



From Pilot to Production: 5 Lessons About the Reality of Governing AI at Scale

Hard-won insights from Atlan and Snowflake on scaling AI safely, across people, policies, and platforms



Everyone's Building AI. Few Know How to Get It Into Production

"Our AI app would be in production today, if we could just figure out ____."

That was the interactive prompt posed by Austin Kronz, Director of Data and AI Strategy at Atlan, as he opened the webinar Governance That Drives AI: From Pilot to Reality. The answers poured in: ownership, quality, trust, security. The blockers were clear and common.

According to recent studies, **85% of AI initiatives never make it past the pilot phase**, often due to issues with **data governance, ownership, and quality**. In the race to becoming AI-native, governance can't be a speed bump. It needs to be your seat belt — helping your organization **move fast, but stay safe**.

That's exactly what was unpacked during a conversation with:



Mayur Mahadeshwar,
Partner Sales Engineer at Snowflake



Austin Kronz,
Director of Data and AI Strategy at Atlan



Gary Patterson,
Director of Product at Atlan



Sharif Karmally,
VP of Product & Corporate Marketing, Atlan

In this short guide, we distill 5 critical lessons from the session: real insights from teams navigating the messy middle between AI experiments and real-world impact. Whether you're building LLM apps, scaling models into production, or crafting governance frameworks for your data stack, these takeaways will help you cross the gap between good ideas and production-ready AI.

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LESSON 1

Design for Production from Day One

"The models are good. The tech stack is there. What's missing is the path from experimentation to actual use."

One of the biggest challenges surfaced in the webinar wasn't building the AI models themselves—it was **operationalizing them**. Teams often start with data scientists experimenting in silos, only to hit a wall when it's time to deploy models into business workflows. The root problem? No one planned for the "last mile."

Panelists emphasized that production should not be an afterthought, it needs to be **designed from day one**.

Action Step:

Before writing a single line of model code, define your production path:

- Who owns the AI product post-deployment?
- How will its outputs be monitored and governed?
- What does "production-ready" look like for your organization?

Starting with these answers avoids bottlenecks later and helps teams deploy with speed and confidence. In the webinar, we heard how teams that plan early for ownership, observability, and trust can turn governance from a blocker into an enabler. The next few lessons unpack what that looks like in practice.



LESSON 2

Governance Can't Be a Gatekeeper

"Governance isn't about slowing things down. It's about making sure things go live with confidence."

Gary Patterson, Director of Product at Atlan, shared that the biggest hurdle in many AI projects isn't just technical—it's the legacy perception of governance as a stop sign. In his words, "You can't scale solutions when governance lives outside the workflow." Instead, he emphasized designing **embedded, dynamic governance** that evolves with the AI lifecycle.

Austin Kronz, Director of Data and AI Strategy, added that governance frameworks need to shift left—moving from post-deployment checks to real-time guardrails that empower teams to build safely from day one.

✦ Atlan's Policy Center lets teams define and apply policies like accuracy thresholds or masking rules, early in the AI lifecycle. These policies are linked to assets and models, and violations automatically trigger workflows via Slack or Jira. The result: real-time governance, embedded into development — not bolted on after the fact.

Action Step:

Adopt a "guardrails, not gates" approach:

- Involve governance early in the process
- Automate compliance wherever possible
- Empower teams with the context and tools to self-serve safely

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LESSON 3

Connect Data Contracts to Business Outcomes

"People won't follow policy for policy's sake. But they will if it helps them get their AI model live."

Governance only works when it speaks the language of outcomes. As Austin pointed out, teams ignore policies framed as control—but they engage when governance accelerates real KPIs like time-to-production or model reliability.

✦ In the demo, Gary showed how Atlan's data contracts help producers and consumers align upfront. With both YAML specs and natural-language previews, contracts become clear, actionable, and credible to both engineers and business stakeholders.

Action Step:

Reframe your governance language around business outcomes:

- Show how policies reduce risk to revenue or reputation
- Tie controls directly to deployment speed and trust
- Involve product and business stakeholders in contract design

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LESSON 4

Treat Metadata as a Product

“The metadata itself tells the story of whether a model is ready for production.”

Gary highlighted that metadata isn't just for documentation or audit trails, it's the real-time operating system for trustworthy AI. He explained how organizations are using active metadata to track model lineage, surface ownership, and automate risk detection.

Treating metadata as a product—with defined owners, consistent schemas, and tight integration into workflows—is what separates scalable AI teams from stalled ones.

As Sharif Karmally, Atlan's VP of Product & Corporate Marketing, explained during the session: “The things we thought would be hard—like building LLMs—turned out to be easy. The things we thought would be easy—like getting the data and context right—turned out to be the hardest part.”

Action Step:

Turn metadata into an operational asset:

- Assign ownership for key metadata domains
- Surface metadata in workflows (e.g., for approval, auditing)
- Integrate metadata collection into every step of the AI lifecycle



LESSON 5

Make Production a Shared Responsibility

“Too often, AI ownership lives in one team’s head. That’s where things fall apart.”

In the final segment, Austin pointed out that AI initiatives often falter not because of bad models, but because of unclear ownership. Governance, legal, engineering, and business stakeholders all play a role in getting a model live and keeping it healthy in production.

He emphasized that creating shared accountability—from development through monitoring—is key to sustainable AI adoption.

Action Step:

Create a shared ownership model for AI deployment:

- Define responsibilities across development, review, deployment, and monitoring
- Establish a RACI or roles matrix for your AI governance process
- Use shared tools to keep teams aligned as models move toward production

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PARTNER INSIGHT

How Snowflake + Atlan Work Together to Power Trust in AI

Mayur Mahadeshwar, Partner Sales Engineer at Snowflake, emphasized the importance of a collaborative data ecosystem in enabling AI-native workflows.

He highlighted how organizations are using tools like **Snowflake Cortex** in combination with metadata platforms like Atlan to:

- Feed metadata into chatbots and AI models
- Build secure, scalable pipelines across siloed systems
- Align governance, lineage, and context at the compute layer

"There's a lot of collaboration that needs to happen to make these things work and that's where partnerships like Atlan + Snowflake become critical."

Final Thoughts + What's Next

AI governance isn't a blocker—it's your bridge from pilot to production. The fastest-moving teams build for scale from day one, with trust and clarity embedded at every stage.

Want to see this in action?



[Book a demo](#) of Atlan's AI-native governance platform



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