

TAMRA SAYS

AI CAREER FAMILIES & ROLES



3-MINUTE CHEAT SHEET • EXPLORE → DECIDE → PREPARE

1. EXPLORE THE FIVE AI CAREER FAMILIES

Tamra's rule: choose the responsibility first. Titles change; the work is what matters.

BUILD	RUN	APPLY	LEAD	PROTECT
Create models, applications, agents, datasets, and evaluations.	Deploy, scale, monitor, and maintain AI systems.	Adapt AI to workflows, products, customers, and users.	Choose use cases, outcomes, adoption, and change.	Secure AI and manage privacy, risk, and governance.

THE INDUSTRY HAS THREE LAYERS

BUILD MODELS	BUILD PRODUCTS	ADOPT AI
Research labs create foundation models, specialized methods, safety, and evaluation.	Product teams turn models into assistants, agents, coding tools, copilots, and applications.	Healthcare, finance, manufacturing, retail, logistics, government, and services implement AI.

2. MATCH THE FAMILY TO THE ROLE

Core = central to the job. Helpful = strengthens the role. Optional = not required, but technical literacy still helps.

FAMILY	RECOGNIZABLE ROLES	WHAT THEY DO	CODING
BUILD	AI / LLM Engineer ML Engineer AI Research Scientist Data Scientist	Build applications, train or evaluate models, and turn data into working systems.	Core
RUN	MLOps Engineer AI Platform Engineer Data Engineer SRE	Deploy, scale, observe, secure, and maintain reliable AI services.	Core
APPLY	AI Automation Specialist AI Evaluator Solutions Engineer AI UX Designer	Connect AI to workflows, customer needs, human review, and user experience.	Optional–Helpful
LEAD	AI Product Manager AI Consultant AI Program Lead Adoption Manager	Define requirements, economics, metrics, rollout plans, and organizational change.	Optional
PROTECT	AI Security Specialist Privacy Engineer Governance / Risk Specialist	Threat-model AI, control access and data, and create policy and audit evidence.	Optional–Core

Important: AI agents are usually a specialization inside Build or Apply, not a separate family. “No coding required” does not mean “no experience required.”

3. DECIDE, THEN PREPARE

Start from your existing strengths. Build one small piece of evidence instead of collecting endless certificates.

YOUR BACKGROUND	TRY THESE DIRECTIONS	FIRST EVIDENCE
Software developer	AI application, LLM, ML, or agent engineering	A tested API application with evaluation and error handling
IT / infrastructure	AI platform, MLOps, infrastructure, security, implementation	A deployed service with logs, access controls, and an architecture note
Business / operations	Automation, workflow implementation, AI operations, domain adoption	A measured workflow redesign with human review and exceptions
Data professional	Data engineering, ML, evaluation, analytics engineering	A documented pipeline or evaluation dataset with quality checks
Design / product	AI UX, conversation design, product, human–AI interaction	A prototype plus research, requirements, and failure states
Student / beginner	Foundations, entry-level data, evaluation, automation, internship	One complete small project and a clear explanation of what you learned

THE 90-DAY START

DAYS 1–30 · LEARN

Choose one family. Study fundamentals, read five job descriptions, and reproduce one small example.

DAYS 31–60 · BUILD

Complete one practical project: application, service, workflow, proposal, or risk assessment.

DAYS 61–90 · DEMONSTRATE

Document decisions, test failures, show the demo, measure results, and request feedback.

Tamra's final check: a 90-day roadmap is a structured beginning, not a promise of employment or professional mastery.

Next step: choose a family, build one artifact, and explain the tradeoffs. Read the full AIBX guide for demand, salaries, qualifications, and hiring advice.