



THE NECESSARY EVIL

AI FOR SYSTEM ADMINISTRATORS

COMPANION RESOURCES

Version 1.0 • Public Edition

Purpose

These companion resources turn the book's human-governed systems-administration model into practical worksheets for planning, review, safer operational preparation, and documentation. They are intentionally non-executable and preserve human accountability.

Operating model

observe → analyze → recommend → human review → authorized execution → validate → rollback/remediate if needed → document

Core rule

Generating a command is not authorizing execution. Producing a plan is not approving a change. Identifying a likely cause is not proving root cause.

Use these resources to help administrators frame work, surface missing evidence, identify owners, preserve uncertainty, and prepare for human review.

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WORKSHEET 1

AI-Use Risk-Tier and Boundary Checklist

Book alignment: Chapters 1, 3, and 10

Boundary: Draft/planning support only. A tier identifies review treatment; it does not authorize the tool, data, workflow, action, or output.

Proposed use	Generalized description only: _____
Accountable owner role	_____
Approved AI/tool status	☐ Approved ☐ Restricted ☐ Unknown — STOP until confirmed

Review / worksheet prompts

- ☐ The task is owned by systems administration rather than another discipline.
- ☐ The input can be safely sanitized and organizational policy permits use of the selected AI tool.
- ☐ The AI is assisting with analysis, drafting, comparison, organization, questions, or planning — not independently approving or executing production work.
- ☐ An accountable human owner and reviewer are identified before the AI output is used.

Tier 1 — Low	Explanation, formatting, or low-risk draft support.
Tier 2 — Moderate	Sanitized operational planning/documentation with owner review.
Tier 3 — Elevated	Change/troubleshooting/recovery adjacency requiring stronger review gates.
Tier 4 — Restricted	Sensitive or uncertain use — stop pending designated approval.
Tier 5 — Excluded	Autonomous authority, privileged execution, risk acceptance, compliance or incident authority.

Closing note

Disposition: ☐ Proceed ☐ Escalate for policy/owner review ☐ STOP

WORKSHEET 2

Sensitive-Data Redaction Checklist

Book alignment: Chapters 2 and 3

Boundary: Redaction does not guarantee that information is safe, permitted, non-identifying, or suitable for an AI tool.

Original data location	Approved source/system of record: _____
Sanitization performed by	Role: _____ Date: _____

Review / worksheet prompts

- ☐ Credentials, passwords, tokens, private keys, session data, and secrets are absent.
- ☐ Real hostnames, IP addresses, usernames, asset identifiers, and ticket/case IDs are removed or generalized.
- ☐ Raw logs, screenshots, diagrams, and incident artifacts are excluded unless an approved tool and policy explicitly permit them.
- ☐ Only the minimum facts needed for the task remain.
- ☐ The AI tool and retention settings are approved for this information type.

Residual uncertainty	What might still identify the environment? _____
Decision	☐ Safe/authorized for bounded use ☐ Needs security/privacy review ☐ STOP

WORKSHEET 3

Human-Governed Workflow and Gate Map

Book alignment: Chapters 3 and 10

Boundary: This map records responsibilities and review gates; it does not create workflow authority or an autonomous process.

Objective	What outcome is being prepared? _____
AI assistance point	What may AI draft, compare, organize, or question? _____
Explicitly prohibited	What must AI not decide, execute, approve, or access? _____

Review / worksheet prompts

- ☐ Observe — human gathers approved facts and evidence categories.
- ☐ Analyze — AI may organize or compare sanitized information.
- ☐ Recommend — AI output stays a draft with assumptions listed.
- ☐ Human review — SME/process/security/change reviewers identified.
- ☐ Authorized execution — only approved humans execute.
- ☐ Validate — expected outcome and evidence categories defined.
- ☐ Rollback/remediate — owner and approved governing source identified.
- ☐ Document — system of record owner identified.

Closing note

Gate check: ☐ data ☐ official documentation ☐ peer/SME ☐ security/privacy ☐ change approval ☐ maintenance window
☐ rollback readiness ☐ validation ☐ documentation

WORKSHEET 4

Documentation Review Checklist

Book alignment: Chapter 4

Boundary: Review the existing governed document only. Do not create, infer, or insert operational steps.

Document type	☐ SOP ☐ Runbook ☐ KB/Reference ☐ Change record ☐ Other
Document owner role	_____
Source of truth	_____

Review / worksheet prompts

- ☐ Purpose and scope are clear and match the accountable owner.
- ☐ Warnings, cautions, decision points, and approval gates are visible.
- ☐ Roles and ownership are explicit; AI is not named as approver or executor.
- ☐ References point to current authoritative documentation.
- ☐ Obsolete, contradictory, or ownerless content is flagged rather than guessed at.

Missing information	_____
Questions for owner/SME	_____
Recommended editorial changes	Clarity/structure only: _____

WORKSHEET 5

Maintenance-Window Planning Worksheet

Book alignment: Chapters 5, 6, and 7

Boundary: Use only after the organization's change process defines the approved work. This worksheet does not schedule, approve, or direct execution.

Purpose	Generalized description: _____
Approved scope source	Change/ticket/system-of-record reference location: _____
Window owner	Role: _____
Validation owner	Role: _____

Review / worksheet prompts

- ☐ Scope and affected service categories are defined.
- ☐ Dependencies and adjacent owners are identified.
- ☐ Required approvals are confirmed outside this worksheet.
- ☐ Communication audiences and the communication owner are identified.
- ☐ Rollback/remediation ownership and the governing approved plan are identified.
- ☐ Post-change validation criteria and evidence categories are defined.

Open questions	_____
Known constraints	_____
Decision needed from	_____

WORKSHEET 6

Manager / Status Update Template

Book alignment: Chapters 5, 7, and 10

Boundary: Use verified approved facts only; preserve uncertainty and do not promise timelines, declare root cause, or claim successful validation without evidence.

Status period	_____
Owner	_____
Current state	What is known now? _____
Impact	Sanitized, verified impact statement: _____
Decision needed	What decision and by whom? _____
Validation state	☐ Not started ☐ In progress ☐ Human-validated ☐ Exception/remediation required

Review / worksheet prompts

- ☐ No unsupported ETA or commitment is stated.
- ☐ No hypothesis is presented as root cause.
- ☐ No change is described as successful before human validation.
- ☐ No sensitive identifiers or raw evidence are included.

WORKSHEET 7

Change-Readiness Review Worksheet

Book alignment: Chapter 6

Boundary: Completeness review only. It does not prioritize, approve, deploy, roll back, or validate a patch/change. Rollback content is questions only — never commands or procedures.

Change category	☐ Patch ☐ Config ☐ Script/Automation Draft ☐ IaC Plan ☐ Cloud-adjacent ☐ Other
Change owner	Role: _____
Approval process	Governing process/reference location: _____
Official source check	Vendor/organizational sources to verify: _____

Review / worksheet prompts

- ☐ Objective, scope, impact, owner, and affected service categories are documented.
- ☐ Assumptions and unknowns are explicitly listed.
- ☐ Dependencies and blast-radius questions are addressed.
- ☐ Test, dry-run, plan, staging, or other non-production evidence is available where applicable.
- ☐ Validation criteria and post-change evidence categories are defined.

Rollback-readiness questions	What condition causes stop/remediation? Who owns the decision? What approved source governs rollback? What evidence shows service is restored?
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Closing note

Disposition: ☐ Review-ready ☐ Missing evidence ☐ Missing owner/approval ☐ Requires specialist review ☐ STOP

WORKSHEET 8

Post-Change Evidence Checklist

Book alignment: Chapter 7

Boundary: Evidence-category organizer only. A human using approved evidence decides success, exception handling, closure, and documentation status.

Change reference location	_____
Human validator	Role: _____
Expected outcome	_____

Review / worksheet prompts

- ☐ Service/function state compared with expected outcome.
- ☐ Monitoring/health indicators reviewed by an authorized human.
- ☐ Dependencies checked by responsible owners where applicable.
- ☐ Exceptions or unexpected behavior documented.
- ☐ Stakeholder communication prepared from verified facts.

Observed result	_____
Human decision	☐ Success ☐ Partial/conditional ☐ Remediate/rollback ☐ Escalate
Documentation updates	_____

WORKSHEET 9

Troubleshooting Hypothesis Worksheet

Book alignment: Chapter 8

Boundary: Hypotheses are not findings or root cause. Do not generate commands or actions. Verify with approved evidence and official sources.

Symptom	Sanitized description: _____
Confirmed observations	Only facts supported by approved evidence: _____
Recent known changes	Generalized/approved facts only: _____
Scope/impact	Sanitized: _____

Review / worksheet prompts

- ☐ Hypotheses stay hypotheses until validated.
- ☐ Questions to adjacent owners are questions only, not conclusions.
- ☐ Official documentation checks are identified before action.

Hypothesis A	Why plausible / what evidence would support or refute: _____
Hypothesis B	Why plausible / what evidence would support or refute: _____
Hypothesis C	Why plausible / what evidence would support or refute: _____
Missing evidence	_____
Current conclusion	☐ No confirmed cause ☐ Likely cause pending verification ☐ Confirmed by human evidence/process

WORKSHEET 10

Monitoring Summary Worksheet

Book alignment: Chapter 8

Boundary: Use sanitized aggregates and categories only. Trends do not establish cause, root cause, incident severity, or required action.

Review period	_____
Monitoring owner	_____
Scope category	Servers / virtualization / identity / backup / other: _____

Review / worksheet prompts

- ☐ Correlation is not presented as causation.
- ☐ No raw alerts/logs/identifiers are copied here.
- ☐ No incident severity or root cause is assigned by AI.
- ☐ Questions requiring system inspection are routed to the accountable human owner.

Alert volume/trend	Counts/categories only: _____
Recurring categories	_____
Notable changes	Sanitized, aggregate: _____
Questions for review	_____
Next human review point	_____

WORKSHEET 11

Controlled Evidence Organizer

Book alignment: Chapter 9

Boundary: Index and organize only. Evidence stays in approved systems. This resource does not confer incident authority, audit sufficiency, compliance status, or recoverability.

Incident owner role	_____
Chronology entry	Time/date + sanitized confirmed fact + source location: _____
Control/evidence category	_____
Approved evidence location	_____
Evidence owner	_____
Review status	☐ Located ☐ Missing ☐ Owner review required ☐ Audit reviewer decides sufficiency

Review / worksheet prompts

- ☐ Backup status must not be confused with demonstrated recoverability.
- ☐ Use approved recovery tests or exercises as the basis for recovery evidence.
- ☐ A qualified human owner accepts evidence under organizational process.

Guardrail

Prohibited: raw incident evidence, restore commands/steps, access decisions, compliance scoring/certification, severity decisions, or root-cause declarations.

WORKSHEET 12

Team AI Operating Model Worksheet

Book alignment: Chapter 10

Boundary: This worksheet helps teams define bounded use. It is not policy approval and does not replace security, legal, privacy, change, incident, or compliance governance.

Team / function	Generalized name: _____
Accountable human owner	Role: _____
Review period	_____
Allowed AI roles	Explain / organize / compare / draft / question / summarize sanitized inputs: _____
Prohibited AI roles	Approval / privileged execution / access decision / incident authority / risk acceptance / compliance decision / other: _____

Review / worksheet prompts

- ☐ Data minimization and sanitization before AI use.
- ☐ Assumptions and uncertainty labeled in AI outputs.
- ☐ Peer/SME review proportional to risk.
- ☐ Change/maintenance authorization before production-impacting work.
- ☐ Human execution and post-change validation.
- ☐ Periodic review of tool behavior, policy, and workflow suitability.

Escalation triggers	When must AI use stop or move to specialist/owner review? _____
Metrics/learning	What non-sensitive signals will the team review? _____
Next review	Date / owner: _____

Closing note

Team commitment: AI assists. Human administrators evaluate. Authorized humans approve. Humans remain accountable.