Complex AI projects need a shared way of working

Today's reality

AI changes every week, client problems are rarely well defined, and the gap between a demo and a reliable production system is wide. FDEs carry all of this, often on several engagements at once.

A shared framework gives the team:

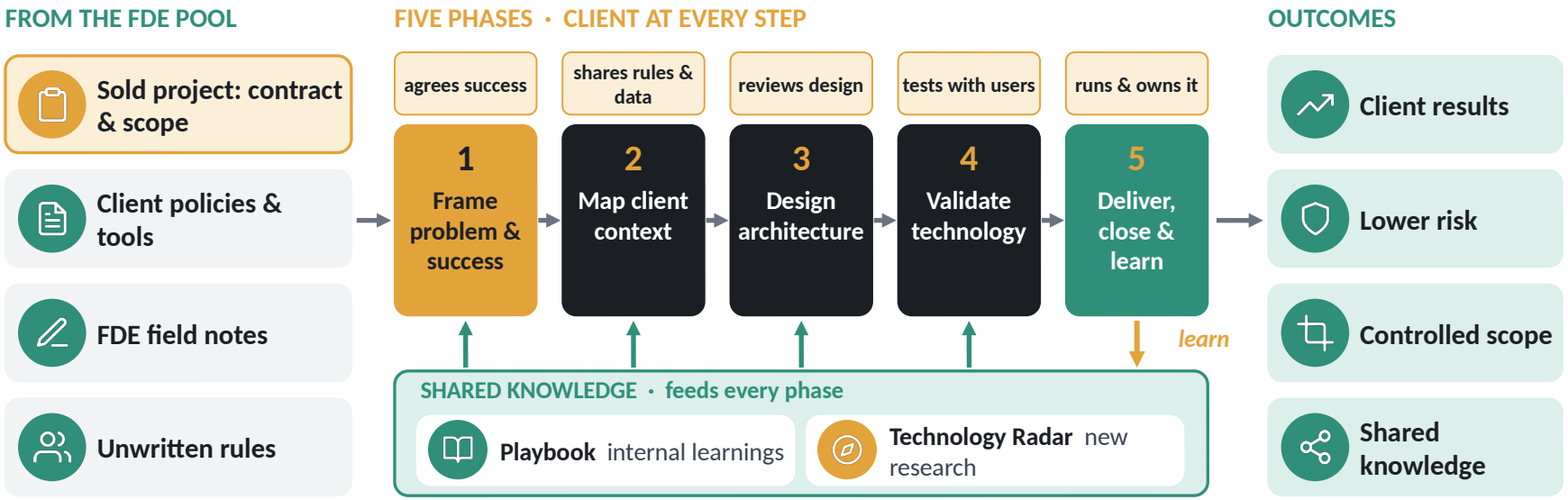
- Clients see value early and trust the process
- Quality that keeps rising
- Knowledge shared, not lost
- A motivated team that keeps evolving

12 CHALLENGES FDEs FACE TODAY

Each tag reappears where the framework addresses it

1 **Vague requirements** — Ambiguity	2 **Demo vs. production** — Production	3 **Legacy & dirty data** — Legacy data	4 **Custom vs. core product** — Customization
5 **Tech vs. exec language** — Translation	6 **Security & regulation** — Security	7 **Low user adoption** — Adoption	8 **Accountable, no control** — Ownership
9 **Speed vs. standards** — Speed vs. quality	10 **Overload & burnout** — Burnout	11 **Agent reliability** — Reliability	12 **Cost, latency, scale** — Cost & latency

One framework, from sold project to lasting value



Three modes: Light for small engagements · Standard for most · Critical for regulated work or agents that act. Every log fits on one page.

Every week: a client update in business language, and a peer check-in with a hands-on FDE Lead

Phase 1: success is agreed before any solution

ADDRESSES #1 Ambiguity #5 Translation #7 Adoption #11 Reliability #12 Cost & latency

Path A: the problem is defined

Specs and success criteria already exist

1. Question the request: problem before solution
2. Validate specs with stakeholders and users
3. Measure the current process
4. Record the success baseline

Path B: the intent is vague

"We want to use AI in X" · design thinking, time-boxed

1. Empathize & define: users, process, data
2. Ideate and prototype in days
3. Test with real users
4. Agree success once the problem is clear

Versioned success baseline

- Business objective
- Current process
- Success metrics
- Acceptance criteria
- Quality test set
- Cost & latency
- Scope & limits
- User adoption

Versioned: what changed, why, who agreed. When quality, cost and deadline conflict, the baseline guides the trade-off, agreed with the client.

Phases 2-5: every step is tied to success

2 Map client context

What can and cannot be done here?

- Docs and unwritten rules
- Data: quality, gaps, access
- Who decides, does, vetoes
- Blocker list with owners

ADDRESSES

#3 Legacy data
#6 Security
#8 Ownership

3 Design architecture

What is the simplest design that meets success?

- Business rules at the center
- Agents: only needed access
- Right AI model for the cost
- Decision record, impact
- Setting, reusable or one-off

ADDRESSES

#4 Customization
#5 Translation
#6 Security
#12 Cost & latency

4 Validate technology

Is each choice proven, safe and allowed?

- Six checks: source, maturity, fit, risk, gain, failures
- Quality tests for the AI
- Agent knows when to stop
- Security and client rules

ADDRESSES

#2 Production
#6 Security
#11 Reliability

5 Deliver, close & learn

Did we deliver what was agreed?

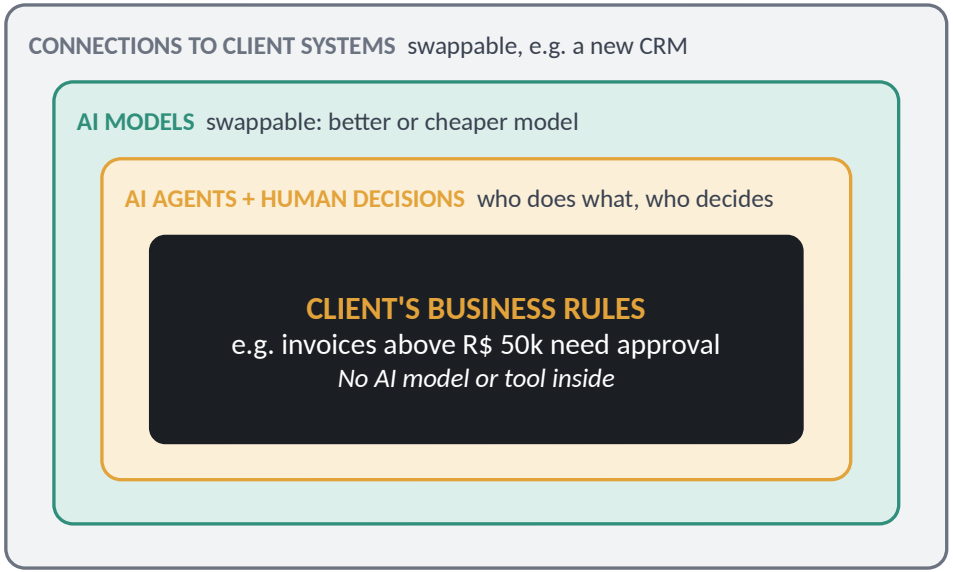
- Production checklist
- Monitoring from day one
- Client team trained
- Value measured
- Lessons feed the playbook

ADDRESSES

#2 Production
#7 Adoption
#9 Speed vs. quality
#11 Reliability

The business at the center, technology you can swap

AI technology changes every week; the business changes at its own pace. So the architecture keeps technology as independent and agnostic as possible, and new tools can be adopted or replaced fast.



In every layer: quality, monitoring, security and governance

AI helps write the code. Our process keeps the quality high.

1. Clear rules the AI must follow
2. Automatic checks
3. AI reviewers that know past mistakes
4. Tests
5. A person reviews

Every mistake found becomes a candidate for a new rule.

Fast delivery today, freedom to adopt better technology tomorrow, no rework of the business rules.

Every engagement improves the next

Playbook

What the team learned inside

- Success templates
- Context checklist
- Architecture patterns
- Known failures

Technology Radar

New research from outside

- Scan new research weekly
- Rate: Watch, Trial, Adopt
- Route it to the right engagement
- Respects each client's rules

Peer check-in

Peers, not hierarchy

- Is the client seeing value?
- Success on track?
- New risk, blocker, scope?
- Limit on parallel work
- Recurring issues: playbook

ADDRESSES

#8 Ownership #10 Burnout

Built with the client. The FDE owns the engagement and leads the squad technically.

The FDE Lead: a hands-on leader who mentors, unblocks and keeps the team connected and learning.

How I would start: one pilot engagement. The framework itself is versioned and reviewed with the team every quarter.

We learn together, every week

WEEKLY

FDE Simulation Challenge

- One complex, non-obvious technical scenario
- Inspired by real engagements and radar topics
- Everyone answers, the FDE Lead included
- Scored on reasoning, not only the answer
- FDEs take turns writing them

MONTHLY

Demo Day

- Best answers and different approaches
- Wins and lessons from live engagements
- Best solutions go into the playbook

EVERY GO-LIVE

Celebration

- The whole team celebrates each engagement in production
- Impact shown against the "before"

Gamified: quarterly leaderboard and a prize, such as a learning budget, a conference of choice or an extra day off.

Learning is a team sport.

The FDE Lead is a hands-on teammate

Works inside the engagements, side by side with the FDE, whenever they agree it helps.

With the client

- Builds trust with sponsors and users
- Joins kickoff, design review, go-live
- Aligns expectations, scope, value
- Brings the client's voice to the team

In the engagement

- Pairs on hard design, data or AI quality problems
- Takes a workstream during peaks
- Covers when the FDE is away

Across engagements

- Connects FDEs facing similar problems
- Brings proven patterns from the playbook
- Hosts the peer check-in
- Shares context so knowledge is not held by one person

For the team

- Mentors and gives honest feedback
- Helps balance work across the pool, with the team
- Protects focus and a sustainable pace

At the start of each engagement, the FDE and the FDE Lead agree where the Lead joins: for example, data check, design review and go-live.

One team. The FDE owns the engagement and leads the squad technically. The FDE Lead joins by agreement.