

Not Every Problem Needs a Model.

The story used to be speed: ship the pilot, plug in the frontier model, show the demo. That phase is ending.

SWIPE →

Five moves for teams running AI at scale

01 Stop sending every request to the biggest model

02 Build in failover

03 Centralise governance

04 Distil, don't just call

05 Ask whether you need a model at all

The Bill.

Cost scales with adoption, not with the value created.

Add single-provider lock-in and painful migrations, plus invisible costs: context management, caching, infrastructure, keeping models current. Real TCO looks nothing like the original business case.

Burnout.

Open-source maintainers can't keep up with AI-generated pull requests.

Some of that code carries invented dependencies or security issues that slip past normal review. Projects are tightening contribution rules, or shutting the door altogether.

Do We Need a Model at All?

That's the one most teams skip once a use case moves from proof-of-concept to implementation. If a lookup table or rules engine can handle the logic, that's the default — not a habit-driven model call.



The organisations getting real ROI from AI aren't the ones with the flashiest demo. They're the ones treating model choice as an infrastructure decision.

THE CENTRAL ARGUMENT

Reflex vs. infrastructure decision

OLD REFLEX

Route everything to the frontier model

One provider, no failover

Every team owns its own governance

INFRASTRUCTURE DISCIPLINE

Proxy layer routes by complexity

Automatic failover across providers

Centralised rate limits, cost, data controls

Distil, Don't Just Call.

Use frontier models to generate high-quality training data, then fine-tune smaller open-source models on it. Done well, these models match frontier performance on narrow tasks — for a fraction of the cost, with lower latency and fewer data-residency headaches.

Which Question Are You Actually Asking?

Most teams ask which model to use. The right question, once a use case leaves proof-of-concept, is whether you need a model at all — or just a lookup table.

Full piece:

terencekok.com/blog/not-every-problem-needs-a-model-some-just-need-a-lookup-table

AI Earns Its Place Through Necessity.

Not habit. The organisations getting real ROI treat model choice as an infrastructure decision, and ask at every stage whether AI is the right tool at all.



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