

Bolting AI Onto a Broken System **Doesn't Work.**

Chatbots and AI modules bolted onto old workflows deliver incremental gains at best. The fix starts with how work is structured, not which tool you buy.

SWIPE →

What “AI-ready” actually requires.

- 01** Capture data cleanly at the source — not Excel, WhatsApp, and paper forms
- 02** Make core workflows machine-readable — job orders, scheduling, replenishment
- 03** Build architecture that anticipates AI workloads before they arrive

3

Three foundations come before any AI tool.

Standardised processes, reliable data, and modular systems. Without them, AI stays a set of disconnected pilots that never compound.

One logistics SME, worked through.

Job orders, driver rosters, and delivery updates move into a single workflow platform. Once the data model is stable, AI adds demand forecasting and route optimisation — outputs that update schedules and trigger risk alerts directly.

2

Two ways to spend a digitalisation grant: buy a tool, or fund the redesign underneath it. Only one builds an operating environment that scales.



If we were designing this business from scratch in 2026 with AI as a given, how would we structure our data, systems, and workflows?

Terence Kok

on reframing the AI-adoption question

The wrong question vs. the right one.

“WHICH TOOL SHOULD WE BUY?”

Isolated pilots

Vendor-owned black boxes

Short-lived experiments

“HOW DO WE REDESIGN AROUND AI?”

Standardised, auditable workflows

Internal capability to manage AI

Traceable, compounding ROI

Grants fund tools. Discipline funds outcomes.

IMDA, Enterprise Singapore, and industry programmes offer real support — but only pay off when used to fund workflow and data-model redesign, with clear ownership and KPIs like lead-time reduction, error-rate reduction, and labour-hours saved.

It isn't tools. It's structure.



Full framework for sequencing AI investment for Singapore SMEs:
terencekok.com/blog/stop-treating-ai-add-on

Redesign the workflow. Then buy the tool.

The SMEs that get real ROI use grants and AI tools to complete a redesign that was already underway — not to paper over one that never started.



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