Responsible AI is not just a tech issue, it is a leadership imperative

September 10, 2025

This article is part of BLG's 12-part series: ***12 Strategic Priorities for Privacy, Cybersecurity, and AI Risk Management.*** *Designed for board members and executives, the series highlights key priorities for managing risk and driving innovation with confidence.*

Artificial intelligence is no longer limited to technology teams: it has become a core part of corporate strategy and enterprise risk. As AI capabilities mature and spread across business functions, so too must decision-makers' oversight and accountability. Boards and executive teams that treat AI risk as an IT matter may find themselves unprepared for its enterprise-wide impact.

Why it matters

AI systems increasingly impact decision-making in high-stakes areas such as finance, employment, healthcare, and national infrastructure. Missteps can lead to discrimination claims, privacy violations, intellectual property disputes, and algorithmic opacity. Regulatory scrutiny is intensifying, with Canada's new Minister for AI hinting at introducing new legislation and several international regimes establishing transparency and auditability standards.

Stakeholders, from investors to customers, are asking hard questions about how AI is governed, and they are not satisfied with the "ethical AI" response. Instead, they expect boards to provide informed, proactive oversight.

What management and boards must prioritize

1. Board-level AI education

Directors must be equipped to ask the right questions about AI systems. This means ongoing training and updates on technological, legal, and ethical developments. A well-informed board is essential to providing meaningful oversight.

2. Cross-functional governance framework

AI governance must involve privacy, legal, HR, compliance, IT, and business units. Governance structures should define ownership, decision rights, escalation protocols, and reporting lines.

3. Procurement and vendor risk management

Many AI systems are procured through third-party tools. Boards must confirm that procurement processes include legal and ethical risk assessments, including obligations related to transparency, explainability, and data handling.

4. Auditability and accountability

AI systems must be traceable. Boards should require documentation that enables internal and external audits. This includes understanding the training data, model updates, intended uses, and fallback procedures.

5. Clear leadership responsibility

Who owns AI risk? Boards must know which executive is responsible for AI governance — and how their performance is measured. This ownership should be supported by internal policies, KPIs, and accountability mechanisms.

Final thoughts

Responsible AI governance starts at the top. Boards must go beyond vision statements, and ensure there is an actionable strategy for managing AI risks and opportunities. Leadership requires structure, curiosity, and commitment, not just aspiration.

By

Hélène Deschamps Marquis

Expertise

Cybersecurity, Privacy & Data Protection, Artificial Intelligence (AI)

BLG | Canada's Law Firm

As the largest, truly full-service Canadian law firm, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (BLG) delivers practical legal advice for domestic and international clients across more practices and industries than any Canadian firm. With over 800 lawyers, intellectual property agents and other professionals, BLG serves the legal needs of businesses and institutions across Canada and beyond – from M&A and capital markets, to disputes, financing, and trademark & patent registration.

blg.com

BLG Offices

Calgary

Centennial Place, East Tower
520 3rd Avenue S.W.
Calgary, AB, Canada
T2P 0R3

T 403.232.9500
F 403.266.1395

Ottawa

World Exchange Plaza
100 Queen Street
Ottawa, ON, Canada
K1P 1J9

T 613.237.5160
F 613.230.8842

Vancouver

1200 Waterfront Centre
200 Burrard Street
Vancouver, BC, Canada
V7X 1T2

T 604.687.5744
F 604.687.1415

Montréal

1000 De La Gauchetière Street West
Suite 900
Montréal, QC, Canada
H3B 5H4

T 514.954.2555
F 514.879.9015

Toronto

Bay Adelaide Centre, East Tower
22 Adelaide Street West
Toronto, ON, Canada
M5H 4E3

T 416.367.6000
F 416.367.6749

The information contained herein is of a general nature and is not intended to constitute legal advice, a complete statement of the law, or an opinion on any subject. No one should act upon it or refrain from acting without a thorough examination of the law after the facts of a specific situation are considered. You are urged to consult your legal adviser in cases of specific questions or concerns. BLG does not warrant or guarantee the accuracy, currency or completeness of this publication. No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior written permission of Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. If this publication was sent to you by BLG and you do not wish to receive further publications from BLG, you may ask to remove your contact information from our mailing lists by emailing unsubscribe@blg.com or manage your subscription preferences at blg.com/MyPreferences. If you feel you have received this message in error please contact communications@blg.com. BLG's privacy policy for publications may be found at blg.com/en/privacy.

© 2026 Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. Borden Ladner Gervais LLP is an Ontario Limited Liability Partnership.