



# THE GREAT INTELLIGENCE REVERSAL

## How Community Banks Reclaim Trust, Data, and Direction in 2026

**Joe McMann, Co-Founder & CRO, Artificial Intelligence Risk (AIR)**

### **Abstract:**

Every banking leader knows the frustration of systems that hold more customer data than they can use. For many years information moved outward to cores, CRMs and reporting platforms that promised insight but rarely delivered it in a way the bank could control.

That direction is changing.

The next generation of financial technology is defined by a reversal. Intelligence is beginning to move back inside the institution. It is being governed by the banks that earned community trust in the first place.

Information that used to be pushed toward bankers through rigid dashboards is now being pulled by them with purpose, with precision and with control.

Data is no longer something community banks simply receive. It is something they direct. They direct it vertically for precision. They direct it horizontally for perspective. They keep it under governance and compliance that make both possible.

This is not theory. It is the next story of responsible banking. The great intelligence reversal has started and it will shape the year ahead and the decade that follows.

### **Why Now:**

Artificial intelligence has reached a level of maturity. Regulation has reached a level of clarity. Community banks have reached a point where they must decide how they will use both.

The NIST Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework and the expectations of federal and state supervisors now give banks a clear description of what trustworthy intelligence looks like. Directors and regulators want the same thing. Many banking executives in 2025 identified artificial intelligence and data integration as top operational risks that need real governance.

Technology, supervision and urgency are finally aligned. The systems that once limited banks can now give them control. The year 2026 is not when change begins. It is the moment when everyone can see it.



## Reversing the Flow of Control:

For decades, technology vendors decided how data moved. Banks handed information to cores, CRMs, and service providers and waited for whatever those systems chose to return. Convenience replaced control. Control is the foundation of confidence.

That era is ending.

As artificial intelligence reshapes every process, a one-way exchange has become a liability. Banks can now pull their own customer data directly and in real time from the systems they already use.

Core processors, digital platforms, and CRMs now expose secure interfaces for governed access. AIR's AI GRCC architecture allows banks to pull data dynamically while every action remains traceable and compliant.

Information moves at network speed while oversight stays intact.

Push creates dependency. Pull creates control.

This reversal is not about software. It is about sovereignty. It is about the right to decide how data moves and how value is created from it. When data begins to move by design, integration becomes intelligence.

## Connecting Systems Vertically and Horizontally:

Owning data is progress. Connecting it is transformation.

Financial technology evolved in vertical stacks. Each system specialized in its own function but rarely spoke beyond it. The next stage is a connected fabric that runs horizontally across those silos.

Vertical depth preserves specialization.  
Horizontal reach creates perspective.

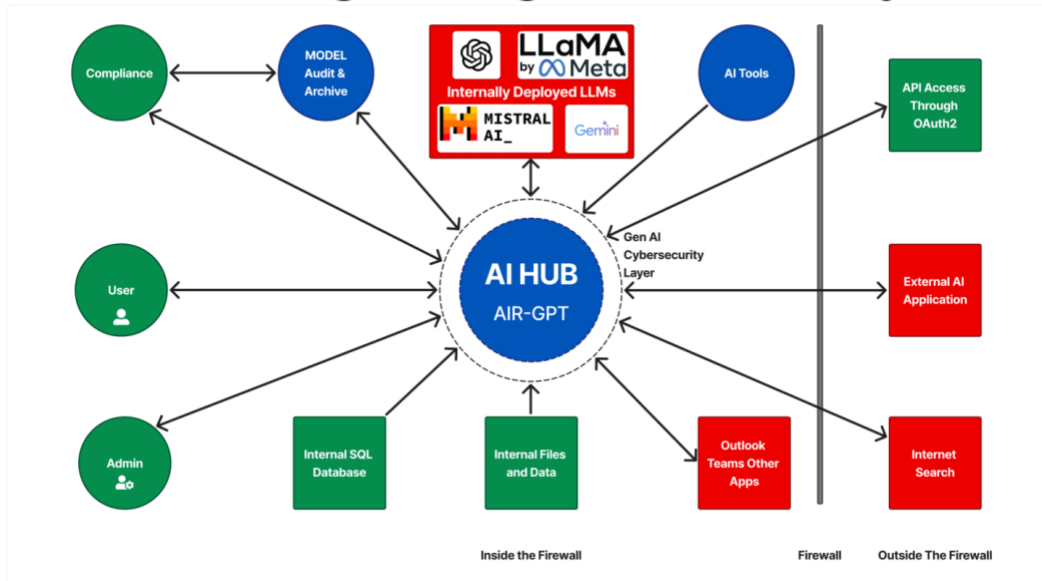
When a banker updates a client record, AI retrieves account data from the core, merges credit information, reviews compliance requirements, and prepares the next best action. It happens instantly and under supervision.

Inside AIR's architecture, this feels natural. It is not automation. It is orchestration. The system coordinates human intent and machine execution with clarity.

Vertical integration shows what happened.  
Horizontal connection reveals why.  
Together they create perspective.

That is how community banks will think, act, serve, and grow in real time.

## AIR: Integrates High Risk AI Securely



### Rebuilding Trust from the Inside Out:

For forty years, institutions were told to trust the system. They sent data outward and believed it would come back safe and useful. In practice, much of it was aggregated, resold, or repackaged before it returned.

Now the direction of trust is changing.

When banks govern their own data and intelligence, they become the primary source of verified truth. They no longer borrow trust from vendors. They extend it outward to regulators, partners, and customers.

Trust begins with architecture. Private-cloud frameworks let institutions secure information under their own controls. This is not just a technical shift. It is an ethical one. A bank should always be the safest place for its own information.

Trust is becoming personal again.

### Turning Data into Performance:

When trust returns, value follows.

Community banks generate some of the most valuable behavioral and financial intelligence in the market. Few maintain unified strategies that connect operations, compliance, and customer engagement.

When every record is verified, mapped, and contextualized, data stops being a by-product of transactions. It becomes an asset that can be measured, defended, and converted into enterprise value.



In AIR environments, every data event is captured immutably in an audit database visible to compliance teams and regulators. Staff spend less time searching and more time validating. Governance evolves from policy into proof.

Governance is not the cost of innovation.  
It is the condition that makes innovation possible.

### Governed Intelligence:

Once data becomes an asset, intelligence must be accountable.

AI in banking is no longer a single system hidden behind a dashboard. It is a network of cooperative agents that perform tasks, verify one another's work, and operate within boundaries defined by people. Each agent knows what it can access, who it can engage with, and under what conditions.

That is agentic interoperability. It is intelligence that behaves responsibly because governance is built into its design.

AIR's Agentic GRCC layer validates every decision before execution. Each action, from a data retrieval to a customer communication, is recorded and traceable.

Automation does not replace human judgment.  
It strengthens it.

In this model, intelligence does not run unchecked.  
It runs with purpose and proof.

## AI Agents for Every Team

| General                          | Risk                             | Compliance              | Investing                   | Call Center                        | CFO, Treasury                            | Media and Comms                          |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Meeting transcript summaries     | Portfolio surveillance           | Policy Q&A chatbot      | Summarize external research | Company-wide knowledge base        | ALM trend reporting                      | Social media content creation            |
| RFP answers                      | Generating stress test scenarios | Create policy documents | Investment memo draft       | Call transcript database discovery | Board report drafting                    | Write "explainer" brochures              |
| Search for key emails, documents | KRI analysis                     | Email surveillance      | New deal screen             | Complaint analysis                 | Deposit rates comparison                 | Personalized customer emails             |
| New "People Manager" AI Coach    | Automated daily risk monitoring  | Policy adherence        | Fund competitive analysis   | Sentiment analysis                 | Check reports for mistakes, missing data | Regulatory review for external messaging |

### Regaining Control of the Vendor Relationship:

Control once meant dependency. That was the quiet trade banks accepted when they chose convenience over authority. Vendors set the pace. Institutions followed it.

That era has ended.



When data becomes fluid and intelligence becomes governed, control returns to the bank. Institutions stop waiting for vendors to decide what connects, when, and how. They begin to orchestrate their own ecosystems. They direct data vertically for precision and horizontally for perspective.

Core processors, digital platforms, and service partners still provide the depth banks rely on. But the intelligence that binds those systems together—the connective fabric that makes them one coherent network—belongs to the bank.

AIR makes that transition real. It allows each bank to pull from every system it already uses, weave those streams into a single governed framework, and view them through a single pane of glass.

This is not disruption.  
It is direction with proof.

When a bank controls both its data and the intelligence that connects it, it controls its future.

### **Where Regulation Becomes Real:**

Resilience means little without accountability. Accountability begins with compliance.

For community banks, compliance is not optional. It is the foundation of trust. Supervisory agencies have made it clear: artificial intelligence must be governed, explainable, and subject to the same scrutiny as every other system that touches customer data or advice.

Regulators now expect intelligence to operate under principles of security, privacy, fairness, explainability, and fiduciary transparency. The standards are documented, testable, and auditable.

The NIST AI Risk Management Framework and federal compliance principles form the blueprint.

The question is no longer whether a bank can use AI. The question is whether it can prove that its AI operates safely, securely, and within fiduciary rules.

AIR's GRCC platform turns compliance from paperwork into architecture. Every model output, every action, every decision path is recorded in real time and remains auditable by both the bank and its regulators.

Compliance becomes continuous and visible instead of reactive.

Regulation does not restrain innovation. It authorizes it.  
Compliance is not where progress stops.  
It is where it begins—with accountability.

### **Amplifying the Human Edge:**

When governance and compliance are built in, people lead again.



Technology's purpose in banking has never been automation. It has always been freedom. Freedom from inefficiency. Freedom from silos. Freedom from oversight that cannot see its own evidence.

Governed intelligence restores that freedom. It gives every professional a fuller view and a clearer purpose.

The compliance officer no longer searches for exceptions. She prevents them.

The banker no longer reacts to risk. He anticipates it.

The board no longer asks what happened. It already understands why.

AI does not replace bankers.

It refines them.

It makes them better at what they do.

Within governed systems, work becomes lighter, decisions become faster, and judgment becomes sharper. Teams rediscover what made community banking meaningful in the first place—trust built through understanding.

As each bank learns to govern its own intelligence, the industry becomes stronger. It becomes a network of fiduciary trust connected by shared integrity.

### **Governance, Direction, and Resilience:**

Every leadership team can reduce modernization to three questions.

Direction: Are we waiting for reports, or are we orchestrating our own data?

Integration: Do our systems communicate across departments, or only within them?

Governance: Can we explain every automated decision in real time?

Supervisory agencies now define oversight through resilience—the ability to trace, test, and explain every decision. The NIST AI Risk Management Framework defines what trustworthy truly means.

Aligned with that framework, models and workflows inside governed architecture become transparent. When examiners ask why a decision occurred, the answer comes from the bank's own immutable records, not from a vendor's report.

AIR's architecture, built on NIST RMF and fiduciary compliance principles, weaves governance into daily operations. Oversight is not external. It is intrinsic.

Direction defines control.

Integration defines perspective.

Governance defines trust.

Transparency is not bureaucracy.

It is discipline.

And discipline, in the hands of a responsible institution, becomes leadership.



### **The Cost of Inaction:**

Transformation is not just about progress. It is about timing.

When innovation arrives, the cost of waiting compounds quietly. Each disconnected system, delayed report, and unseen data point becomes a withdrawal from future relevance.

Inaction is not neutral. It is expensive.

Competitors that master orchestration move faster and see further. Their decisions align across compliance, operations, and customer experience. Those who hesitate operate on delay. They fall a step behind in a business that moves at the speed of insight.

The cost of inaction is not inefficiency.  
It is invisibility.

Leadership is not about adopting technology.  
It is about refusing to be left behind by how you use it.

### **Banking Remembered:**

Community banks have always competed on proximity, purpose, and trust. Those values remain. They now live inside the data itself.

The model that emerges is not new. It is remembered. It is a system that pulls rather than pushes. It is vertically precise and horizontally connected. It is governed by design.

It restores control. It accelerates understanding. It makes trust measurable.

When a banker can see clearly, act decisively, and explain why, technology stops feeling like technology. It becomes confidence made visible through data.

This is not disruption. It is restoration. A return to ownership, integrity, and the belief that intelligence should serve those who earned the right to use it.

AIR was built for that reversal—to help community banks govern intelligence with clarity, confidence, and control.

The next chapter of banking will not be written by algorithms.  
It will be written by people who understand how to guide them.  
It will be written by leaders who remember what has always mattered most.

The reversal has begun.  
The question is not when you will join it.  
It is whether you will use intelligence to lead.

Leadership belongs to those who understand the reversal first.



## About the Author:

**Joe McMann**

**Co-Founder and Chief Revenue Officer - Artificial Intelligence Risk (AIR)**

Joe McMann is a lifelong entrepreneur and former investment banker whose work is focused on making artificial intelligence safe, secure and compliant for financial institutions. At AIR he leads growth and partnerships across community banks, credit unions and wealth management firms. His approach helps organizations harness agentic artificial intelligence through AIR's framework for Governance, Risk, Regulatory Compliance and Cybersecurity. That approach restores trust in data driven decision making and makes innovation accountable.

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/joemcmann](https://www.linkedin.com/in/joemcmann)

**Email:** [joemcmann@aicrisk.com](mailto:joemcmann@aicrisk.com)