The judgment bottleneck: what McKinsey's analysis means for supply-chain decisions

In October 2026 McKinsey published an article on a problem many teams now recognise: analysis runs on AI time, but judgment still runs on human time. The article is about strategy. The same limit applies to the operational decisions of a supply chain, and there it hits at a much higher volume.

What the article says

AI speeds up scanning for trends, running scenarios and setting triggers for action. One team cut five weeks of financial analysis to under two days. But people still have to interpret the evidence, test the assumptions, recognise what was not anticipated, build alignment and mobilise the organisation. As analysis accelerates, judgment becomes the bottleneck.

Faster analysis can even slow decisions down. At one company a junior team produced outputs ten to twenty times faster and ran three to five times as many scenarios, and executives needed more time to review them because they did not know which assumptions and data sources were behind them.

The authors see three failure modes: applying an efficiency mindset where better outcomes are the goal; burying leaders in more analyses than they can absorb; and junior people no longer building judgment because AI does the work that used to train them. Automation bias, trusting an output because a machine produced it, makes all three worse.

They propose three moves:

- Expand judgment capacity: show leaders the key assumptions and uncertainties instead of the whole report, and sort decisions into three tiers. Routine, high-volume decisions with clear parameters can be automated within guardrails; decisions with more uncertainty stay human-led with AI support; high-stakes decisions stay with accountable leaders.
- Build judgment deliberately: have AI tools show the formulas, data and assumptions behind each step, so people learn to question the output.
- Fight the erosion of accountability: every consequential decision has a person who owns it, and separate AI agents can challenge an analysis from different perspectives before it reaches the decision-maker.

The Aidecis angle

A supply chain takes many consequential decisions a day: expedites, reroutes, alternate sources, quality releases. Agents can now prepare each of them in minutes. The scarce resource is the attention of the person who must decide, and the article's three moves describe how Aidecis is designed.

- The three tiers are decision envelopes. Each decision type and site has its own mode: routine cases inside a limit can run on their own, uncertain cases go to a person with the case prepared, and high-stakes cases need the right seat or two keys. A case moves to a lower-touch tier only on evidence, and moves back when it drifts.
- Showing the key assumptions is the Evidence Brief. It does not hand over the whole analysis; it states the question, the options, every fact with its source and freshness, what is missing, where

sources conflict and what is uncertain.

- Showing the working is the run record. Each agent role hands a checked, typed output to the next, so a reviewer can see which role did what and on which sources. A decision taken on the brief is tied to exactly the brief that was shown.
- Automation bias is watched, not assumed away. Approvals within seconds, approvals without opening the brief and reviewers who never reject are flagged.
- A second perspective is built in. The Option Analyst weighs the leading option against what is at risk and the track record, and says when it should be challenged. It informs; it never decides.
- Accountability stays with a named person. An agent proposes; the person or seat whose authority covers the case decides, and the decision record keeps who decided, on what and what happened next.

The Aidecis demo shows these capabilities on fictional data. The article ends by saying the winners will not be the organisations that automate the most decisions, but those that use AI's speed while protecting human judgment. For consequential supply-chain decisions, that means making the person's time count: review only what needs judgment, on evidence they can check, and measure the review time as part of the cost.

The judgment bottleneck: Balancing AI and human speeds in strategy. McKinsey & Company, Strategy & Corporate Finance Practice. Alex D'Amico, Bruce Delteil, Laura LaBerge and Matt Banholzer, October 2026.

See how it works, explore use cases, or discuss a pilot.

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