

The AI Blast Zone

A brief for directors

OCTOBER 2026

Your AI risk is not only the AI you use

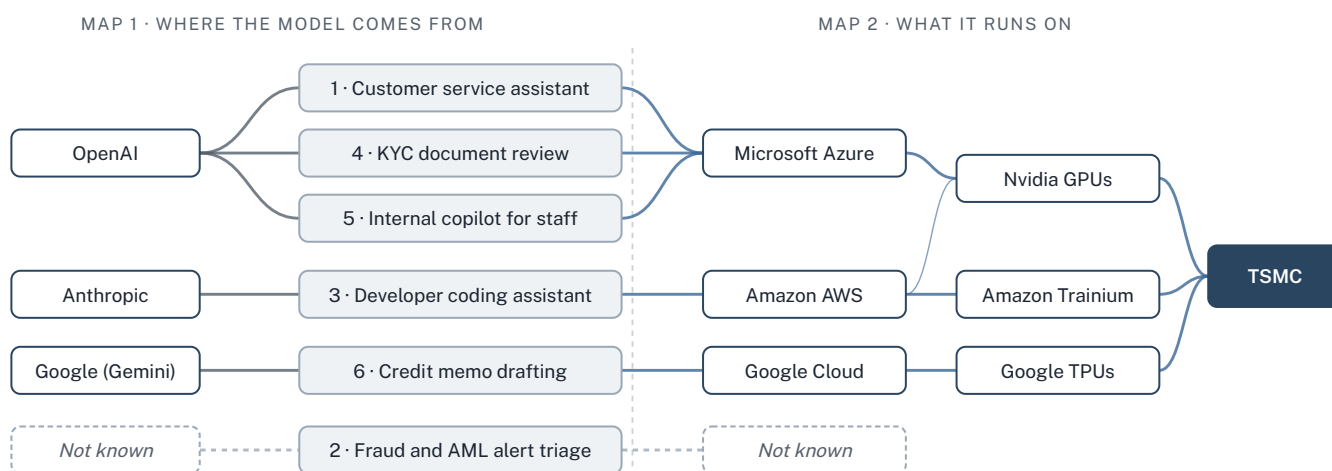
A board may know where its firm uses AI, and who supplies it. But that knowledge usually stops at the supplier. It rarely extends to the companies on which the supplier depends.

That matters because the AI industry is unusually tangled. A handful of chipmakers, cloud providers and AI labs fund, supply and buy from one another, and many of them borrow from the same lenders and draw on the same power grid. Microsoft owns about 27% of OpenAI's for-profit arm and sells it cloud capacity, and OpenAI has committed to buy a further \$250bn of Azure. Nvidia supplies the chips for most of this, and has also invested in OpenAI, Anthropic and CoreWeave.

When money and service flow round a circle like this, a problem in one company may be passed on rather than absorbed. The **blast zone** is the area such a failure could reach. Your firm sits somewhere in it, whether or not anyone has drawn it.

Two maps

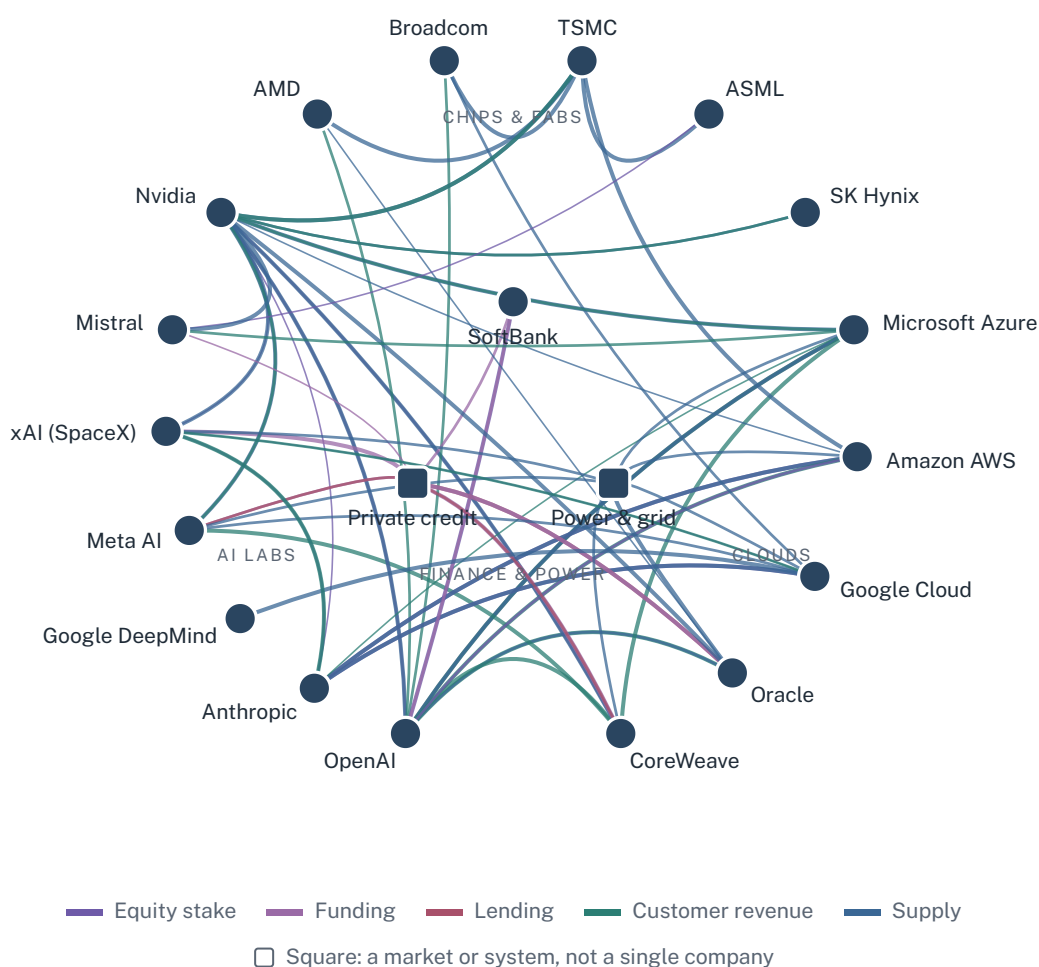
To see where you sit, you need two maps of your own AI. The first shows where each model comes from. The second shows what it runs on. Firms usually know the first better than the second. The example firm below looks as if it has three AI providers. Its second map shows half its processes on one cloud, and every process it can trace running on chips manufactured by one company.



An invented example firm with six AI-dependent processes. For one of them, nobody knows what sits underneath.

The circle

This is the map the tool uses. It shows 20 chipmakers, cloud providers, AI labs and sources of finance and power, and 67 relationships between them. Each line runs from a company to something it depends on: an equity stake, funding, lending, a customer or a supplier. Every relationship is backed by a public source in an [evidence register](#), last fully reviewed on 15 October 2026.



1 · Market loss

Values fall and credit tightens. Services keep running, but suppliers under pressure may change prices or terms.

2 · Correlated failure

Stress is passed on rather than absorbed. Contracts fail, and service capacity starts to fall.

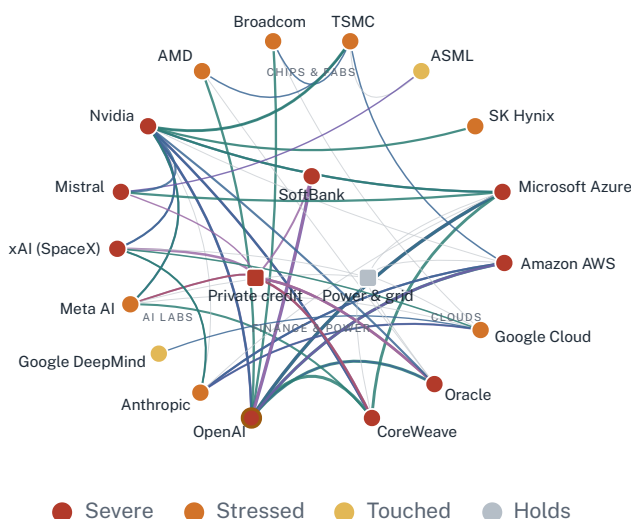
3 · AI winter

An assumption, not a forecast: chips, cloud and AI development are depleted together for years, so switching provider no longer helps.

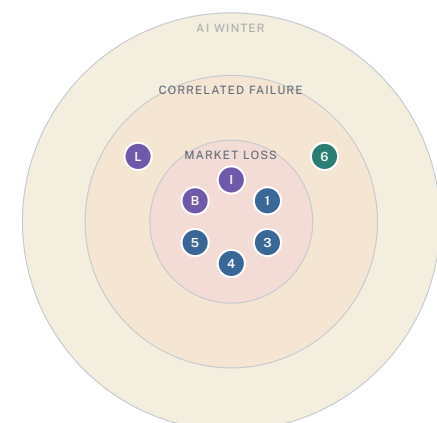
The tool lets you choose what fails and how far the failure spreads, from a market loss to an AI winter. It applies illustrative rules to each type of relationship, and more severe scenarios let stress travel further through the network. These are assumptions for discussion, not calculated probabilities. The map shows connections, not proven contagion. It does not model the size of each exposure, contract protections, liquidity, timing, or what a company might do to contain a problem.

An example: where a failure lands

Hypothetical scenario: OpenAI fails, and failures correlate (level 2). This is not a prediction, or a view on OpenAI or any other company. It is chosen because OpenAI has the most connections on the map.



Colour shows the greater of financial stress and service loss. Thicker lines carry more stress.



- Service at risk ● Commercial pressure
- Financial exposure
- Reached only at a more severe level

1	Customer service assistant Service at risk (severe) · OpenAI · Microsoft Azure Exposed, with no fallback in place	Reached in a market loss
3	Developer coding assistant Service at risk (stressed) · Anthropic · Amazon AWS Exposed, with a tested switch to another provider	Reached in a market loss
4	KYC document review Service at risk (severe) · OpenAI · Microsoft Azure Exposed; switching to another provider has not been tested	Reached in a market loss
5	Internal copilot for staff Service at risk (severe) · OpenAI · Microsoft Azure Exposed, with no fallback in place	Reached in a market loss
B	Borrower route Financial exposure (stressed) · Moderate exposure	Reached in a market loss
I	Investor route Financial exposure (severe) · High exposure	Reached in a market loss
6	Credit memo drafting Commercial pressure: prices or terms may change · Google (Gemini) · Google Cloud Fallback: Manual process, still staffed	Reached if failures correlate
L	Lender or insurer route Financial exposure (stressed) · Low exposure	Reached if failures correlate
CAN'T TELL: DEPENDENCY NOT KNOWN		
2	Fraud and AML alert triage We don't know what model or infrastructure sits underneath, so the tool cannot say whether or when this is reached. Fallback: Manual process, still staffed	Unknown

The rings show the same invented firm. Items nearer the centre are reached by milder scenarios. B, I and L are the firm's other routes in: as a borrower, an investor and a lender or insurer. Process 3 uses neither OpenAI nor Azure, yet it is reached, because Amazon has invested in OpenAI and sells it cloud capacity. This does not mean that OpenAI's failure would cause AWS to fail. It shows a possible route by which financial stress could reach a provider the firm relies on.

Questions the board should consider

1. Do we have both maps of our AI: where each model comes from, and what it runs on? Who keeps them up to date?
2. Which companies do our AI suppliers depend on? Would we have listed any of them as our suppliers?
3. Where we rely on switching to another provider, has anyone tried it, and would the alternative still have room if many firms switched at once?
4. If our most important AI process stopped tomorrow, who would do the work, and when did we last do it without AI?
5. Beyond our processes, how exposed are our funding, pension scheme, treasury holdings and lending to the same handful of companies?
6. If AI capability became scarce and expensive for three years, what would still work, and what have we already dismantled that we could not rebuild?

Mapping your own firm

The AI Blast Zone tool lets a board or management team sketch its own firm in a single sitting. You name the processes that depend on AI, say roughly where each model comes from and what it runs on, and choose what fails and how far it spreads. The tool shows where the failure lands, and produces questions for your board and a report you can download. What you enter about your firm stays in your own browser and is never sent to AndersonRisk.

The tool	andersonrisk.com/ai-blast-zone
How it works	andersonrisk.com/ai-blast-zone-method.html
The evidence for every link	andersonrisk.com/ai-blast-zone-register.html

None of this needs a technical answer. It needs the board to talk.

Through The AI Risk Dialogue I help boards work out which of their AI dependencies and fallback assumptions deserve a closer look. A 30-minute, no-obligation conversation is a good place to start.

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DISCLAIMER

This brief is illustrative and is designed to prompt discussion. It is not advice, and no one may rely on it. You should make your own decisions, taking into account advice from your management and your professional advisers.

The relationships shown are based on matters disclosed publicly or reported in the media, last fully reviewed on 15 October 2026. We do not warrant their accuracy or completeness, and they will not always be up to date. The scenario is hypothetical. Nothing in this brief is a prediction, or a view on the financial condition or prospects of any company named, and it takes no account of any action a company might take to prevent or limit a problem. The example firm is invented.

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