

Installing Scan in 90 Days

A week-by-week plan for standing up the Scan layer of Woodring's Loop in a single operating unit.

Most organizations do not have a signal layer. They have an executive inbox and a Google alert from 2019. This is the field manual for installing Scan from cold in one operating unit over a single quarter — charter the sources, wire the intake, run the cadence, then tune and hand it off as a living artifact.

Before You Start • Prerequisites

Do not open Week 1 until three things are true. The cost of a failed installation is far higher than the cost of waiting one quarter to start. If any prerequisite is missing, find the missing piece first.

- An executive sponsor at CEO or COO level has explicitly committed to defend the cadence from quarterly pressure — anyone lower and the discipline gets reabsorbed into a forecast within six months.
- A scope decision is made: one operating unit, not the whole enterprise. The Scan layer lives inside a single P&L, region, or business line where you have specific reason to believe early signal lives.
- A named Operator owns the cadence and a named Signal Layer Owner owns Scan (can be the same person below ~\$500M revenue).
- A one-page memo is approved by the sponsor: what you will do for 90 days, what you need from them, and what success looks like at Day 90. If the sponsor will not approve it, you do not have a sponsor.

Scope discipline matters more than ambition. A signal layer the leadership team can carry in working memory beats a comprehensive one nobody reads. Install in one unit, prove it, then replicate.

Weeks 1–2 • Charter the Categories and Sources

The first two weeks produce one artifact: a one-page Scan charter naming categories, sources, and owners. Pick six to eight signal categories — no more — split roughly half inside and half outside. The asymmetry to respect: inside signals are usually earlier and almost always less contested by competitors reading the same outside news you are.

Inside signals are the patterns your own organization generates — frontline pattern reports, customer success vocabulary drift, win/loss reason drift, internal data anomalies, employee referral flows to and from competitors. Outside signals are the patterns the world generates — regulatory whispers, competitive moves, adjacent technology shifts, talent flows, capital and credit conditions, and prediction market prices in your category.

- Name six to eight categories, roughly half inside and half outside. Pick categories where you have specific reason to believe early signal lives — not categories that sound comprehensive on a slide.
- For each category, name one or two specific seed sources — specific enough that someone other than you could retrieve the data tomorrow (e.g. 'Polymarket and Kalshi feeds for our three most relevant contracts,' 'support call transcripts summarized by AI nightly,' 'regulatory comment letters in our docket category, daily').
- For each category, name one human owner. Inside categories sit with operating leaders; outside categories sit with the Operator and rotate through analysts.
- Confirm prediction market ingestion is on the list — a Scan that does not watch where the price is moving is running on twentieth-century information.
- Draft the one-page Scan charter: categories, sources, owners, ingestion rhythm. Circulate it to the sponsor for sign-off.

The test of a weak signal is four properties: early, ambiguous, low-volume, possibly meaningful. Strip any one and you have something else. Choose sources that surface signal while it still has all four — before The Wall Street Journal names it and it becomes a strong signal everyone is already reading.

Deliverable, end of Week 2: a named category list, one or two seed sources per category, and one named human owner per category, signed by the sponsor.

Weeks 3–4 • Wire Intake and Set the AI/Human Split

Now make the sources flow into one place and stand up the AI-assisted triage layer that clusters and tags incoming items. This is where you install the AI/Human Split deliberately: AI sifts volume, humans hold judgment. The funnel gets wider at the top — more sources, faster ingestion, semantic clustering, cross-language capture — and stays exactly as narrow at the bottom, where a leadership team carries five to fifteen active signals it has actually read and argued about.

- Get every charter source flowing into one shared surface — a well-maintained shared document beats most software for a single unit under \$1B revenue. The discipline is the asset, not the tool.
- Wire daily ingestion to run without a human pressing a button: RSS, API, scrape, watchlist, email digest, transcript pipeline.
- Stand up AI first-pass triage: cluster incoming items by underlying theme, not surface keyword, and tag by category. The output of daily ingestion is a queue, not a decision.
- Set the prediction market alert: when a watched market moves more than 10 percentage points inside 24 hours, the Scan layer gets notified.
- Wire inside-signal capture as deliberately as outside — a vocabulary tracker on support tickets, a win/loss process that captures reason drift quarter over quarter, a channel for frontline pattern reports that does not depend on someone mentioning it in a one-on-one.
- Schedule the standing weekly review on the calendar now: same day, same time, recurring, ninety minutes, leadership in the room.

What AI does not change is judgment. It does not know your competitive position, your capital constraints, or the bets your leadership team has already staked. Give the volume to AI; keep the prioritization with the humans. Reverse the split and the layer fills with technically interesting noise that means nothing to the decisions on the table.

Deliverable, end of Week 4: sources flowing into one place, AI triage producing a clustered daily queue, prediction market alerts live, and the weekly review on the calendar.

Weeks 5–8 • Run the Cadence

Four consecutive weeks of running the weekly review with discipline. Do not skip a week in this stretch even if the layer feels thin — the discipline of running the meeting matters more than the quality of the signals during installation. The first reviews will be uneven: signals too obvious or too obscure, owners not yet trusting their own pattern recognition. Run it anyway. The intuition the team builds is the asset; the signals are the byproduct.

The cadence is four nested beats, set deliberately and held. The rule is that the rhythm runs faster than the operating unit's change cycle — that is the asymmetry that makes Scan worth running. The beats below are the floor; faster environments can compress them.

CADENCE	OWNER	INPUT	OUTPUT
Daily	AI toolchain + Signal Layer Owner	Wired source feeds, prediction market price moves	Clustered, tagged ingestion queue — not a decision
Weekly (90 min)	Operator runs it; each category owner brings 3 signals max	The queue plus each owner's three one-line signals with a one-line 'why this might matter'	Updated live signal layer — promote what shows legs, kill what is noise
Monthly	Leadership team	The live signal layer	Graduation decision — which one or two signals are weight-bearing enough to carry into Story
Quarterly	Operator + sponsor	The quarter's full layer and what played out	Calibration retro — what was missed, what was over-weighted, revised charter

Each weekly review has the same shape: no deck. Each owner brings three signals from their category, no more — each a one-line description and a one-line reason it might matter. The team walks the queue, kills noise, promotes what is interesting, and updates the live layer in the room. By the end of this stretch the team has met roughly four to eight times and surfaced sixty to a hundred signals.

- Run the weekly review every week without skipping — same time, same agenda, same artifact updated each session.
- Hold every owner to three signals maximum. The constraint forces prioritization upstream of the meeting.
- Promoting a signal onto the live layer requires a defensible argument — what makes this one weight-bearing? Adding is easy; promotion is earned.

- Build and maintain the live signal layer as a rolling list of five to fifteen active signals. Below five, the layer watches nothing; above fifteen, the team cannot hold it in its head.
- Have the leadership team review the live layer each Monday as part of the operating rhythm — not just inside the Friday meeting. A signal the CFO cannot recall in a board meeting is not on the layer in any practical sense.
- Note which leadership members reliably contribute and which need coaching — the Operator's quiet job.

Deliverable, end of Week 8: a working signal layer with five to fifteen active signals and a leadership team that has run the review four-plus times and started to feel the cadence.

Weeks 9–12 • Tune, Graduate, and Hand Off

The final stretch turns a running cadence into a durable, owned discipline. Prune hard, graduate the first signal into Story as a forcing function, rebalance the categories, and run the first quarterly retro. The deliverable at Day 90 is not a perfect signal layer — it is a signal layer that is alive, owned, and on a calendar.

- Week 9 — Run the first real cull. Retire anything on the layer that is not earning its place. A signal that has been ambient for a quarter with no movement is not weak signal — it is background.
- Week 10 — Run the first graduation pass. Pick one or two signals to carry into Story. Graduating a signal should feel like a meaningful act, because it forces the rest of the Loop to engage.
- Week 11 — Rebalance the charter. Identify which categories produce real signal and which are dead weight; reassign owners where the original fit was wrong; upgrade or replace sources that are not paying for themselves.
- Week 12 — Run the first quarterly retro. What did the 90 days surface? What did it miss? Which signals you killed turned out to matter, and which you promoted turned out to be noise?
- Produce a revised Scan charter for the next quarter encoding what the retro learned.
- Document the discipline so it survives a sponsor or operator change — the Loop must be transferable, not dependent on one person.
- Feed the retro learnings forward: which signals proved reliable, which categories to expand, which to retire. The feedback loop is what makes Scan continuous rather than a faster annual cycle.

Watch for the three failure modes as you hand off. Over-scanning — the layer balloons past fifteen items and dies by quiet attrition; the fix is the cull. Under-scanning — the layer tracks one-for-one with whatever trade publications a senior leader happens to read; the fix is forcing the wiring. Ideology bias — the layer only surfaces signals that confirm the current strategy; the fix is structural: assign someone the explicit role of carrying the disconfirming case, rotate it, and make killing a signal require an argument rather than a shrug.

Deliverable, Day 90: a live, owned signal layer on a calendar, a leadership team that has run the cadence for a full quarter, and the credibility to call the first Story session.

Cadence Design Notes

Three rules govern the cadence once it is running. Hold them deliberately rather than treating any as a default.

- The five-to-fifteen rule — most units sit best between eight and twelve active signals. Stay in the band on purpose; it is the simplest guardrail against both over- and under-scanning.
 - Faster than the environment — set every beat faster than the operating unit's change cycle. Faster environments can run weekly graduations and monthly retros; slower regulated units can run biweekly reviews without losing much.
 - One Accountable owner per phase — the Operator is accountable for Scan and Story, the sponsor for Steer, the CFO and COO for Stake. Cells with no accountable owner are where the discipline breaks.
1. Signals are inputs, not insights — Scan feeds Story and nothing else. A signal is never acted on directly.
 2. A pile of signals is not a plan, and a well-run weekly review is not a decision. Scan's only job is to put the right small set of signals on the table.
 3. Curated means owned — automation handles ingestion, but a named human owns the layer, and continuously refreshed means a signal keeps earning its place or gets retired.

The Day-30 Scan Brief Template

Fill this at the end of Week 4 to mark the layer real and again as a recurring artifact. It is a one-page working surface, not a research report — the test is whether your leadership team can name the active signals without looking anything up. Complete one copy per review cycle.

OPERATING UNIT

REPORTING PERIOD (FROM / TO)

OPERATOR (CADENCE OWNER)

SIGNAL LAYER OWNER

NUMBER OF ACTIVE SIGNALS (TARGET 8-12)

INSIDE / OUTSIDE BALANCE (COUNT EACH)

TOP SIGNAL 1 – ONE-LINE DESCRIPTION

TOP SIGNAL 1 – WHY IT MIGHT MATTER

TOP SIGNAL 1 – INSIDE OR OUTSIDE · SOURCE · OWNER

TOP SIGNAL 2 – ONE-LINE DESCRIPTION

TOP SIGNAL 2 – WHY IT MIGHT MATTER

TOP SIGNAL 2 – INSIDE OR OUTSIDE · SOURCE · OWNER

TOP SIGNAL 3 – ONE-LINE DESCRIPTION

TOP SIGNAL 3 – WHY IT MIGHT MATTER

TOP SIGNAL 3 – INSIDE OR OUTSIDE · SOURCE · OWNER

EMERGING CLUSTERS (NAME 2-4 THEMES THE SIGNALS POINT TO)

SIGNALS PROMOTED ONTO THE LAYER THIS PERIOD

SIGNALS RETIRED THIS PERIOD (AND WHY)

CANDIDATE(S) FOR GRADUATION INTO STORY –
AND THE ARGUMENT FOR EACH

PREDICTION MARKET MOVES OF NOTE (CONTRACT ·
MOVE · WHAT IT SIGNALS)

DISCONFIRMING SIGNAL CARRIED THIS PERIOD
(THE CASE AGAINST CURRENT STRATEGY)

CATEGORIES PRODUCING REAL SIGNAL

CATEGORIES THAT ARE DEAD WEIGHT (REBALANCE
OR RETIRE)

SOURCES TO UPGRADE OR REPLACE NEXT PERIOD

OPEN QUESTIONS FOR THE SPONSOR

DATE · NEXT REVIEW

If a signal cannot be stated in one line with one line on why it matters, it is not ready for the brief. Send it back to the queue.

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SCAN FEEDS STORY – NOTHING ELSE.

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