

Governance, not agents

“Which AI agent should we buy?” is the *second* question. The first — **who owns this, and how do we decide what ships?** — is the one that predicts whether the project survives. When these programs get cancelled, **four of the five reasons are governance and ownership. Only one is technical.**



THE 5 TELLS — YOU'RE MISSING GOVERNANCE — **only 1 of 5 is technical**

- 1

No decision rights
Nobody can say which projects start or stop — or who's accountable when an agent makes a bad call.
- 2

No use-case gate
Every team wants an agent, so the program spreads across a dozen weak candidates instead of two strong ones.
- 3

Broken data underneath
The agent reasons confidently over records that disagree.

THE TECHNICAL ONE → LAYER 2
- 4

Runaway cost
Tokens, orchestration, human review, vendor fees compound quietly — the bill lands after the budget's committed.
- 5

No owner after launch
The pilot team disbands, the agent drifts, and six months later it's quietly wrong and nobody's watching.

Governance is a **thin function — three to eight people, not a forty-person committee.** It owns the decision rights, the use-case gate, and the lifecycle:

Decision rights · the GO / PILOT / PARK use-case gate · intake→run→retire lifecycle

A clear **no** with a reason is enablement. A slow **maybe** is theatre.

TIER THE AUTONOMY — NOT EVERY DECISION DESERVES IT — **blunder: L3 autonomy · L0 controls**



Monday morning

YOUR FIRST MOVE

Write a name — **today, without a meeting** — next to each of the six decision rights:

1 Which use-cases get built

2 Production rollout sign-off

3 Budget

4 Risk acceptance

5 Model & prompt changes

6 Integrations

*An afternoon of work that prevents months of chaos. Self-check: **who accepts the risk if the agent acts and gets it wrong?** If you hesitated — that's your gap.*

OPERATOR INSIGHT · LAYER 1

Governance doesn't slow AI down — it's what lets AI scale.

“Your AI maturity will never exceed your operational maturity.”

Free

Score your own org — the AI-Ready Operations Assessment turns this episode into a check you can run (maturity scale: *ad hoc* → *AI-ready*). vihrenlabs.gumroad.com/l/rmkje