

EXECUTIVE GUIDE

AI & Shadow IT Risk Guide

Understanding and governing the unsanctioned AI tools already running inside your business.

What Is Shadow AI?

Shadow AI refers to AI tools and services employees adopt on their own — chatbots, writing assistants, image generators, coding copilots — without IT review or approval. It's a subset of the broader "shadow IT" problem, but it's growing faster and carries a distinct risk: employees routinely paste sensitive business data directly into these tools without realizing where it goes.

Why It's Growing

AI tools are free or low-cost, require no procurement process, and deliver an immediate productivity boost — a combination that makes them nearly impossible to fully prevent through policy alone. Most organizations now have far more AI tools in active use than their IT team is aware of.

The Risks

- Sensitive or regulated data (PII, PHI, financial data) pasted into public AI tools with no data processing agreement in place
- AI vendors training models on submitted data, depending on the tool's terms of service
- No audit trail of what data left the organization or through which tool
- AI-generated code or content introduced into business systems without security review
- Increased attack surface as more third-party AI integrations gain access to business systems

Building an AI Usage Policy

An effective policy doesn't try to ban AI outright — that typically pushes usage further underground. Instead, define which tools are approved, what categories of data may never be entered into an AI tool, and a clear path for employees to request evaluation of a new tool instead of adopting it unilaterally.

Monitoring & Governance

Modern security monitoring platforms are beginning to treat "Shadow AI Apps" as a first-class data source alongside cloud platforms and endpoints — giving IT visibility into which AI tools are actually in use across the organization, not just the ones that were formally approved. Pair that visibility with a lightweight approval process so sanctioned tools are easy to adopt and unsanctioned ones are easy to spot.

Get Visibility Into Shadow AI Usage

Cenova Cyber's monitoring platform helps you see and govern AI tool usage across your business.
Contact us to learn more.

www.cenovacyber.com