviews with people in different roles, and situations from consulting and training projects.

Where

Mostly SMEs

Also larger organizations, and even a multinational.

Hypotheses, not rules

The map doesn't tell you what your organization is like. The balance between kinds of resistance varies, so it has to be tested case by case.

Research led by Alfonso Romay and Cinta Vergés (INorth). Method adapted from scenarioDNA's culture mapping.

How to read the map

Two questions place each stance on the map

Vertical axis · Where is it said?

At the top, official culture: leadership meetings, documents and announcements. At the bottom, subculture: the corridor, coffee breaks or the team's group chat.

Horizontal axis · What kind of argument?

On the left, analytical codes: rules, data, money or errors. On the right, expressive codes: identity, fear, pride or fatigue.

The quadrant names come from the cultural critic Raymond Williams (1977). The method is scenarioDNA's culture mapping.

Residual

official + analytical

Slowing things down by leaning on rules and proven cases.

→ **Custodians · Wait-and-Seers**

Dominant

official + expressive

Defending the company's identity and who decides.

→ **Artisans · Territorials · Window-Dressers**

Disruptive

subculture + analytical

Questioning the official message with technical arguments.

→ **Verifiers · Guardians of Judgment**

Emergent

subculture + expressive

Fears and fatigue not yet said out loud.

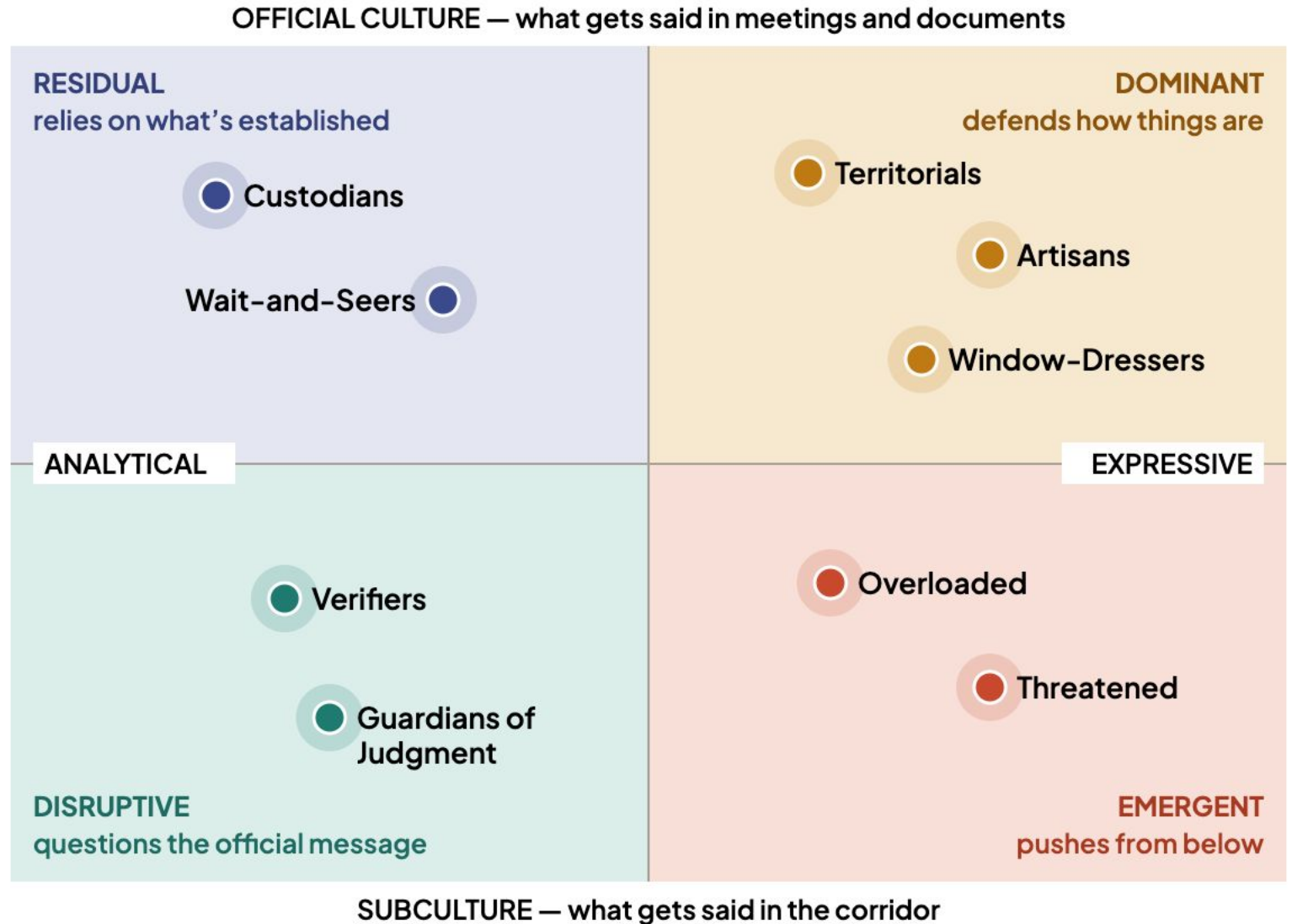
→ **Threatened · Overloaded**

The map

Each point is a way of arguing against AI (or of delaying it), not a type of person. Its position shows where it is said and with what kind of argument.

A difference from scenarioDNA

On its map, the Residual quadrant is empty. Inside a company it fills up: leaning on regulations or asking for the return is the most comfortable way to put the brakes on.



What each stance is afraid of losing

Same question, different concerns

Behind “do we use AI or not?” there are very different concerns. That’s what sets one stance apart from another.

The person

What happens to me?

The Threatened
job and pay

The Overloaded
time and energy

The Guardians of Judgment
the ability to think

The work

What happens to what
we deliver?

The Verifiers
reliability of the result

The Artisans
what sets us apart, and the price

The company

What happens to the
organization?

The Custodians
data and legal liability

The Wait-and-Seers
budget and timing

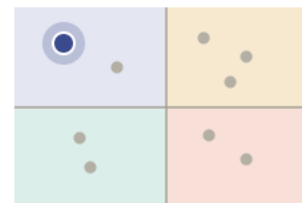
The Territorials
decision-making
power

The Window-Dressers
an image of modernity

The Custodians

Slow things down because of legal and data protection risk.

What they're afraid of losing: data security, confidentiality and the company's legal liability.



On scenarioDNA's map

Thresholdists

Here, the safeguard they want is legal.

“Not until Legal signs off: one mistake with a client's data costs more than any savings.”

What you hear

- “What about client data?”
- “GDPR won't let us”
- “IT hasn't approved it”
- “Let's wait and see what the regulation says”

Words and images

compliance · confidentiality ·
traceability · approval · audit
“a leak” · “a black box” · “a red line”

Where they have a point

The risk is real. But banning AI doesn't stop people using it: it moves that use somewhere the company can't control.

What works

Let them write the “how we can”: the usage policy, with data sorted by risk level.

Their logic in one sentence

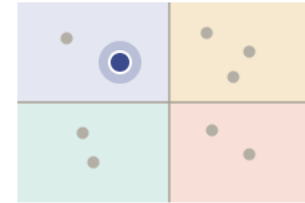
A mistake with data can be extremely costly, so nothing gets used until it's approved.

The Wait-and-Seers

Wait for others to prove that AI pays off.

What they're afraid of losing: the budget, and picking the right moment to invest.

“When it’s mature and someone proves the return, we’ll get in. We saw what happened with blockchain.”



On scenarioDNA's map

Normalizers

They use the same language, in reverse.

What you hear

- “It’s a fad”
- “Show me the return”
- “We tried a pilot and it didn’t work”
- “Let others try it first”

Words and images

return on investment · business case · maturity · priorities
“a bubble” · “hot air” · “better to arrive second”

Where they have a point

Many pilots really do fail, often because nobody measured anything before they started.

What works

Small, cheap, reversible pilots, with how results will be measured agreed before starting.

Their logic in one sentence

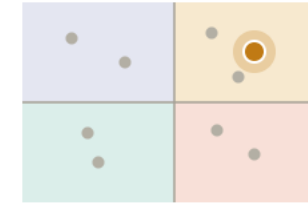
Other tech trends went badly; better to wait until someone proves this one pays off.

The Artisans

Believe AI isn't up to the standard of their work.

What they're afraid of losing: what sets the company apart, its reputation for quality and the price it charges.

“AI is fine for low-level work. We get paid for what a machine can't do.”



On scenarioDNA's map

Human Preservationists

The defense of authorship.

What you hear

- “We’re a boutique”
- “What we do is craft”
- “Clients pay for our judgment”
- “That’s for the big players”

Words and images

bespoke · craft · excellence ·
signature · exclusive
*“handmade” · “a workshop, not
a factory”*

Where they have a point

AI makes standardized work
cheaper, and clients already ask
why they pay for hours of work
they can get done in minutes.

What works

Redefine being a boutique as
judgment plus AI. And review how
you charge before the client does.

Their logic in one
sentence

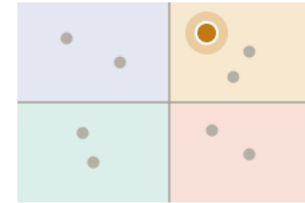
What makes us valuable is human work; if we use AI, we lose what sets us apart.

The Territorials

Want to control who makes decisions about AI.

What they're afraid of losing: decision-making power and control over change.

“AI is strategic. Each department can't just do its own thing: we're leading this.”



On scenarioDNA's map

**Strategic
Containmentists**

There it's about countries;
here, departments.

What you hear

- “It has to go through the committee”
- “First we need to define the strategy”
- “That’s not your department’s call”
- “We’ll look at it in the roadmap”

Words and images

governance · alignment · centralize
· coordination · leadership
“a control tower” · “a single point of contact”

Where they have a point

Coordination is needed: if each department goes its own way, you get duplication, security risks and scattered spending.

What works

Shared rules, tools and data for the whole company; each department decides on and runs its own uses.

Their logic in one sentence

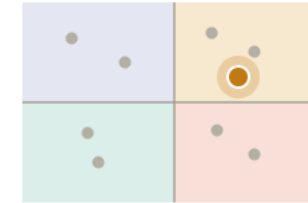
AI is strategic; if we don't control it, we lose influence.

The Window–Dressers

Announce AI, but don't change anything.

What they're afraid of losing: the image of a modern company, without having to touch processes, roles or how power is shared.

“We’re already doing AI: everyone has Copilot and we’ve done the training.”



On scenarioDNA's map

Normalizers

Only on the surface: talking about AI without really adopting it.

What you hear

- “Everyone already has a license”
- “We did an AI training session”
- “It’s in the strategic plan”
- “We’ve got a chatbot on the website”

Words and images

transformation · innovation · rollout
· licenses · success story
*“the launch” · “the photo op” ·
“we’re already there”*

Where they have a point

Announcing helps: it reassures people waiting for permission and reduces fear. The problem isn’t starting in the shop window; it’s staying there.

What works

Measure real use, hours saved and processes that have changed, not licenses.

Their logic in one sentence

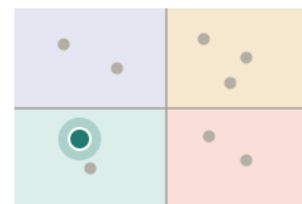
What matters is being seen to be on it; if it’s been announced, it counts.

The Verifiers

Don't trust what AI produces.

What they're afraid of losing: the reliability of their work.

“I’ve tried it. It makes things up, and if I have to check everything, it takes me longer than doing it myself.”



On scenarioDNA's map

Thresholdists

Here, the safeguard they want is technical.

What you hear

- “It makes things up”
- “It doesn’t work for what we do”
- “I don’t trust it”
- “Checking takes longer”

Words and images

error · accuracy · source · review · professional responsibility
“a lottery” · “an intern who lies with total confidence”

Where they have a point

AI makes mistakes, responsibility lies with whoever signs, and in many tasks checking takes almost as long as doing.

What works

Start with tasks where checking is quick, measure the real time with them and make them go-to people.

Their logic in one sentence

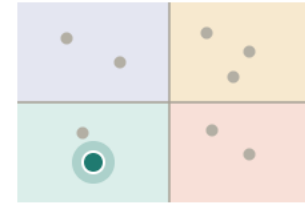
If a mistake carries my signature, I don’t use anything I can’t check.

The Guardians of Judgment

Worry that people will stop thinking for themselves.

What they're afraid of losing: the ability to think, and the learning of people just starting out.

“If AI does our thinking for us, in two years nobody here will be able to do an analysis from scratch.”



On scenarioDNA's map

Human Preservationists

People's ability to think and decide for themselves.

What you hear

- “It kills critical thinking”
- “Juniors can't think anymore”
- “It makes us lazy”
- “If you don't do it yourself, you don't learn it”

Words and images

judgment · depth · critical thinking
· dependence · learning
“a crutch” · “the muscle wastes away” · “autopilot”

Where they have a point

A study of 319 professionals (CHI 2025): the more people trust AI, the less critical thinking they apply. It depends on how it's used.

What works

“Do it yourself first, then check it against AI.” And assess the reasoning, not just the result.

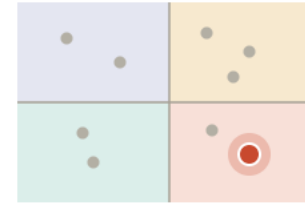
Their logic in one sentence

Judgment is learned by doing; if AI does the work, nobody learns.

The Threatened

Are afraid of losing their jobs.

What they're afraid of losing: their job, their pay and their stability.



On scenarioDNA's map

Human Preservationists

The defense of jobs.

“They want me to teach AI how to do my job. And then what?”

What you hear

- “It’s going to replace us”
- “Are they training me to replace me?”
- “If I explain how I do it, I’m out of a job”
- Using AI in secret

Words and images

replacement · layoffs · cuts ·
guarantees · headcount
*“digging your own grave” · “a
Trojan horse”*

Where they have a point

The way tasks are shared out is
going to change, and nobody can
honestly guarantee that no job will
be affected.

What works

A clear agreement on what will be
done with the time AI frees up, and
involving the people who do the
task in redesigning it.

Their logic in one
sentence

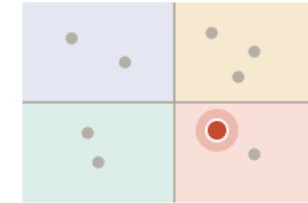
Every task AI learns is one less reason for my job to exist; cooperating isn’t in my interest.

The Overloaded

Have no time or energy for yet another change.

What they're afraid of losing: their time, their energy and their capacity to take on more change.

“I don’t have the time or the headspace for another tool. Getting through the day is hard enough.”



On scenarioDNA's map

Material Refusers

The resource that runs out is people's attention.

What you hear

- “Yet another initiative”
- “I’m not a tech person”
- “After the month-end close”
- “Who does my work while I’m learning?”

Words and images

workload · day-to-day · priorities
· urgent
“firefighting” · “the hamster wheel”
· *“the last straw”*

Where they have a point

Change fatigue has been measured: between 2016 and 2022, willingness to support company changes fell from 74% to 43% (Gartner).

What works

Free up time before asking people to learn something new, and start with the task they hate most.

Their logic in one sentence

I have no time or energy left; anything new loses out to what’s urgent.

Same word, different meaning

The same message is heard nine ways

When leadership talks about “quality”, “risk” or “control”, each stance hears something different.

Quality	“no mistakes” Verifiers	“something exclusive” Artisans	“well thought through” Guardians of Judgment
Risk	“a fine or a leak” Custodians	“being laid off” Threatened	“wasting money” Wait-and-Seers
Control	“who decides” Territorials	“what happened to each piece of data” Custodians	“a person checks it” Verifiers
Time	“I don’t have any” Overloaded	“it’s not the right moment” Wait-and-Seers	“checking takes me longer” Verifiers
Transformation	“announcing” Window-Dressers	“leading” Territorials	“cutting” Threatened

Alliances shift depending on what AI is used for

01

Chat and licenses

Each person tries AI on their own.

Heard most

Verifiers

Guardians of

Judgment

Window-Dressers

02

Tasks

AI enters day-to-day work.

Heard most

Overloaded

Threatened

03

Processes

The way work is done changes.

Heard most

Territorials

Artisans

This is where the Window-Dressers stall.

04

Agents and client data

AI programs that do tasks on their own with real data.

Heard most

Custodians

Threatened

They team up: a person must always supervise.

05

Large-scale investment

Real money has to go in.

Heard most

Wait-and-Seers

Territorials

Custodians and the Threatened have nothing in common... until AI agents arrive.

From groups in society to stances in the company

Group on scenarioDNA's map	Equivalent stance in the company	What changes
Thresholdists	Custodians (legal safeguards) · Verifiers (technical safeguards)	Caution goes from a critical stance to the official message: it's the most accepted way of saying no.
Human Preservationists	Threatened (jobs) · Guardians of Judgment (the ability to think) · Artisans (authorship)	It splits into three depending on the level of the hierarchy people speak from, and each part ends up in a different quadrant.
Normalizers	Wait-and-Seers · Window-Dressers	Their language is used to slow AI down: some say "not yet" and others "it's already done".
Strategic Containmentists	Territorials	What is sovereignty between countries becomes control by each department inside the company.
Material Refusers	Overloaded	The resource that runs out is no longer water or energy: it's people's attention.
Commons Technologists	None of the nine	Hardly appears in small and medium-sized businesses. Only where there's a strong technical team ("we'll build our own").

Company culture matters too

Where each stance shows up most

We relate the stances to Cameron and Quinn's Competing Values Framework, measured with the OCAI questionnaire.

The Window-Dressers

They don't depend on a type of culture. They appear when there's a big gap between the culture a company says it has (innovative) and the one it really has (hierarchical). The OCAI measures exactly that gap.

It's a hypothesis: it has to be tested in each organization.

Clan

inward · flexibility

Threatened · Guardians of Judgment

What gets protected is people and those who are learning.

Adhocracy

outward · flexibility

Artisans · Overloaded

Lots of creative pride, and fatigue when everything is constantly new.

Hierarchy

inward · control

Custodians · Territorials

Rules and the chain of command are the accepted language.

Market

outward · control

Wait-and-Seers · Verifiers

Everything is discussed in terms of return and the cost of mistakes.

At each stage, some objections are heard more than others

FIRST 6 MONTHS Trying it out	6 TO 18 MONTHS Spreading	18 TO 36 MONTHS Redesign
Each person tries AI and the company buys its first licenses. Heard most Verifiers · Guardians of Judgment · Custodians · Window-Dressers	AI enters day-to-day tasks and starts to cost money. Heard most Wait-and-Seers · Territorials · Overloaded	Processes, roles and the way clients are charged all change. Heard most Threatened · Custodians · Artisans

How to know if change is working

From corridor to meeting

Objections are raised openly, and what is said openly can be dealt with.

From “we can’t” to “here’s how”

Custodians stop blocking and write the usage policy.

From skeptics to go-to people

Verifiers show which tasks make checking quick.

From licenses to real use

Window-Dressers stop counting licenses and count real use.

Six steps to map your own organization

01

Collect real phrases

Literal phrases about AI, exactly as people say them: interviews, discussion groups or sentence starters. Always anonymous.

02

Place each phrase on the map

Score from -5 to +5 where it's said and what kind of argument it uses. Ideally, two people score separately.

03

Group by stance

By what they're afraid of losing and by their logic, not by how often you hear a phrase.

04

Write a profile for each stance

And test it in a workshop: if someone doesn't recognize themselves in "their" profile, the profile is wrong.

05

Cross the stances

What each one fears losing, which words they share, which alliances appear and how they fit the culture (OCAI).

06

Repeat after 6-12 months

Seeing how the stances move (what the method calls migration) is the most valuable part of the exercise.

Next step

Before changing a culture, it helps to know what each person is afraid of losing.

This map is a set of hypotheses, not a set of rules. The stances come from fieldwork, but the balance between them varies from one organization to another. The next step is to test it in yours.

Research

Alfonso Romay and Cinta Vergés

Version

1.0 · October 2026

Fieldwork

July–October 2026

References

- scenarioDNA, “The Subcultures of AI Doomerism” (fall 2026) and its culture–mapping method.
- Raymond Williams, “Marxism and Literature” (1977): dominant, residual and emergent culture.
- Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn: Competing Values Framework and the OCAI questionnaire.

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