

A home, not applause

Building an AI system is a project. **Keeping it valuable is an operational capability** – and those are very different things. Successful pilots rarely die because the technology failed; they disappear because nobody ever owned what happens after the success. The pilot graveyard is full of ideas that worked, that had a sponsor but never an owner, project funding but never operational funding.



THE FIVE PIECES OF AN OPERATING MODEL ————— not one involves machine learning

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Funding OPERATIONAL, NOT PROJECT

A project budget asks "can we build this". An operating budget asks "can we keep this healthy". **"We'll figure it out later" means you have an experiment, not a capability.**
- 2

Ownership ONE NAME

One accountable person. Not five, not a steering committee, not "the business". **Shared ownership is no ownership.**
- 3

Roadmap IT EVOLVES

What improves next quarter, what gets retired. Without one, your AI slowly turns into a snapshot of yesterday's business.
- 4

Run and maintain THE ENGINE ROOM

Pilots have builders; capabilities have operators. Builders create it, operators keep it reliable – genuinely different roles.
- 5

Decommission HOW IT LEAVES

Not every agent deserves to live forever. The worst outcome isn't retiring one, it's forgetting it exists – abandoned, it becomes technical debt and sometimes a security risk.

WHICH ONE DID YOU BUILD ————— the ordinary–Tuesday test

AN AI EVENT

A beginning, some excitement, then an end. Its success still **depends on the person who built it** – and dependencies don't scale.

AN AI CAPABILITY

Survives new leadership, shifting priorities and staff turnover, because it is **no longer a project** – it's simply how the business works.

The test: on an ordinary Tuesday eighteen months from now, if the person who built it has left, does it still deliver value? **One organisation gave its AI a home. The other gave it a round of applause.**

Monday morning

FIVE WORDS, FIVE NAMES

Take one AI capability you're proud of. On one sheet of paper write five words – **Funding, Ownership, Roadmap, Run, Decommission** – and next to each write a **name**, not a description. Who pays next year? Whose one name owns it? Who decides what it becomes, who gets the call when it breaks, who retires it?

If you catch yourself writing "the project team" or "we'll decide later", you've found the weakest part of your operating model. **Fix the empty box before hundreds of people depend on it.**

OPERATOR INSIGHT · LAYER 5

Pilots don't scale. Operating models do.

"Your AI maturity will never exceed your operational maturity."

Free

Score your own operation – the AI-Ready Operations Assessment turns all five layers into a readiness check, from "ad hoc" to "AI-ready". [vihrenlabs.gumroad.com/l/rmkje](https://vihrenlabs.com/gumroad.com/l/rmkje)