



REPORT

**Building agentic
teams with Zapier,
Airbnb, and
JPMorganChase**



Building agentic engineering teams: lessons from Zapier, Airbnb, and JPMorganChase

After examining AI transformations at Zapier, JP Morgan, Agoda, and Airbnb, clear patterns emerge. Successful adoption was deliberate: these companies built internal infrastructure and encouraged organic uptake. Those that faltered made premature public declarations, skipped foundational investments, or relied too heavily on top-down mandates.

• AGODA'S AI DEVELOPMENT TOOLS.

The collage illustrates Agoda's AI development tools. It features a terminal window showing the command `migrate-ag git:(main) migrate-ag` and its usage. A Jira ticket titled "GEN AI Added based on base Description" is shown, with a red arrow pointing to the "Rubric Template" section. A GitHub repository page for "code-buddy-svc" is displayed, showing a commit message and a description of the tool. A "CODE" snippet is shown, along with a "Template Prompt" box. A "Repo README" for "Business Logic" is also included, detailing the project's objective and features.



Key insights:

→ **Invest before mandating:** Every successful company built internal platforms first. JP Morgan created its LLM Suite, Agoda built a GenAI Proxy, and Shopify pre-deployed tools before declaring AI usage mandatory. This is less about control and more about establishing secure, cost-effective foundations.

→ **Communities drive adoption:** Bottom-up adoption creates momentum; top-down mandates often create resistance. Zapier's #fun-ai Slack channel became a peer-learning hub. Uber and Agoda used hackathons to let engineers discover possibilities firsthand.

→ **Embrace iterations:** Zalando needed multiple cycles to succeed in its migration project. Airbnb still found 3% of cases required manual intervention, even with advanced retry loops. Patience, experimentation, and realistic expectations are essential.



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Using hackathons as a catalyst for AI adoption

Grassroots curiosity and experimentation are common to every successful rollout. Both Agoda and Uber credit hackathons as pivotal. These events shifted employees from apprehension to empowerment. At Agoda's February 2023 hackathon, over 200 developers attended a one-hour crash course on GenAI and APIs, then spent three days experimenting. Many of the company's subsequent AI use cases and investments stemmed from this event. The prototypes mattered less than the mindset shift: a shared confidence that GenAI could meaningfully improve work.

Three insights emerged:

- 1. LLMs were already capable of meaningful work.**
- 2. Prompt engineering mattered more than expected.**
- 3. Internal context access was critical for value.**

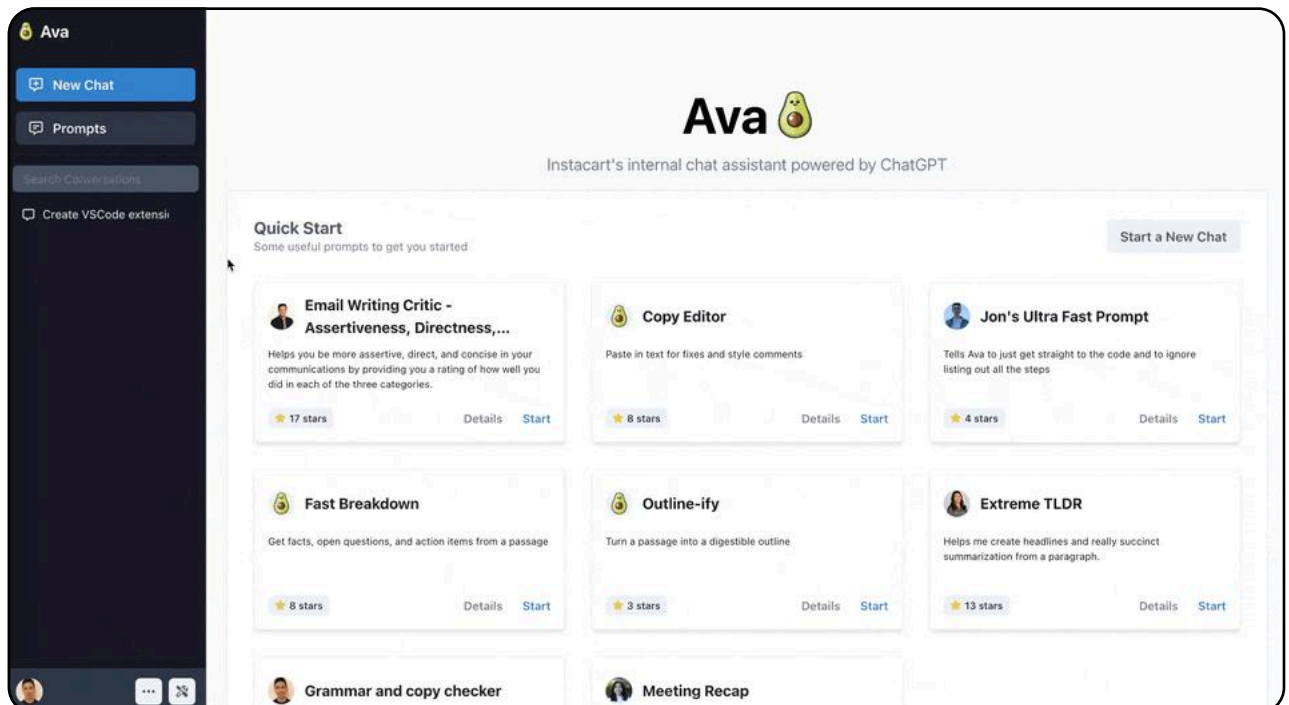
Uber's hackathon yielded similar lessons: one team built a tool to explain legacy code in natural language, speeding onboarding; another generated UI code from text descriptions for rapid prototyping. The takeaway: let teams discover capabilities themselves—adoption follows organically.



Create ‘pull’ through shared Slack channels

Post-hackathon, sustained adoption came from embedding shared learning into daily work. Seeing a teammate use AI to eliminate a tedious task creates curiosity. A shared prompt that saves hours spreads faster than formal training. Zapier’s #fun-ai channel let teams post experiments, successes, and builder sessions to reinforce AI’s role in the culture. Instacart’s internal AI assistant, Ava also includes a ‘prompt exchange,’ that enables specialists to share domain-specific knowledge, reduce bottlenecks, and inspire peers.

- AVA’S PROMPT EXCHANGE





Start with low-risk but high-impact use cases

Successful companies began with tools that improved developer productivity but carried minimal risk to core systems.

Uber's hackathon teams showed this by building tools for explaining legacy code and generating UI from text, sped up daily work without touching critical infrastructure. These weren't customer-facing or revenue-critical systems, but they solved real daily frustrations for developers. Agoda also started with a simple Slack bot before expanding to a ChatGPT-like interface. Early wins built confidence, enabling expansion into more complex areas.



Deploy an AI gateway for governance and attribution

At scale, visibility is essential—not for surveillance, but for learning and control. Every successful company in our study implemented an AI gateway.

Agoda's GenAI Proxy tracked usage by service, team, and individual request, attributed costs, enforced rate limits, blocked risky calls, and centralized compliance review. BNP Paribas offered 'LLM as a Service' on secure infrastructure, giving teams access to both open-source and internal models while preserving governance.

Attribution should extend into the workflow. Tagging AI-generated code in commits or PRs helps correlate quality with source, identify successful patterns, and build institutional knowledge. Combining infrastructure-level tracking with workflow-level attribution gives a full picture of AI's impact.



Expose context to AI for maximum return

‘Context is king.’

Without access to internal code, docs, and knowledge, AI is limited to best guesses from training data. Zalando’s UI migration project illustrates this. Simply providing source code to an LLM failed. After five iterations, success came from supplying transformation examples with explanations, showing both good and bad outputs and why they worked. Each iteration layered more context, enabling reasoning specific to Zalando’s environment.



Embrace iterations and teach AI with examples

Transformation requires patience.

Zalando's eventual success came from treating prompts as lessons, not commands. Airbnb's migration of 3,500 React test files also underscored this—success came from retrying until tests passed, with manual intervention for edge cases.

The lesson: expect retries, plan for exceptions, and treat AI training as iterative.



Where to adjust your own AI strategy

The most successful companies defy the ‘announce and deploy’ playbook.

They:

- **Built infrastructure before mandates.**
- **Fostered communities to create pull.**
- **Started with low-risk, developer-first use cases.**
- **Planned for human oversight at the edges.**

For engineering leaders, the mandate is clear:

- **Lay secure, cost-controlled foundations.**
- **Deploy gateways for visibility and governance.**
- **Create peer-driven adoption channels.**

AI transformation is not a single launch, but a compounding series of small wins. Each explained legacy file, each automated migration, each eliminated bottleneck adds up. Over time, those wins reshape teams, workflows, and entire engineering cultures. The companies that master this sequence will not just adopt AI but will set pace for how modern software is built.



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