

The Broker Who Carried Three Lamps

Through the metaphor of three lamps, this story reflects on partnership brokering at the intersection of relational practice, artificial intelligence, and ethics.



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Chapter 1 The Arrival of the Third Lamp

For most of my professional life, I had carried the first lamp with confidence.

It was the lamp I knew well. Relational practice. It was warmed by attunement, trauma informed listening, and the instinct to step in when systems faltered around people. As a practitioner, that lamp had guided me reliably.

As I began stepping more consciously into a partnership brokering role, I noticed that this lamp did not disappear, but it could no longer be the only one I carried.

The second lamp arrived quietly.

A tool, at first unremarkable.

A suggestion in meetings.

An invitation to save time, see patterns, increase efficiency.

AI.

At first, I used it tentatively. Then practically. Eventually, more intentionally.

Its light was cool and precise. It sorted complexity quickly. It named patterns I sensed but could not always articulate. For a partnership broker working across services, systems, and narratives, this capacity was undeniably attractive.

And that was when the third lamp became necessary.

Not as a tool, but as a conscious ethical frame.

That evening, I opened my logbook, the same logbook that accompanied my Level 2 brokering journey, and wrote not just what AI could do, but what my role as broker required of me.

I began naming ethical judgements I would have to make deliberately rather than implicitly.

What information did I have the right to translate into AI supported sensemaking

How might AI amplify already dominant voices within partnerships

Where could efficiency undermine trust, consent, or dignity

And where would accountability sit when machines supported human decisions

I realised then that partnership brokering with AI was not about adopting a tool.

It was about holding three lamps at once.

Relational integrity

Analytical capacity

Ethical judgement

And knowing when each needed to lead.

Chapter 2 When Language Shifts Power in the Room

The partnership that brought this into sharp relief sat at the seam I knew well. Community based local care organisations and clinically funded mental health services working together around domestic and family violence recovery.

On paper, the partnership appeared balanced.

In lived practice, power moved quietly through language, funding, legitimacy, and professional hierarchy.

At an early meeting, clinicians shared AI generated summaries drawn from service data.

These patterns help us identify escalation risk and disengagement points, one clinician explained.

As a partnership broker facilitating collaboration rather than advocating for one sector, I noticed a familiar shift. The analytical clarity was compelling, but the room had gone quieter.

A local care practitioner leaned toward me and said softly, I am worried our clients are becoming data profiles instead of people.

This was not resistance to technology.

It was information about power.

As a broker, I recognised this as a moment requiring an active brokering intervention rather than quiet observation. Left unnamed, AI supported clinical language risked becoming the dominant interpretation of reality, not because it was inaccurate, but because it carried institutional authority.

I named what I was noticing.

Before we lean too far into these patterns, I said, I want to pause us. How do these insights sit alongside lived experience, advocacy knowledge, and the relational work happening outside clinical rooms.

This was not a rejection of AI.

It was a deliberate rebalancing intervention to protect equity within the partnership.

The third lamp came fully into view.

Chapter 3 Sensemaking as a Broker Rather Than a Technician

Later, working alone, I used AI to synthesise de identified coordination notes, positioning the tool intentionally as support for broker sensemaking rather than an authority.

The output was competent. Clean. Technically accurate.

And incomplete.

It named non attendance without exhaustion.

Risk without resilience.

Breakdown without context.

Here, my logbook learning echoed strongly. Partnership brokers carry responsibility not just for pattern recognition, but for meaning making.

I laid the AI output beside my handwritten reflections, shaped by months of boundary spanning, neutrality, and restraint.

I made a conscious ethical judgement.

I would not present the AI summary on its own.

Instead, I wove the outputs together, ensuring that analytical clarity did not erase relational truth.

When I shared this composite picture with partners, something shifted.

A case manager said quietly,

This actually sounds like the people I work with.

In that moment, AI did not disappear. It took its rightful place.

I understood more clearly that ethical brokering with AI requires active repair when meaning is flattened.

Chapter 4 Futures, Framing, and the Risk of Fixing People

As the partnership turned toward future planning, I again engaged AI, this time to generate possible scenarios for joint work.

The projections were sobering. Increased demand, constrained workforce capacity, expanding triage systems.

Technically sound.

Relationally dangerous.

My brokering instinct, strengthened through reflective practice, alerted me to the risk that these futures could harden into limiting narratives about people rather than serve as prompts for collaboration.

As a broker, I made a conscious framing intervention.

I presented the scenarios without attribution.

I invited partners to respond, challenge, and reshape them.

This was an intentional brokering choice to ensure AI informed dialogue without dictating direction.

One participant wrote,

These futures assume failure, not recovery.

That critique became the real work.

Together, partners reframed the scenarios around continuity of care, dignity, and shared responsibility. AI widened the field of possibility only because interpretation remained collectively owned.

Chapter 5 Transparency as an Ethical Safeguard

As AI supported drafting and synthesis across partnership artefacts, another ethical question surfaced, closely connected to principle based accountability.

How visible should AI be in shared partnership work.

Rather than decide privately, I chose transparency.

At the next meeting, I clearly named where AI had been used, where it had been overridden, and where human judgement had intentionally led.

The response was not resistance.

It was reassurance.

I recorded this learning carefully.

Transparency reduces ethical risk. Invisibility increases it.

Chapter 6 Guarding Against Drift

Over time, I began noticing quiet signals, mostly in myself.

The ease of automation.

The comfort of delegation.

The subtle pull toward letting systems decide.

Each became a cue for restraint rather than acceleration.

When outputs felt too neat, I deliberately slowed the process, recognising restraint as an active brokering practice rather than inaction.

When language drifted toward clinical dominance, I translated it back into lived experience.

When partners leaned on AI for authority, I redirected dialogue toward shared ownership and accountability.

These were not technical decisions. They were broker judgements grounded in neutrality and ethical discipline.

Chapter 7 Consent, Power, and Collective Agreement

The most important question came from a partner.

Are any client details being entered into that system.

I realised then that ethical practice cannot be privately held by the broker.

I paused the work and convened a collective conversation.

Together, we set clear boundaries.

Together, we named what AI would never be used for.

Together, we affirmed that efficiency would not outrank consent or trust.

This reflected a core insight from my logbook practice.

Ethics in partnership brokering are not rules imposed by one actor. They are relational agreements shaped and held collectively.

Chapter 8 Carrying All Three Lamps

This is not a story about AI.

It is a story about what partnership brokering requires when new forms of power enter collaborative systems.

AI made existing dynamics more visible.

Whose knowledge carries authority

Whose voices are summarised

Whose experiences risk compression

My learning across this period is clear.

The partnership broker's role is not to choose between tools and people.

It is to protect equity while holding complexity.

On a quiet evening, I closed my logbook and saw the three lamps clearly.

Relational presence

Analytical support

Ethical judgement

My task is not to carry any one perfectly.

It is to carry them consciously, transparently, and accountably, in service of partnerships that remain human even as systems evolve.

Broker Insight Summary

This story reflects my development as a partnership broker working across community based local care and clinically funded mental health services within a complex and unequal system. The introduction of AI into partnership processes made my brokering role more visible, not less. Throughout this work, I made deliberate broker interventions to rebalance power, surface hidden assumptions, slow decision making, and protect dignity where analytical tools risked privileging dominant knowledge or institutional authority.

The key learning for partnership brokers is that technology increases the need for skilled brokering judgement rather than reducing it. AI can support analysis, synthesis, and reflection, but it cannot hold neutrality, sense readiness, navigate power, or take ethical responsibility. This work reinforced that Level 2 partnership brokering is defined as much by restraint as by action, by transparency rather than invisibility, and by principled accountability to the partnership rather than efficiency. My contribution lies in demonstrating how brokers can steward conditions for collaboration that remain inclusive and ethical, even as new tools reshape the landscape of partnership work.