

LEAN AI ADOPTION

Small Bets, Real Evidence, Fewer Failed Pilots

The discipline behind Toyota's production line and the modern startup, and how it makes AI adoption safer, not only faster.

Three things

- 01** Why most AI pilots fail before the model gets a chance to be wrong.
 - 02** Five Lean practices that translate directly into an AI programme.
 - 03** The andon cord, the safety mechanism most programmes are missing.
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95%

of generative AI pilots produce no measurable profit and loss impact

MIT NANDA, "The GenAI Divide: State of AI in Business 2025," based on 300 public AI deployments analysed.

30%

of generative AI projects are abandoned after proof of concept

Gartner, 2024 forecast for enterprise generative AI projects by the end of 2025, citing poor data quality, unclear value, and rising cost.

The pilot was scoped like a rollout

Every department got a seat on the steering committee before one real user touched it. Success was written as a business case with a payback period, not a hypothesis with a date attached for checking it.

Small batches, then real evidence

Toyota shrank the batch and gave every line worker a rope to pull the moment something looked wrong. The Lean Startup called the same loop build, measure, learn. Both exist to keep a mistake cheap enough to notice.

Five practices, one workflow at a time

- Go and see the actual workflow first
- Specify value from the user's problem, not the model's capability
- Pilot one workflow, with real users, before scoping wider
- Decide the stop-or-go metric before you start
- Give someone a real andon cord



A small batch limits your exposure during the exact period you know the least about how the system will actually behave.

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Start smaller than feels responsible

- Pick one workflow with a named owner and real friction
- Go watch the work before writing a requirements document
- Write the stop metric and the review date on one page
- Name who holds the andon cord, out loud, in the room

Find the smallest version of your biggest AI bet

One workflow. One team. One metric. One person holding the andon cord.



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