

YOUR ARCHETYPE — LONGER READ

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# The Pilot Graveyard

*You bought the tool. You ran the pilot. The pilot produced a deck. The deck disappeared.*



## THE PATTERN

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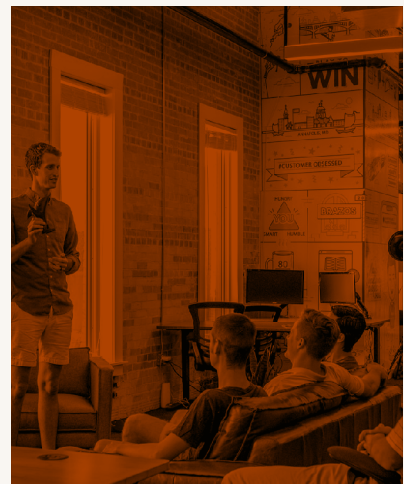
### What this means in practice

Pilot Graveyards aren't operations that don't try. They're operations that try a lot — three, four, five pilots a year — and the trying stopped translating into capability about two cycles ago. The pattern isn't laziness or bad procurement. It's that pilots are being asked to *prove* things that should have been *built* first: data quality, process documentation, ownership clarity. A pilot built on a wobbly foundation doesn't fail because the technology is wrong. It fails because the foundation moves.

**“The headstones aren't engineering problems. They're alignment problems someone hoped the pilot would resolve on its own.”**

### Tells you'll recognize

- You can name three pilots from the last two years and describe what each was supposed to prove.
- The same vendors keep coming back with *“the version that actually works.”*
- Internal champions for new tools have a high turnover rate, or get reassigned before the rollout is real.
- The post-mortem on the last failed pilot was either never written or never circulated.
- *“We need to think more carefully about adoption next time”* shows up in multiple kickoff decks.
- Your team is quietly skeptical when leadership announces the next initiative. They've earned the skepticism.
- Someone in the last all-hands asked whether [recent announcement] was going to be like [previous announcement]. Nobody quite answered.



## What it's costing you

This pattern is less visible than the others because the cost is opportunity, not waste. The work continues; the operation hasn't compounded its capabilities in two years. Each failed pilot also raises the bar for the next one — eventually nobody volunteers to lead one, and the people who would have been good at it move on. The hardest cost: when the next *real* opportunity comes, your team will be too tired to engage.

## Your sequencing read — and why

**Before any new pilot, write the post-mortem you didn't write last time.** This is the only sequencing read that flips the order. You don't need more automation, more analytics, or more AI right now — you need a sober look at what actually went wrong before the next round.

The pattern is almost always the same: foundation gaps (data quality, process variance, ownership) that the pilot needed to *hide* rather than expose. Solve those first, in their own order. Then the next pilot doesn't fail.

The thing nobody tells you about pilot graveyards: the headstones aren't engineering problems. They're alignment problems someone hoped the pilot would resolve on its own.

## Three first moves (this week)

- 01 Write a one-page post-mortem on your last failed pilot. Include three specific moments where it was clear something wasn't going to work, and what you did at each of those moments.
- 02 Identify the foundation gap that pilot was avoiding rather than addressing. Name it out loud, in writing, to whoever approved the pilot.
- 03 Don't approve the next pilot until that gap is named and owned by someone with the authority to fix it.

## What to look for over the next 30 days

Watch for a vendor pitch that promises to solve the same thing your last failed pilot was solving. Watch for the phrase *"this time we'll do adoption right"* — it usually means nobody has named what went wrong last time. Watch for a champion being assigned without being given the authority to actually decide. Those are the signals that the next pilot is already on the same trajectory.

*If any of this resonates, the next step isn't a sales call — it's a 30-minute conversation about your last failed pilot, with no pitch. The link to book that conversation is on the result page.*