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CASE STUDY · MARLUC SYNOPSIS

Mott MacDonald responsible AI framework and EMMA assistant

IMPLEMENTED 2024 ONWARDS · PROFESSIONAL SERVICES · UNITED KINGDOM · BAND D · CLAIMED ONLY

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Mott MacDonald, an employee-owned engineering consultancy with more than 20,000 people, published a responsible AI policy in 2024 with a risk-based governance framework designed with EY. It launched its own generative AI assistant, EMMA, in January 2025 and uses Microsoft 365 Copilot. In 2026 it licensed Microsoft 365 E7 for all staff to manage AI agents. No usage or results figures are published.

ABOUT THIS SYNOPSIS

This is MarLuc's summary and grading of publicly available sources, for information only. It is not investment, legal, financial or professional advice, and should not be relied on for any decision. Readers must validate it against the original sources and, where appropriate, challenge its conclusions.

Facts and figures are as reported by the sources listed below, which may be incomplete, self-reported or out of date. Check the original source before relying on any figure.

The impact band, proof marker and SEAM view are MarLuc's opinion. The organisation is not a MarLuc client and has not reviewed or endorsed this synopsis. Names and trademarks belong to their owners.

NOTICE WORDING LAST UPDATED 16 NOVEMBER 2026

AT A GLANCE

AI used: Generative AI assistants: an in-house knowledge assistant (EMMA) on Microsoft Azure, and Microsoft 365 Copilot.

Implemented: 2024 onwards. Grade: band D, Task support, Claimed only.

Headline result, as reported: EMMA, an in-house AI assistant, connects 20,000 staff with company knowledge, by Mott MacDonald's account

1 · The case

The facts, as reported by the 5 sources listed at the end. Where a source is silent, the field says "Not reported".

Organisation

Mott MacDonald. Employee-owned engineering, development and management consultancy headquartered in the UK, with more than 20,000 people in over 50 countries, per EY. Canvas block: 8. Governance and risk. Also 6. Data and technology, 5. People and skills.

Business challenge

The challenge. EY says Mott MacDonald wanted to identify and respond to AI risks and prepare for regulation such as the EU AI Act, which EY describes as carrying fines of up to 7% of global annual revenue. Mott MacDonald says its information estate is vast and staff spent time hunting for answers.

How it was addressed. With EY, Mott MacDonald chose a risk-based approach in place of a blanket AI policy: a risk appetite, an inventory of AI systems and models, and a risk assessment method that classifies systems by commercial and regulatory risk. Its Group policy statement of September 2024 names an executive board director as responsible, sets up an AI leadership team and a Group AI governance lead, and requires annual responsible AI training where appropriate. In January 2025 it launched EMMA ('Every Mott MacDonald Answer'), built on Microsoft Azure AI Search and AI Foundry, to search its internal knowledge. Microsoft 365 Copilot is described as staff's main entry point to AI. In July 2026 it announced Microsoft 365 E7, including Copilot and Agent 365, for all 20,000 people. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

Who implemented it

EY (Consultancy): Helped design the risk-based AI governance framework and policy.
Microsoft (Model or cloud provider): Supplies Microsoft 365 Copilot, Azure AI Foundry and Microsoft 365 E7.
In-house (In-house): Built EMMA and runs the AI governance team.

Technology (SEAM pillar E)

SEAM types: T1 Chat assistants, T2 Embedded AI in existing software, T4 RAG / vector search over your own data. Deployment: Mixture. Vendors and products: Microsoft, EMMA (Every Mott MacDonald Answer), Microsoft 365 Copilot, Microsoft Azure AI Search, Microsoft Azure AI Foundry, Microsoft 365 E7 with Agent 365.

Where it was built in: EMMA searches the company's internal knowledge bases; Copilot is used in everyday Microsoft 365 work; an AI-guided workflow supports monthly project reviews, by the company's account.

What changed

Before: staff searched a vast information estate for procedures, experts and compliance details, by the head of AI's account. After: a published policy with named owners, an AI system inventory and risk classification, an in-house knowledge assistant, Copilot for everyday tasks, and an AI-guided workflow for monthly project reviews, by the company's account. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

What it cost

Not reported

What it saved

Not reported. Mott MacDonald's head of AI says language models now categorise public consultation responses 'in minutes', per Microsoft UK Stories; no figures are given. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

Governance and control

A published policy names an executive board director as responsible, with an AI leadership team and a Group AI governance lead who monitors AI risks. Staff must follow the framework and complete annual responsible AI training where appropriate. EY designed an AI inventory and a risk classification method. In 2026 the company said Agent 365 would let it operate AI agents with control and accountability. All of this is the company's or its partners' account.

S2 · Accountable owner · Claimed
An executive board director is responsible for the policy statement, with an AI leadership team accountable for the governance framework, by the company's account. [1] [4]

A1 · Safe use · Claimed
Staff must comply with the AI governance framework and, where appropriate, complete responsible AI training each year, under principles aligned with the OECD's. [1]

A2 · Human in the loop · Claimed
The policy commits to appropriate levels of human oversight of AI systems and their outputs. [1]

A3 · Monitoring and assurance · Claimed
A Group AI governance lead monitors AI risks and adherence to the framework; EY designed an inventory process to track AI systems and models. [1] [5]

A4 · Vendor AI · Claimed
The policy covers procuring AI systems, and EY's risk method classifies systems by commercial and regulatory risk; no supplier-specific checks are described. [1] [5]

A5 · Agent controls · Claimed
In 2026 the company said Agent 365 would let it operate AI agents with trust, accountability and control. [4]

A6 · Standards and regulation · Claimed
EY says Mott MacDonald is prepared for the EU AI Act; the policy aligns its principles with the OECD's. [1] [5]

What worked, what did not, what is unproven

WORKED

– A published responsible AI policy with named owners, by the company's account.

– An in-house assistant launched and on its second version within nine months, by the company's account.

– More than 3,000 staff building tools on a governed digital workspace, per Microsoft UK Stories.

DID NOT

– No usage, accuracy or time-saving figures for EMMA or Copilot have been published.

– The head of AI says AI can be divisive and some engineers worry about its effect on jobs, per Microsoft UK Stories.

UNPROVEN

– Whether EMMA and Copilot save measurable time or improve the quality of engineering work.

– Whether the agent controls described for Microsoft 365 E7 work in practice as agents are added.

Timeline

Sept 2024 Group policy statement on responsible AI published [1]

Jan 2025 EMMA generative AI assistant first launched [2]

Sept 2025 Head of AI and information management appointed; EMMA on its second version [2]

Nov 2025 Microsoft feature describes EMMA on Azure AI Foundry and more than 3,000 citizen

Jul 2026 Microsoft 365 E7, with Copilot and Agent 365, announced for 20,000 people [4]

2 · Grade and SEAM assessment

MarLuc's opinion, made on the evidence above. How cases are graded: marluc.co.uk/case-studies/how-we-rate

Level of change and impact

Claimed: Not applicable. Grade: D, Task support. Proof: Claimed only. Level of change: Task support.

Task support (Level 1, band D). The governance framework and some AI-guided workflows point towards process change, but no results are reported.

Staff use AI assistants to find information and summarise work, which is task support. Mott MacDonald describes some redesigned steps, such as AI-guided monthly project reviews and AI classification of consultation responses, but reports no measures of their effect. The framework is a governance change and is not graded as an outcome.

The SEAM view and lessons learnt

Mott MacDonald put governance in place before scaling AI: a policy with named owners, an inventory and risk tiers. That order is sound for a firm whose work affects public safety. The gap is evidence: neither the company nor its partners publish how many staff use the tools, what they save, or how often answers are wrong. For a larger organisation, the transferable point is to measure use and quality from the start, so a governance framework can show what it is governing.

1. Name an accountable owner and publish the policy before rolling tools out.
2. Keep an inventory of AI systems and grade each by risk.
3. Publish usage and quality measures alongside the governance story.

Evidence

Score 1 of 4. Self-reported: the company's policy and releases, a case story by EY (its consultancy) and a feature by Microsoft (its supplier). No independent check.

Evaluation method. Self-reported: company releases, a policy statement, a consultancy case story and a supplier feature. No before and after measures published.

Sources disagree. The policy statement PDF is headed September 2024 but its second page footer reads August 2024.

Status. Ongoing: EMMA is in use and Microsoft 365 E7 was announced for all staff in July 2026, by the company's account.

3 · Original sources

Read these in full. To challenge a fact or a grade, use the contact form at marluc.co.uk or the link on https://marluc.co.uk/case-studies/mott-macdonald-responsible-ai-and-emma

[1] Mott MacDonald: Responsible AI, Group policy statement (September 2024)
https://cdn.mottmac.com/download/fb212d4a7f2d11efa5898a03e9b06f48

[2] Mott MacDonald: Nasrine Tomasi to lead deployment of responsible AI at Mott MacDonald (September 2025)
https://www.mottmac.com/en/news/nasrine-tomasi-to-lead-deployment-of-responsible-ai-at-mott-macdonald/

[3] Microsoft UK Stories: How Mott MacDonald is using AI to engineer a smarter world (November 2025)
https://ukstories.microsoft.com/features/how-mott-macdonald-is-using-ai-to-engineer-a-smarter-world/

[4] Mott MacDonald: strengthens frontier position on AI enablement with Microsoft 365 E7 (July 2026)
https://www.mottmac.com/en/news/mott-macdonald-strengthens-frontier-position-on-ai-enablement-with-microsoft-365-e7/

[5] EY: How Mott MacDonald accelerated responsible AI (client story)
https://www.ey.com/en_uk/insights/ai/how-mott-macdonald-is-building-confidence-through-responsible-ai

Mott MacDonald website: https://www.mottmac.com

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