TNQ RESEARCH · METHODOLOGY
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The Eighteen Artifacts:

a documented build methodology for the regulated Digital Employee.

ABSTRACT

This methodology paper documents the complete artifact set that constitutes a TrueNorth Quantum Digital Employee build. The discipline it formalises is simple in description and demanding in practice: every Digital Employee TNQ deploys is purpose-built under a structured engagement that produces **eighteen named, version-controlled, ledger-anchored artifacts**, gated by **five client sign-off milestones** across **six phases**, and ratified by the formal commercial and operational documents that bracket the build on either side. The intent of this paper is not to describe a project plan. It is to describe the engineering substrate beneath one. A Digital Employee whose build cannot be reconstructed from its artifacts is, in the TNQ view, not a deployable workload. This paper enumerates each of the eighteen artifacts, specifies its purpose, its contents, and the acceptance criterion that governs its sign-off — and explains the principle that has organised the methodology from the first engagement: the build record IS the operating record.

AUTHORING

TNQ Research. Released under TrueNorth Quantum's standing monthly publication cadence. Public release; no distribution restrictions.

COMPANION DOCUMENTS

RPT-2026-001 — Governance for the AI Workforce: an architectural reference for parallel-trained oversight in the regulated enterprise. RPT-2026-002 — The Risk Tier Framework: a five-dimension rubric for agent deployments. POV-2026-002 — Insurance-grade evidence: what underwriters actually want from an AI agent audit trail.

DOCUMENT SPINE

Section 1 · Why a methodology paper, and why eighteen

There is a growing class of AI-agent deployments in regulated enterprises that look complete from the demonstration but cannot be operated under scrutiny. They produce outputs. They handle tasks. They have a name and an internal owner. What they do not have is a documented build record that a competent third party could read in six months, in two years, in five — and reconstruct from first principles how this particular agent came to be the way it is.

This is not a theoretical complaint. It is the operational reality that TrueNorth Quantum's customer engagements were designed to avoid, and it is the failure mode that the methodology in this paper exists to make structurally impossible. The discipline is straightforward: a Digital Employee whose build cannot be reconstructed from its artifacts is not a deployable workload. A regulator who cannot read the build cannot accept the operation. An underwriter who cannot read the build cannot price the operation. An incoming Engagement Lead who cannot read the build cannot continue the operation. The artifact set is what makes the Digital Employee an object that can be reasoned about by anyone other than the person who built it.

The number eighteen is not arbitrary, and it is not aspirational. It is the count of artifacts that emerged after three completed customer engagements, two further engagements in active build, and a structured retrospective conducted in Q1 2026 across the engagement leadership of the firm. Each artifact in the eighteen has, at minimum, three properties: it is produced at a specific point in the engagement, it serves a specific downstream purpose in either build, operation, or audit, and it has been required at least once by a client party who would not otherwise have signed.

The principle: the build record is the operating record

Many enterprise software projects produce documentation that exists for the duration of the project and is then archived or, more commonly, lost in a folder structure that no one re-enters. The artifact set described in this paper is governed by a different principle. Every artifact produced during the build phases is also a live operational document during the run phase. There is no point at which the engagement record is handed off to a separate operating record. There is one record, version-controlled, anchored to the immutable audit ledger that the TNQ platform maintains as a matter of course.

Concretely, this means that when a Governance AI overseer halts a Digital Employee's action in Phase 6 (Live Operation) because the action fell outside the policy boundary specified in **TNQ-DE-05 Policy-as-Code Definition**, the policy file the overseer consulted is the same file the client signed at M2 Spec Lock, eight months earlier. When the client's Risk Officer asks why a particular decision was made on a Tuesday afternoon in October, the ledger entry will reference the role specification, the policy boundary, the behavioural baseline, and the governance training corpus — and each reference is to a specific named artifact, in a specific version, signed by a specific party. There is no gap.

Why this paper is short, and why the appendices are long

This paper documents the artifact set itself. It does not document the contents of the artifacts. The artifacts are the contents — each is a substantial document or data package in its own right, ranging from a ten-page Risk Tier Assessment to a multi-hundred-page Build Manifest with attached test results, training corpora, and integration specifications. What this paper provides is the field guide: the name, code, phase, owner, purpose, expected contents, and acceptance criterion for each of the eighteen. A separate methodology supplement — internal-only and customer-confidential — provides the template for each artifact.

The reader who has read the companion RPT-2026-001 (Governance for the AI Workforce) will recognise the structure: TNQ Research papers are calibrated to be useful at two distances. Read end to end, they argue a position. Read by index, they answer a specific operational question. The artifact codes (TNQ-DE-01 through TNQ-DE-15) and the operational codes (TNQ-OP-01, TNQ-OP-02, TNQ-OP-03) used throughout this paper are also the codes used inside the TNQ platform itself, in customer engagements, and in the audit ledger. There is one vocabulary.

Section 2 · The shape of the engagement

Before the artifacts, the shape. A Digital Employee build engagement is delivered under the Development Services Statement of Work (TNQ-COMM-02), attached as Exhibit A to the customer's Platform-as-a-Service Agreement. The engagement spans six phases over approximately five weeks of working time, with day-for-day adjustments where either side runs behind. Each phase produces a defined subset of artifacts and culminates, where applicable, in a client sign-off that gates progression to the next phase.

The six phases, summarised

- **Phase 1 · Discovery & Scoping · Week 0.** The customer's candidate role is examined against the Digital Employee deployment criteria. A risk tier is provisionally assigned, scope boundaries are drawn, and the engagement is either ratified at M1 or returned to the customer with a

written explanation of why the role is not, in TNQ's view, a sound Digital Employee candidate at this time.

- **Phase 2 · Design & Specification · Weeks 1-2.** The role is formally specified. The policy boundary is written as code. The data plan is agreed. The behavioural baseline is established. The artifacts produced in this phase are the documents the customer signs at M2 to lock the build's substantive parameters before construction begins.
- **Phase 3 · Build & Train · Weeks 2-3.** The Digital Employee is constructed. Critically — and this is the point where TNQ's methodology diverges from most agent-deployment vendors — the Governance AI overseer is trained in parallel on the same role specification, not as a downstream check but as a co-architect. M3 is the build-complete milestone.
- **Phase 4 · Integration & Testing · Weeks 3-4.** End-to-end testing. UAT with the client's operational counterpart. Red-team probing against the policy boundary. M4 is the pilot-pass milestone: the Digital Employee has demonstrated, under adversarial conditions, that it operates within the boundary set at M2.
- **Phase 5 · Supervised Rollout · Weeks 4-5.** Shadow-run. The Digital Employee operates in parallel with the human counterpart who currently performs the role, with the overseer recording every decision the DE makes and every disagreement between the DE's output and the human's. M5 is Go-Live: the customer signs that the DE is fit for the production workload.
- **Phase 6 · Live Operation · Week 5 onward.** The Digital Employee enters production. The Governance AI overseer continues to evaluate every prompt, every tool call, every decision. The engagement record becomes the operating record. There is no further build milestone; the operational artifacts (TNQ-OP-02 and TNQ-OP-03) take over.

The five sign-off milestones, as instruments

The milestones are not progress indicators. They are commercial and legal instruments. Each one is signed by a named counterparty on the customer side — typically the Executive Sponsor for M1 and M5, the Operational Owner for M2 and M4, and the Technical Counterpart for M3 — and each signature carries a specific consequence. Build fees are invoiced against the milestones in fixed proportions (typically 20% at SOW signature, then 15/20/20/25% at M1 through M4, with the final 5% at M5). A milestone that does not sign does not bill. A milestone that signs late delays the next phase by an equal interval.

> A milestone is a place where the engagement either continues with both parties' agreement or stops. There is no third option, and that is the point.

The artifacts produced in each phase are the documentary basis on which the milestone is signed. A signature at M2, in concrete terms, is a signature on the package of artifacts produced in Phase 2 — chiefly the Policy-as-Code Definition (TNQ-DE-05), the Data & Access Plan (TNQ-DE-06), and the locked Role

Specification (TNQ-DE-04). The customer is not signing a status report. They are signing the documents themselves, by reference.

Section 3 · The fifteen build artifacts

What follows is the enumeration. Each of the fifteen build artifacts is described with five fields: phase, milestone, owner, purpose, expected contents, and acceptance criterion. The owner field refers to the TNQ-side party with primary responsibility for the artifact; client-side counter-signatures are documented in TNQ-DE-12 (UAT Sign-off Package) for the operational artifacts and in the engagement's master signature matrix for the rest.

Phase 1 · Discovery & Scoping

TNQ-DE-01 Discovery Brief

Phase 1 · Milestone M1 · Owner: Engagement Lead

PURPOSE

Captures the customer's stated objective for the Digital Employee deployment in language that a competent third party could read in two years and understand what was being attempted. The Discovery Brief is the first artifact produced in any engagement and is the document against which scope changes are later evaluated.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Business problem statement (the operational pain the DE is intended to address)
- Existing process map (how the work is currently done, by whom, with what tooling)
- Volume and frequency profile (how often the work occurs, in what quantities)
- Stakeholder map (who benefits, who is affected, who must approve)
- Out-of-scope declarations (explicit list of adjacent activities the DE will NOT handle)

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The Discovery Brief is accepted when the Executive Sponsor on the customer side signs that the brief accurately describes the operational situation the DE is being deployed into.

TNQ-DE-02 Candidate Role Profile

Phase 1 · Milestone M1 · Owner: Engagement Lead

PURPOSE

Translates the Discovery Brief from a business-problem document into a role description in the same form a Digital Employee can be built against. The Candidate Role Profile is the bridge between what the customer wants and what TNQ can construct.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Role title and reporting line within the Digital Employee organisation
- Decision-rights schedule (what the DE can decide unilaterally vs. what it must escalate)
- Tool inventory (the systems the DE will read from, write to, or otherwise integrate with)
- Counterparty schedule (the humans the DE will work alongside, including escalation paths)
- Operational tempo (whether the DE is event-driven, batch, scheduled, or always-on)

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The Candidate Role Profile is accepted when the Operational Owner on the customer side confirms that the role as described is the role they would hire a competent human for.

TNQ-DE-03 Risk Tier Assessment

Phase 1 · Milestone M1 · Owner: Governance Lead

PURPOSE

Assigns the candidate Digital Employee to one of four Risk Tiers per the framework documented in RPT-2026-002. The Risk Tier governs the engagement's intensity for the remainder of the build and the oversight cadence in operation.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Five-dimension scoring (blast radius, reversibility, data sensitivity, regulatory exposure, external visibility)
- Tier assignment (1, 2, 3, or 4) with documented reasoning
- Tier-specific control set (the additional artifacts, signatures, and oversight steps the tier triggers)
- Reassessment cadence (when the tier will be reviewed against operational evidence)

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The Risk Tier Assessment is accepted when the Risk/Security Officer on the customer side signs that the tier assignment is consistent with the customer's own risk taxonomy.

Phase 2 · Design & Specification

TNQ-DE-04 DE Role Specification

Phase 2 · Milestone M2 · Owner: DE Architect

PURPOSE

The locked, version-controlled description of the role the Digital Employee will perform. This is the foundational artifact for the build; everything constructed in Phase 3 is constructed against this specification.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Authoritative role title and identifier

- Capability schedule (the discrete actions the DE is authorised to perform)
- Input schemata (the structured data the DE will receive, in canonical form)
- Output schemata (the structured data the DE will produce, in canonical form)
- Performance criteria (what success looks like in measurable terms)
- Failure modes (the recognised ways the role can go wrong and the documented responses)

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The DE Role Specification is accepted when the Operational Owner signs the locked version at M2. From this point forward, changes to the specification require formal change-control under TNQ-COMM-02 §7.

TNQ-DE-05 Policy-as-Code Definition

Phase 2 · Milestone M2 · Owner: Governance Lead

PURPOSE

The complete policy boundary, expressed in executable form, that the Governance AI overseer will enforce against the Digital Employee's behaviour in operation. The Policy-as-Code Definition is the most consequential single artifact in the engagement — the document that determines what the DE can and cannot do, and what the overseer must halt.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Permitted-action catalogue (what the DE can do, by capability identifier)
- Forbidden-action catalogue (what the DE cannot do, with explicit rationale per item)
- Conditional-action catalogue (actions permitted under specific circumstances, with the conditions encoded)
- Escalation policy (what triggers human review, who is paged, in what timeframes)
- Drift policy (how the overseer reacts to behaviour that departs from the established baseline)

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The Policy-as-Code Definition is accepted when (a) it passes automated compilation against the TNQ policy engine without error, (b) the Risk/Security Officer signs the human-readable export of the policy, and (c) the Governance Lead certifies that the executable form and the readable export are semantically identical.

TNQ-DE-06 Data & Access Plan

Phase 2 · Milestone M2 · Owner: DE Architect

PURPOSE

The complete schedule of data the Digital Employee will read, write, or transmit, and the identity, authentication, and authorisation arrangements under which it will do so. This artifact is what makes the deployment defensible against information-security review.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Data inventory (every source the DE reads, every destination it writes)
- Classification schedule (the sensitivity classification of each data element under the customer's own taxonomy)
- Identity arrangement (the cryptographic identity the DE will operate under, and how it is provisioned)
- Authorisation matrix (the permissions granted to the DE's identity in each connected system)
- Encryption-at-rest and -in-transit summary
- Retention schedule (how long the DE's outputs and logs are retained, and under what disposal protocol)

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The Data & Access Plan is accepted when the customer's Technical Counterpart and Risk/Security Officer co-sign the plan against the customer's existing information-security standards.

Phase 3 · Build & Train

TNQ-DE-07 DE Build Manifest

Phase 3 · Milestone M3 · Owner: DE Architect

PURPOSE

The complete, version-controlled manifest of every component that constitutes the assembled Digital Employee — model selections, prompt artifacts, tool integrations, configuration files, and the cryptographic hashes of each. The Build Manifest is the document that makes the DE reproducible.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Model selection record (base model, version, fine-tuning history if applicable)
- Prompt-template inventory (every system, instruction, and tool-use template, with version)
- Tool integration register (each external system the DE connects to, with API version and credential references)
- Configuration set (every tunable parameter and the value committed at build)
- Cryptographic manifest (SHA-256 of every component, signed by the build identity)

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The Build Manifest is accepted when the manifest validates against the TNQ build registry and the Technical Counterpart confirms the manifest matches what was constructed.

TNQ-DE-08 Governance Training Corpus

Phase 3 · Milestone M3 · Owner: Governance Lead

PURPOSE

The complete corpus of materials used to train the Governance AI overseer that will supervise the Digital Employee in operation. The corpus is constructed against the same DE Role Specification and Policy-as-Code Definition used to build the DE itself, ensuring the overseer is trained on the same vocabulary as the agent it will oversee.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Curated example set (representative actions the DE will take, with adjudications)
- Edge-case catalogue (deliberately constructed borderline scenarios used to calibrate the overseer's judgement)
- Adversarial set (red-team-generated attempts to elicit prohibited behaviour, with the correct overseer responses)
- Drift exemplars (examples of behaviour that drifts from baseline, with the correct overseer responses)
- Training methodology record (the procedure used to construct the overseer from the corpus)

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The Governance Training Corpus is accepted when (a) the trained overseer achieves the documented threshold on the held-out validation set and (b) the Governance Lead signs that the corpus is complete with respect to the policy boundary.

TNQ-DE-09 Behavioural Baseline

Phase 3 · Milestone M3 · Owner: DE Architect

PURPOSE

The quantitative description of the Digital Employee's normal operating envelope, captured during Phase 3 controlled runs. The Behavioural Baseline is what the overseer compares live behaviour against in operation; without it, drift detection is impossible.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Activity profile (the distribution of action types the DE takes under representative input load)
- Tool-call profile (the frequency and pattern of external system access)
- Latency profile (per-action timing distributions, with documented percentiles)
- Output-shape profile (the structural characteristics of the DE's outputs under representative input)
- Statistical thresholds (the boundaries beyond which a sample is considered out-of-baseline)

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The Behavioural Baseline is accepted when the baseline is signed off by both the DE Architect and the Governance Lead, who jointly attest that the baseline was captured under inputs representative of expected operational load.

Phase 4 · Integration & Testing

TNQ-DE-10 End-to-End Test Report

Phase 4 · Milestone M4 · Owner: DE Architect

PURPOSE

The complete record of integration and functional testing performed against the assembled Digital Employee in the customer's actual environment. The End-to-End Test Report is what demonstrates that the DE works in the place it will be deployed, not just in the lab.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Test case inventory (every scenario tested, with expected and actual results)
- Integration matrix (every connected system, with the verification that the DE reads and writes correctly)
- Identity and authorisation verification (proof that the DE's credentials work in every claimed context)
- Failure-mode probe results (verification that the DE responds correctly to documented failure modes)
- Performance evidence (latency, throughput, and reliability measured against documented criteria)

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The End-to-End Test Report is accepted when the Technical Counterpart on the customer side confirms that the tested behaviours match the customer's operational requirements.

TNQ-DE-11 Red-Team Findings

Phase 4 · Milestone M4 · Owner: Governance Lead

PURPOSE

The record of adversarial testing performed against the Digital Employee and its Governance AI overseer. The Red-Team Findings document attempts to elicit prohibited behaviour, bypass the policy boundary, or otherwise demonstrate that the system can be made to do what the Policy-as-Code Definition forbids.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Adversarial methodology (the techniques used, with rationale per technique)
- Finding register (each attempt, classified as successful, partial, or unsuccessful)
- Severity assessment (the operational consequence of each successful finding)
- Remediation record (the changes made in response to findings, by artifact reference)
- Post-remediation re-test results
- For Tier 4 deployments: external red-team attestation

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The Red-Team Findings document is accepted when (a) no high-severity finding remains unremediated, (b) the Governance Lead signs the remediation record, and (c) for Tier 4 deployments, the external red-team partner attests to the methodology.

TNQ-DE-12 UAT Sign-off Package

Phase 4 · Milestone M4 · Owner: Engagement Lead

PURPOSE

The customer-facing acceptance package for the Pilot Pass milestone. Where TNQ-DE-10 documents that the system works, the UAT Sign-off Package documents that the customer agrees it works. These are distinct, and both are required.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Acceptance test scenarios (designed by the customer's Operational Owner)
- Acceptance test results (executed jointly by TNQ and customer)
- Outstanding-issue register (any open issues at M4, with the agreed disposition for each)
- Signature matrix (the customer-side parties signing the package, by role)
- Conditional acceptance terms (if any: the conditions under which the customer signs M4 with reservations)

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The UAT Sign-off Package is accepted when the customer-side Executive Sponsor, Operational Owner, Technical Counterpart, and Risk/Security Officer each sign their respective sections. Conditional acceptance is permitted but the conditions are then carried into the Phase 5 plan.

Phase 5 · Supervised Rollout

TNQ-DE-13 Shadow-Run Log

Phase 5 · Milestone M5 · Owner: DE Architect

PURPOSE

The complete record of the Digital Employee operating in parallel with the human counterpart who currently performs the role, with every decision the DE makes captured alongside the human's decision on the same input. The Shadow-Run Log is the empirical basis for go-live confidence.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Paired-decision register (every input, the DE's decision, the human's decision, the agreement status)
- Disagreement analysis (each case of disagreement, classified by type and adjudicated)
- Drift evidence (any observed departure from the Behavioural Baseline established in Phase 3)

- Overseer activity log (every halt, every escalation, every flagged behaviour)
- Statistical summary (agreement rate, latency comparison, drift frequency)

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The Shadow-Run Log is accepted when the documented agreement rate meets the threshold specified in the DE Role Specification and the Governance Lead attests that no unresolved drift remains.

TNQ-DE-14 Pilot Performance Pack

Phase 5 · Milestone M5 · Owner: Engagement Lead

PURPOSE

The executive-readable summary of the Phase 5 shadow-run, prepared for the customer's Executive Sponsor and Risk/Security Officer for the M5 Go-Live decision. The Pilot Performance Pack synthesises the evidence in TNQ-DE-13 into a document that can be read and signed by parties who will not work through the raw shadow-run log.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Executive summary (one page; what the shadow-run demonstrated)
- Quantitative results (the headline numbers from the agreement and drift analysis)
- Risk register at go-live (the open risks, their classification, the residual mitigation)
- Recommended go-live decision (with stated reasoning)
- First-90-days operational plan (what the customer should expect, with TNQ's commitments)

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The Pilot Performance Pack is accepted when the customer's Executive Sponsor and Risk/Security Officer sign the go-live recommendation, with or without qualifications. A signed pack with qualifications is permissible and the qualifications carry into the operational artifacts.

TNQ-DE-15 Go-Live Readiness Memo

Phase 5 · Milestone M5 · Owner: Engagement Lead

PURPOSE

The final pre-go-live document, produced jointly by TNQ and the customer, certifying that everything required for live operation is in place. The Readiness Memo is the document that authorises the transition from Phase 5 (Supervised Rollout) to Phase 6 (Live Operation), and it is the document the Engagement Lead retains as evidence of the conditions under which the Digital Employee was placed into production.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Infrastructure readiness checklist (signed by Technical Counterpart)
- Operational handoff register (who the DE reports to, who escalations route to, on what cadence)

- Incident playbook (the documented procedure for halting the DE, rolling back, or escalating)
- Communications plan (how the DE's existence and operation will be communicated within the customer organisation)
- Platform billing commencement date
- Final cross-reference to all preceding artifacts in their accepted versions

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The Go-Live Readiness Memo is accepted when all preceding milestones (M1 through M4) are confirmed signed in their accepted versions, the operational handoff register is signed by both parties, and the platform billing commencement date is recorded.

Section 4 · The three operational artifacts

The fifteen build artifacts produced in Phases 1 through 5 are sufficient to construct, test, and place a Digital Employee into supervised operation. They are not, by themselves, sufficient to operate it. Three additional artifacts, produced before and after the build proper, bracket the engagement on either side. Together with the fifteen, they constitute the complete eighteen-artifact set.

The operational bracket

The build engagement does not begin with Discovery. It begins with the commercial document under which Discovery is contracted, and it does not end with Go-Live; it continues through the formal operational cycle that the platform maintains for as long as the Digital Employee is in production. The three operational artifacts make this continuity explicit.

TNQ-OP-01 Signed Statement of Work

Phase 0 (pre-engagement) · Milestone Pre-M1 · Owner: Engagement Lead

PURPOSE

The commercial instrument under which the build engagement is performed. The SoW is structured as TNQ-COMM-02 — the Development Services template — attached as Exhibit A to the customer's Platform-as-a-Service Agreement. It is the document that defines who is paying whom for what, on what schedule, under what conditions, and to what conclusion.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Engagement scope (which Digital Employee, against which Discovery Brief)
- Commercial terms (build fee, milestone payment schedule, platform fee post-Go-Live)
- Engagement personnel (named TNQ-side and customer-side roles, with substitution provisions)
- Conditions precedent (what must be in place for Discovery to begin)

- Termination rights and remedies (under what conditions either party may exit, and on what terms)
- Confidentiality and data-handling clauses (carried forward from the master PaaS Agreement)

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The SoW is accepted when both parties' authorised signatories execute the document. Twenty percent of the build fee is due upon execution; this is the engagement's commercial commencement.

TNQ-OP-02 Live Operation Handoff Package

Phase 6 (operational) · Milestone Post-M5 · Owner: Engagement Lead

PURPOSE

The handoff package produced after Go-Live that transfers operational responsibility from the build-engagement team to the platform-operations team that will run the Digital Employee on a 24/7 basis. The Handoff Package is what allows the build team to step back without operational risk to the customer.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Operational runbook (the day-to-day procedures the platform-operations team follows)
- Escalation register (who the platform-operations team contacts, in what order, for what kinds of events)
- Performance baseline (the operational metrics the platform-operations team monitors against)
- Customer-relationship continuity record (the customer-side parties who must remain in contact, on what cadence)
- First-thirty-days observation plan (the enhanced monitoring regime applied to all new DEs)
- Cross-reference to all build artifacts (TNQ-DE-01 through TNQ-DE-15) in their accepted versions

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

The Handoff Package is accepted when the platform-operations Lead signs that the package is sufficient to operate the Digital Employee without escalation to the build-engagement team. The Engagement Lead remains the customer's named relationship point until the first Quarterly Governance Review.

TNQ-OP-03 Quarterly Governance Review

Phase 6 (operational, recurring) · Milestone Quarterly · Owner: Governance Lead

PURPOSE

The recurring operational artifact produced on a quarterly cadence for the life of the Digital Employee's operation. The Quarterly Governance Review is what makes oversight a continuing discipline rather than a one-time event. It is the artifact that closes the loop between the build record and the operating record.

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

- Operational performance summary (quarter-over-quarter trends in the metrics established in TNQ-DE-09)
- Drift register (any observed departures from the behavioural baseline, with adjudications)
- Overseer activity summary (halts, escalations, and the rate of each, against tier-appropriate thresholds)
- Policy boundary review (any cases where the boundary was tested by operational reality, with the resolution)
- Re-attestation by the Risk/Security Officer (that the deployment's risk tier remains correctly assigned)
- Recommended adjustments (if any: changes to artifacts in the build set, processed under formal change-control)

ACCEPTANCE CRITERION

Each Quarterly Governance Review is accepted when (a) the Risk/Security Officer signs the re-attestation, (b) any recommended changes have been routed through change-control, and (c) the review is anchored to the audit ledger with a cryptographic signature dated within fifteen business days of quarter end.

Why these three are part of the eighteen

It would be possible to draw the artifact boundary differently. One could count only the fifteen build-engagement artifacts, treat the SoW as an instrument of contract law rather than methodology, and treat the operational artifacts as features of the platform rather than products of the engagement. None of those choices would be wrong; they would simply create a different kind of methodology — one in which the build record and the operating record are separate documents maintained by separate teams, and in which the commercial document under which the build was scoped becomes a curiosity by the time the DE is in operation.

The TNQ methodology takes a different position. The Signed Statement of Work, the Live Operation Handoff Package, and the Quarterly Governance Review are the same kind of object as the fifteen build artifacts: version-controlled, ledger-anchored, signed by named parties, and present in the operational record from before the engagement began to after it concluded. Treating them as part of the methodology rather than adjacent to it is what makes the build record and the operating record one record.

Section 5 · The five sign-off milestones

The milestones are referenced throughout this paper, but they deserve a section of their own because the milestone is the engagement's load-bearing unit. The artifacts exist; the phases unfold; but it is the milestones that determine whether the engagement continues, and on what evidence.

M1 · Discovery sign-off

The Executive Sponsor on the customer side signs that the Discovery Brief, the Candidate Role Profile, and the Risk Tier Assessment together describe an operationally sensible Digital Employee deployment in their organisation. M1 is the milestone at which the customer commits to the substantive engagement; before M1, the engagement is exploratory. After M1, the engagement is committed.

M2 · Spec lock

The Operational Owner, with co-signature from the Risk/Security Officer on the Policy-as-Code Definition and the Technical Counterpart on the Data & Access Plan, signs that the role specification, the policy boundary, and the data plan are correct, complete, and locked. M2 is the milestone at which the build's parameters are fixed. Changes after M2 are formal change-control matters and have material commercial consequence.

M3 · Build complete

The Technical Counterpart, with co-signature from the Governance Lead, signs that the assembled Digital Employee and its Governance AI overseer have been built to the specification, that the Build Manifest accurately describes the construction, and that the behavioural baseline has been established. M3 is an internal-facing milestone in operational terms — the customer is not the principal audience — but it is a commercial milestone and bills accordingly.

M4 · Pilot pass

The full customer signature matrix — Executive Sponsor, Operational Owner, Technical Counterpart, Risk/Security Officer — signs the UAT Sign-off Package, attesting that the Digital Employee has demonstrated, under integration and adversarial testing, that it operates within the boundary set at M2. M4 is the milestone at which the system is confirmed to do what it claims to do; M5 confirms it does so in the customer's actual operational environment.

M5 · Go-live

The Executive Sponsor and Risk/Security Officer sign the Pilot Performance Pack and the Go-Live Readiness Memo, authorising the transition from supervised rollout to live operation. M5 is the milestone at which Platform Fee billing commences and the build engagement concludes. From this point forward, the operational artifacts (TNQ-OP-02 and TNQ-OP-03) carry the engagement.

> Five signatures. Each on documents that exist, that name the signer, that name the date, and that will still be referenceable in five years. This is the bar.

Section 6 · What the artifact set is not

It is worth being explicit about what this methodology is not, because the absence of certain features is itself a design choice.

It is not project management

The artifacts are not status reports. They are not Gantt charts. They are not standup minutes or sprint retrospectives. Project management instruments are produced during the engagement — TNQ runs its build engagements with conventional project hygiene — but those instruments are not artifacts of the methodology. They are working documents that may or may not survive the engagement, and their survival is irrelevant to the operating record. The eighteen artifacts are the documents that constitute the Digital Employee. Everything else is scaffolding.

It is not a maturity model

There is no claim implicit in this paper that organisations should aspire to produce all eighteen artifacts as a sign of operational sophistication. The eighteen are the artifacts TrueNorth Quantum produces because the work TrueNorth Quantum does requires them. An organisation deploying lower-stakes agentic systems — a chatbot for routine customer queries, a code-completion assistant, an internal-only summarisation tool — may need a substantially smaller artifact set. The methodology in this paper is calibrated to the Digital Employee class of deployment: agents that take meaningful actions on behalf of regulated enterprises, with material commercial and legal consequence per action.

It is not a substitute for substantive judgement

Each artifact is a document. A document can be written well or badly, signed thoughtfully or signed without reading. The methodology specifies what artifacts exist, what they contain, and what their acceptance criteria are. It does not, and cannot, guarantee that the substantive judgements expressed in those artifacts are sound. The Policy-as-Code Definition is only as good as the thinking that produced the policy. The Risk Tier Assessment is only as good as the assessor. The Shadow-Run Log is only as informative as the shadow run was rigorous. The methodology is a discipline, not a guarantee.

What the methodology guarantees is that the substantive judgement is captured, attributed, and recoverable. A regulator or an underwriter or a successor team reading the artifact set in two years will

be able to identify exactly who decided what, against what evidence, on what date, and under what authority. That is what the discipline protects. The quality of the underlying judgement is the responsibility of the parties named in the signature matrix.

Section 7 · Tailoring the methodology by Risk Tier

The methodology described in this paper is the methodology in its full form, applicable to Tier 3 and Tier 4 deployments. For Tier 1 and Tier 2 deployments, TrueNorth Quantum applies a calibrated subset. The principle is that the artifact set should be proportionate to the consequence of the deployment, and the calibration is documented in TNQ-DE-03 (Risk Tier Assessment) at the start of every engagement.

Tier 1 and Tier 2 calibrations

For Tier 1 deployments — low blast radius, fully reversible, no sensitive data, no regulatory exposure, internal-only — the engagement still produces all eighteen artifacts, but the depth and signature requirements are reduced. The Red-Team Findings document (TNQ-DE-11), for instance, requires only internal red-team activity rather than the external-partner attestation required at Tier 4. The Quarterly Governance Review (TNQ-OP-03) is produced semi-annually rather than quarterly. The signature matrix at M4 may consolidate the Technical Counterpart and Operational Owner signatures into a single business sponsor signature.

For Tier 2 deployments — limited blast radius, mostly reversible, modest data sensitivity, sectoral but not regulatory exposure — the methodology is applied substantially as written, with the principal calibration being the quarterly cadence rather than monthly cadence of governance review and the option for the customer to consolidate some signature roles.

Tier 3 and Tier 4 escalations

Tier 3 — material blast radius, partially reversible, regulated data, formal regulatory exposure, externally visible — is the tier at which the methodology is applied as documented in this paper, with no consolidation of signature roles and the full quarterly governance cycle.

Tier 4 — broad blast radius, irreversible or slowly reversible actions, highly sensitive data, prominent regulatory exposure, high external visibility — adds: an external red-team attestation as part of TNQ-DE-11; a monthly rather than quarterly Governance Review; an additional engagement personnel role (the customer-side Chief Information Security Officer or equivalent, signing as a third Risk/Security Officer signatory at M2 and M5); and a formal regulatory disclosure schedule, where applicable, included as an exhibit to the Go-Live Readiness Memo.

Across all four tiers, every artifact exists. No artifact is omitted. What changes by tier is the depth of the artifact, the parties who must sign, and the cadence of the recurring operational reviews. The methodology is one methodology, calibrated.

Section 8 · Conclusion

Eighteen artifacts. Five milestones. Six phases. One commercial instrument bracketing the build at the front, one handoff package and a recurring quarterly review bracketing it at the back. This is the methodology under which every TrueNorth Quantum Digital Employee is built, and it is the methodology that produces the artifact trail a regulator, an underwriter, or a successor team will read if they ever need to.

The methodology is not unusually clever. It is unusually disciplined. The artifacts it produces are not unusual artifacts — most enterprise engagements produce something resembling each of them, in some form, at some point. What is unusual is the requirement that all of them be produced, all of them be signed by named parties, all of them be cryptographically anchored to a ledger that survives the engagement, and all of them be operationally consulted — not archived — for the life of the Digital Employee's operation.

The Digital Employee is a new class of operational entity. It deserves a new class of operational discipline. The eighteen artifacts described in this paper are TrueNorth Quantum's answer to the question of what that discipline looks like in practice. They are the documents under which our agents are built, the documents under which our agents are operated, and the documents we expect to be read — by someone, somewhere, on a day we have not yet anticipated — to determine what was done, by whom, against what evidence, and on what authority. Build records become operating records. Operating records become evidence records. The eighteen are the chain.

COLOPHON

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