

The Human Authorship Evidence Standard

A Governance Doctrine for Compliance Confidence
in AI-Assisted Content Creation

Published by	ZNS Solutions
Author	Steven Zapolski, Founder
Year	2026
Framework	HAES: Human Authorship Evidence Standard

This framework reflects governance and compliance best practices. It is not legal advice. Organizations with specific copyright questions should consult qualified intellectual property counsel.

Table of Contents

Origin	3
The Problem Nobody Is Treating as a Compliance Issue	4
What the Existing Governance Landscape Misses	5
NIST AI RMF	5
IIA Global Internal Audit Standards (2024)	5
ISO 42001	5
COSO / COBIT	5
The Three-Prong Doctrine	6
Prong One: Ownership	6
Prong Two: Defense	6
Prong Three: Enforcement	6
The Five Elements of HAES	7
1. Creative Intent Statement	7
2. Prompt and Input Record	7
3. Output Capture	7
4. Edit and Decision Log	7
5. Exportable Record Package	7
A Special Note for the Creator Who Also Has a Day Job	8
Who This Standard Is For	9
Independent Creators and Consultants	9
Enterprise Teams	9
AI Platform Companies	9
The ZNS Solutions Approach	10
A Note on Timing	11

Origin

This doctrine did not begin in a research lab or a legal brief. It began as a recurring thought that kept surfacing in the middle of ordinary life. Driving the kids to school. Sitting in a work meeting. Moving between a day job in internal audit and a consulting practice being built on the side.

The question was simple. If someone challenged ownership of the content being created with AI, what would there be to show them? There was no good answer. And when the existing governance landscape was searched for a framework that provided one, the answer was the same everywhere: nobody had built it yet.

The Human Authorship Evidence Standard is that framework.

The Problem Nobody Is Treating as a Compliance Issue

Millions of professionals, creators, and organizations are using artificial intelligence to produce content they intend to own, commercialize, and protect. They are building consulting practices on it. They are developing thought leadership on it. They are creating client deliverables, publishing platforms, and professional reputations on it.

Most of them have no documentation to prove a human created it.

That is not a technology problem. It is not a legal problem. It is a compliance problem, and the governance profession has not yet treated it like one.

The U.S. Copyright Office has been clear and consistent since its 2023 guidance and the Zarya of the Dawn decision: purely AI-generated content does not qualify for copyright protection. The threshold question is not whether AI was used. It is whether a human being made meaningful, identifiable creative choices that shaped the final work. Without documentation of that process, that question cannot be answered in your favor. Not by a registration examiner, not by a platform reviewer, and not by an organizational governance process that surfaces the gap at the worst possible moment.

Compliance confidence requires more than good intentions. It requires a documented process that can be reviewed, verified, and stood behind regardless of which tools were used, which subscriptions are still active, or how much time has passed since the work was created.

What the Existing Governance Landscape Misses

The governance profession has produced serious, substantive frameworks for AI risk. Each one addresses a real and important dimension of the problem. None of them address this one.

NIST AI RMF

The most comprehensive AI governance document currently in wide use. It addresses transparency, accountability, and explainability of AI systems. It focuses entirely on how organizations govern the tools they deploy, not on what happens to the intellectual output of the humans who use them.

IIA Global Internal Audit Standards (2024)

Address AI governance in the context of organizational risk. They tell auditors how to assess AI risk inside an organization. They say nothing about protecting the content those auditors and consultants produce using AI tools.

ISO 42001

Governs AI management systems at the organizational level. Content ownership and creator rights are outside its scope entirely.

COSO / COBIT

Address information governance broadly but predate the AI content creation problem in any meaningful way. Neither has substantive guidance on human authorship documentation.

Every existing framework looks at AI from the outside in. How do organizations govern AI systems they deploy? No framework looks from the inside out. How do human beings protect their own intellectual contribution when they work alongside AI.

***NIST protects the system. IIA protects the audit. COSO protects the organization.
Nobody protects the human. HAES fills that gap.***

The Three-Prong Doctrine

HAES is organized around three prongs that together address the complete intellectual property lifecycle of AI-assisted work. Each prong reflects a distinct compliance need. Together they form a holistic governance doctrine.

Prong One: Ownership

The ownership prong establishes that a human being made meaningful creative contributions to AI-assisted work and documents that contribution in a format that can be reviewed and verified. This is the proactive prong, the documentation practice that every creator and consultant should be maintaining from the moment they begin using AI tools for any work they intend to own or commercialize.

Compliance confidence on the ownership prong means being able to answer the question: what did you bring to this work that the AI could not? The answer should come with a documented, timestamped, exportable record rather than a verbal assertion.

Prong Two: Defense

The defense prong protects creators from downstream exposure related to the content AI tools produce on their behalf. AI systems are trained on vast bodies of existing work. The outputs they generate can carry similarities to source material in ways the user never intended and cannot always detect. Without a documented record of what was prompted, what was received, and what human judgment was applied before publication, a creator has limited ability to demonstrate that any similarities were unintentional and that reasonable care was taken.

Compliance confidence on the defense prong means having a process that creates a clear record of human editorial judgment between AI output and published work. It is evidence that a human being reviewed, shaped, and took responsibility for what went out under their name.

Prong Three: Enforcement

The enforcement prong addresses what happens when someone else uses your work. Your documented expertise, your original frameworks, your creative contribution used as the input for their own AI-assisted content without permission or attribution. This is the emerging frontier of AI intellectual property violation and it is currently almost entirely unaddressed as a governance problem.

Compliance confidence on the enforcement prong means having the documented chain of custody on your original work that makes a credible claim possible when derivative use is detected. It means maintaining a record that establishes your contribution as the origin point. Not just the finished product, but the thinking, the expertise, and the creative direction that produced it.

The Five Elements of HAES

Across all three prongs, the standard is operationalized through five documentation elements that together constitute a complete human authorship record.

1. Creative Intent Statement

Before or immediately after initiating an AI-assisted work session, the creator records a brief statement of what they are trying to accomplish, the creative decisions they are bringing to the work, and the original ideas, research, or expertise they are contributing. Two sentences of honest, specific description is sufficient. The point is to establish that a human being with a purpose and a perspective initiated this work.

2. Prompt and Input Record

The full text of every prompt, brief, or instruction provided to the AI tool is preserved in its original form. This includes follow-up prompts, refinement instructions, and any source material provided as context. This element documents the human creative direction that shaped what the AI produced.

3. Output Capture

The raw AI output, exactly as generated before any human editing, is preserved separately from the final work. This creates a clear baseline that makes human contribution visible by contrast. The gap between the raw output and the final work is where human authorship lives.

4. Edit and Decision Log

The substantive changes made between the raw output and the final version are documented. This does not require tracking every keystroke. It requires noting the meaningful decisions: structural changes, additions of original material, deletions of AI-generated content that didn't serve the work, and any points where the creator overrode or redirected the AI output based on their own judgment.

5. Exportable Record Package

All four elements above are stored together in a portable, platform-independent format that belongs to the creator regardless of what tools were used or what subscriptions are maintained. The record travels with the work, not with the vendor. Compliance confidence requires ownership of the evidence, not just access to it.

A Special Note for the Creator Who Also Has a Day Job

This section is written for a specific person. The consultant, the creator, the practitioner who spends their working hours inside an organization and their remaining hours building something of their own. This person is not a hypothetical. They are the primary audience this doctrine was built for, because they face a compliance dimension that pure independent creators do not.

When an employee uses a corporate-licensed AI tool, whether a company-provisioned ChatGPT Enterprise instance, Microsoft Copilot inside a Microsoft 365 environment, or any employer-provided AI platform, to create content unrelated to their employment, the ownership of that content becomes genuinely contested territory. Corporate licensing agreements and acceptable use policies frequently assert broad ownership over content produced inside their environments. Work-for-hire doctrine in employment law can extend that claim further than most employees realize.

Most people have never read those policies carefully enough to know where the line is. Most organizations have never written those policies carefully enough to draw it clearly.

A consultant who uses an employer's AI tools to develop frameworks for their independent practice may have created an ownership ambiguity they are entirely unaware of. Without a HAES record that establishes when the work was created, on which tools, with what personal expertise as the input, and with what creative intent, there is no clean evidence that the work belongs to the person who created it.

The mitigation is not complicated. Maintain clear separation between corporate tool usage and personal creative work. Document your personal creative process on personal tools and personal storage. And maintain your HAES record in a platform-independent format that you own outright, not inside any employer-provisioned system.

Compliance confidence for the dual-role creator means knowing exactly where your employer's claim ends and yours begins, and having the documentation to prove it.

Who This Standard Is For

Independent Creators and Consultants

Building content practices, consulting frameworks, and thought leadership platforms on AI-assisted workflows without any systematic way to protect what they create. HAES provides a personal documentation practice that is lightweight enough to maintain daily and substantive enough to matter when it counts. Compliance confidence at this level means being able to stand behind your work without hesitation and build a practice on a foundation that holds.

Enterprise Teams

Using AI for marketing, thought leadership, training content, and client deliverables, facing the same exposure at organizational scale with the added dimension of regulatory and contractual obligations. HAES provides a documentation standard that can be embedded into content production workflows and demonstrated to clients, leadership, and governance reviewers. Compliance confidence at this level means your organization's AI-assisted content production process can withstand scrutiny from any direction.

AI Platform Companies

Whose users are creating commercial content inside their tools. User retention, enterprise sales, and market positioning all improve when a platform can demonstrate that it supports its users' intellectual property rights rather than undermining them. HAES provides a licensable implementation standard that can be embedded as a native feature and positioned as a meaningful differentiator. Compliance confidence at this level becomes a product.

The ZNS Solutions Approach

ZNS Solutions brings a specific lens to this problem that pure technology firms cannot replicate. The Human Authorship Evidence Standard was developed from a governance, risk, and compliance foundation, the same discipline that defines what constitutes sufficient evidence in process reviews, regulatory examinations, and organizational audits.

GRC professionals understand something that most product designers do not. Documentation is only valuable if it was designed with the reviewer in mind. The question is never whether your records satisfy you. It is whether they satisfy the examiner, the governance reviewer, or the organizational process audit that surfaces the gap at the worst possible moment. HAES was built with that reviewer in mind from the beginning.

Steven Zapolski brings twenty years of GRC and audit technology experience, a decade of solutions engineering with Fortune 500 and federal agency clients, and direct practitioner experience as an internal audit professional. ZNS Solutions offers HAES implementation consulting, platform licensing, and organizational training for teams that need to operationalize this standard inside existing workflows.

This framework reflects governance and compliance best practices. It is not legal advice. Organizations with specific copyright questions should consult qualified intellectual property counsel.

A Note on Timing

The Copyright Office guidance is evolving. Platform terms are changing. Organizational AI governance policies are still being written. The window in which individuals and organizations can get ahead of this problem, rather than respond to it, is open right now and will not stay open indefinitely.

The creators and consultants who build human authorship documentation into their workflows today will not need to reconstruct it when the question becomes urgent. The ones who don't will find themselves trying to demonstrate a creative process they never recorded.

HAES exists for one reason. So that every human being who creates with AI can do so with compliance confidence.

You always want to stay out of the news.

For licensing inquiries, implementation consulting, or platform partnership discussions, contact ZNS Solutions.

© 2026 ZNS Solutions. Steven Zapolski. All rights reserved.