

ESSAY 01

BETTER JUDGMENT IN THE AGE OF AI

Information Is No Longer the **Advantage.**

"The trigger event was never the advantage. Knowing what to do once you'd found it always was."

Information Is No Longer the Advantage

By Alen Mayer

For most of my career, information was the edge.

In 2007, I wrote about trigger events.¹ A new CEO. A funding round. A reorg. A market entry. Find the shift and you'd found the opening. Reps who spotted these changes before their competitors did got the meeting, the introduction, the first conversation. Spotting the trigger was the skill. It took real effort. Most reps never bothered.

That skill is gone now. Not weakened. Gone.

What once took hours of digging, checking news, scanning filings, piecing together account history, can now be surfaced, summarized, and ranked by AI in minutes. The scanning work an entire generation of salespeople built a career on has been commoditized.

If you're still teaching your team that finding the trigger is the advantage, you're teaching them to compete for something that no longer has a price.

Here's the part I didn't expect. The trigger event isn't dead. It's still real, still useful, still worth noticing. What died is the idea that finding it was the hard part. Your competitors can increasingly see the same signals. The differentiator moved. It's no longer who saw the trigger first. It's who understood what it actually meant.

■ CONFIDENCE YOU DIDN'T EARN

There's a trap hiding inside that convenience, and it's easy to miss because it feels like progress.

When an AI system hands you a clean list of trigger events, ranked and explained, it doesn't just save you time. It hands you a feeling. The feeling of already knowing what's going on. Confidence, delivered along with the data.

The problem is that confidence didn't come from you. You didn't verify it. You didn't test it against what you know about the account. You inherited it, the way you'd inherit someone else's conclusion, and it feels like your own because it arrived dressed as an answer instead of a guess.

■ A SCENE YOU'VE PROBABLY SAT THROUGH

Picture the pipeline review. Someone says, "I ran it through AI, the CEO change at this account is a strong buying signal, I'm prioritizing it this week." The room nods.

Not because anyone verified it. Because the conclusion arrived complete. The signal has already been found, interpreted, and ranked before it reached the room. The reasoning feels finished before anyone has actually examined it, and once it feels finished, asking about it doesn't feel like due diligence anymore. It feels like doubting the tool, or doubting the rep. So the meeting moves on.

That rep looked decisive. They weren't exercising judgment. They were relaying it.

■ WHAT GETS REWARDED

In most pipeline reviews, the fastest confident answer wins the room, whether or not anyone checked it. Nobody is deliberately rewarding sloppy thinking. But if speed and certainty are what get praised in the room, speed and certainty are what people will keep bringing to the room, whether or not the thinking behind them holds up.

■ WHAT THIS COSTS YOU IF NOBODY ASKS

Multiply that pipeline review across every opportunity your team prioritizes this quarter, every account that gets additional resources, every deal that gets discounted or escalated, and every forecast you eventually present to the board. If nobody in the room is asking what the AI-flagged signal is actually based on, you're not looking at a team that's fast. You're looking at an organization quietly building its resource allocation, deal strategy, and forecast on confidence nobody tested. You won't see the cost this week. You'll see it in the numbers that don't hold up next

quarter, and by then it's expensive to trace back to the meeting where everyone nodded.

■ THE FIX ISN'T SLOWER. IT'S WHAT GETS REWARDED.

In a pipeline review, the person who stops to test a recommendation can look slower than the person who arrives with a confident answer. That's the problem worth fixing, and it belongs first to the person running the room. As long as speed and certainty get praised in the room, speed and certainty are what the team will keep bringing to it. The moment the person testing the signal gets noticed instead of the person just relaying it, the whole room's behavior shifts.

There's a first move I train sales teams to make before any AI-flagged recommendation gets acted on. It's not complicated to say, though it's harder to build into a habit: what does this actually depend on? Is it plausible? What is it built on, and does that hold up against what you already know? That single question is the difference between a team that reacts to AI and a team that uses it well. It's the first move, not the whole method. But build that one question into your pipeline reviews and you'll already change the quality of the conversation.

The trigger event was never the advantage. Knowing what to do once you'd found it always was. AI just made that fact impossible to hide behind good research skills anymore.

¹ From my 2007 book, *Trigger Events*.

TAKE THIS FURTHER

Build better judgment into how your team works with **AI**.

I help leaders and organizations strengthen the human capabilities behind better judgment as AI becomes part of everyday work and decision-making.

JUDGMENT LABS

A 90-minute session working through realistic AI-influenced business decisions.

WORKSHOPS

Practical training on how teams question, interpret, weigh and decide with AI.

KEYNOTES

Reframing what human judgment requires as AI becomes more capable.

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