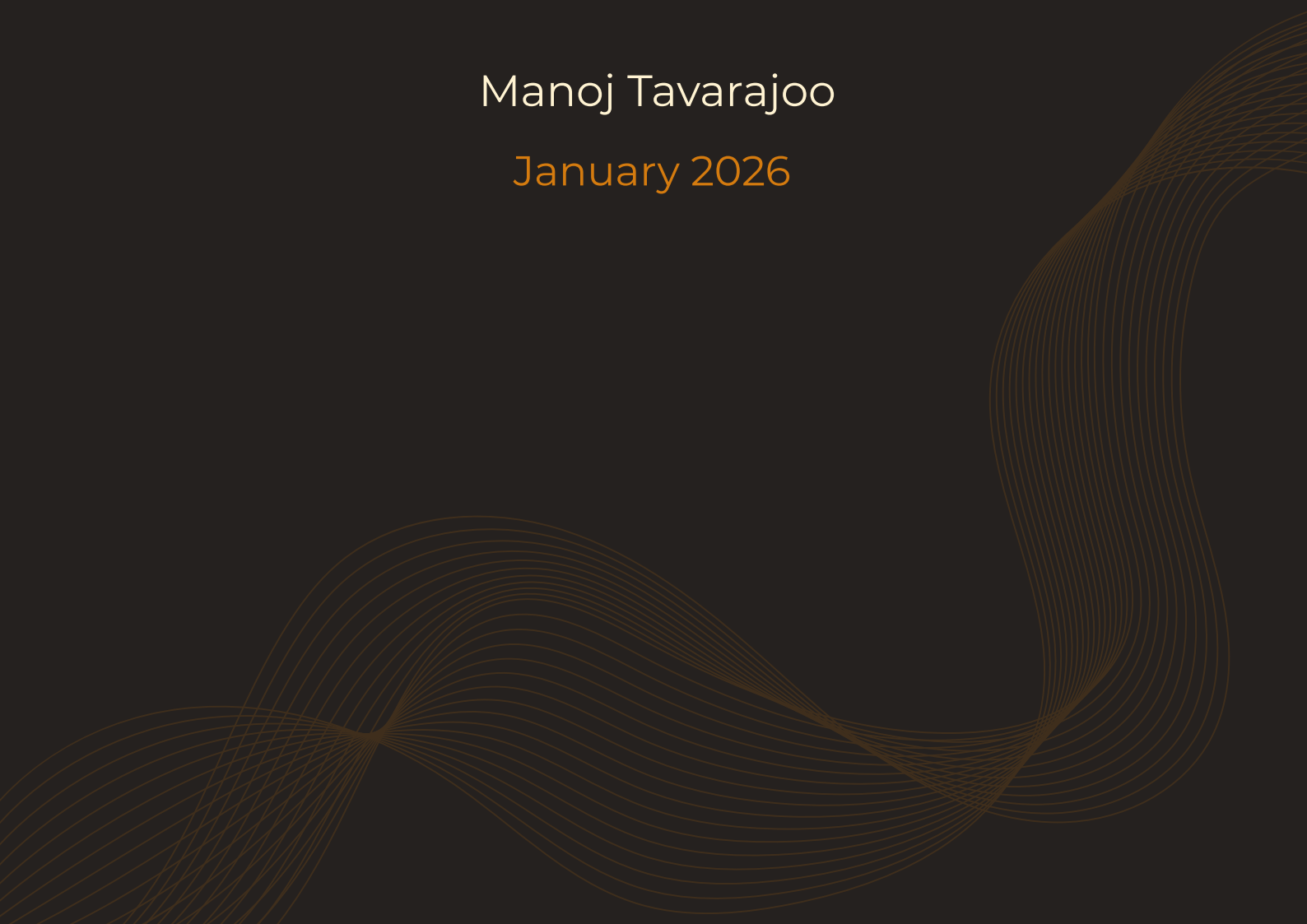MyConsultancy

When to Kill AI Use Cases and Why It Matters

The AI Operating Model Playbook

Manoj Tavarajoo

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Opening context

Stopping AI initiatives is uncomfortable. Teams invest time and effort. Sponsors build expectations. Early signals are often ambiguous.

As a result, many organisations avoid explicit termination decisions. Use cases linger without clear ownership or momentum. Resources are consumed quietly, and portfolios become congested.

This avoidance is not neutral. It is corrosive.

Why this fails in most organisations

AI use cases are rarely designed with explicit exit criteria. Success is defined loosely, and failure is reframed as delay. Without clear stopping rules, initiatives persist by default.

This creates hidden costs. Teams remain tied to low-value work. Learning is diluted. New ideas struggle to gain attention because old ones never fully exit.

Over time, the organisation becomes reluctant to stop anything, even when evidence suggests it should.

The operating model insight

Terminating AI use cases is not a sign of failure. It is a sign of stewardship.

Healthy AI portfolios treat stopping as an integral part of learning. Decisions to exit are made deliberately, based on evidence, and with clarity about what has been learned.

Killing initiatives frees capacity, sharpens focus, and reinforces accountability.

What this looks like in practice

Organisations that stop well define exit criteria upfront. Teams know what success looks like and what conditions will trigger termination or pivot.

Review forums treat termination decisions as learning moments, not post-mortems. Insights are captured and reused. Teams move on without stigma.

This normalises discipline and reduces the emotional cost of stopping.

Common mistakes to avoid

Allowing initiatives to persist because they have senior sponsorship.

Delaying termination in the hope that clarity will emerge on its own.

Treating stopping as a failure rather than a governance decision.

Recycling stalled initiatives under new labels without addressing root causes.

What leaders must do differently

Leaders must legitimise stopping as part of responsible AI governance.

This means setting clear expectations, rewarding evidence-based decisions, and modelling discipline at the portfolio level. When leaders stop work decisively, the organisation learns to do the same.

Conclusion

AI portfolios fail as much from what organisations refuse to stop as from what they choose to start.

Killing AI use cases at the right time is not about reducing ambition. It is about protecting the conditions under which ambition can translate into sustained value.

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