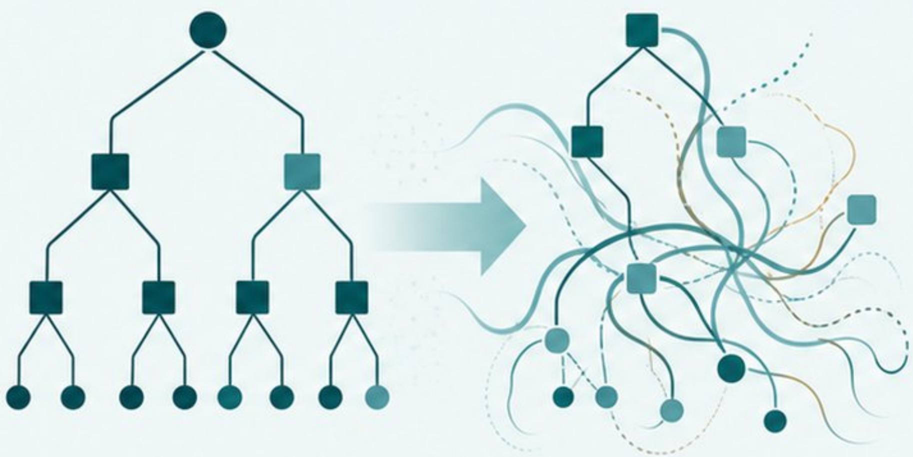
Managing Change in Projects:

Navigating the Hidden Logic That Shapes Outcomes

- Only 35% of projects succeed; 49% face scope creep
- 52% of projects now hit by scope creep, up from 43%
- AI introduces data drift, model updates, and feedback loops
- Governance must span both traditional scope and AI-driven shifts
- Roadmap: why changes happen -> governance -> AI-driven suggestions

The Dual Nature of Change: Why Projects and Algorithms Both 'Change Their Mind'

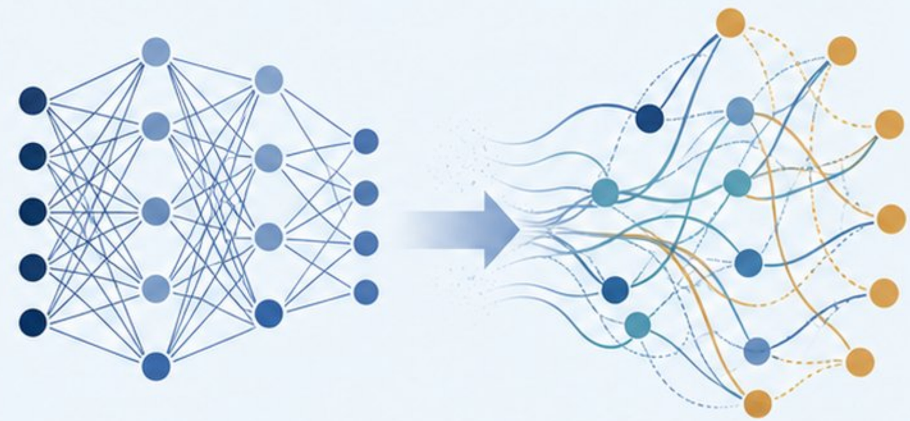
PROJECTS (HUMAN DECISIONS)



Internal drivers: Stakeholder pressure, new requirements, and discovery of unknowns.

External drivers: Market shifts, regulatory changes, and competitor moves.

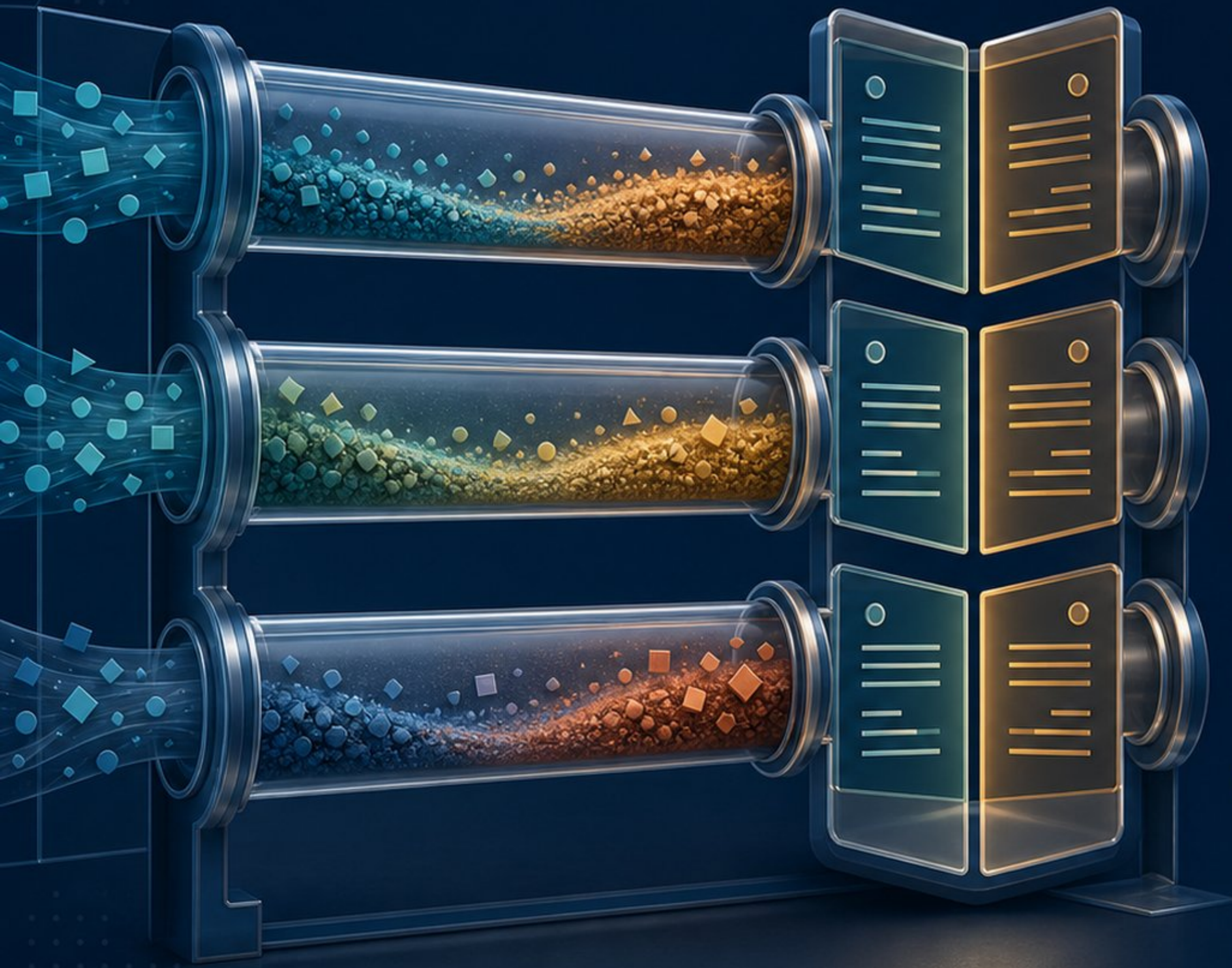
ALGORITHMS (RECOMMENDATION SYSTEMS)



The new dimension: Recommendation systems shift due to data drift, model updates, and A/B testing.

Key bias: We treat machine-generated outcomes as more objective, making their changes feel more disruptive.

Decoding Drift: What 'Change' Looks Like Inside an AI System



- Data Drift: Input data changes; the model sees unfamiliar information, like a store gaining new customer types.
- Concept Drift: The real-world rules change; the same input now means something completely different.
- Model Drift: The system itself changes after technical updates or through self-reinforcing feedback loops.
- Real-world impact: Streaming rankings shift, e-commerce listings shake up, and social feeds change feel.

Traditional Guardrails: Formal Change Control in Project Management

Formal flow:
Change Request → Impact Analysis → CCB Decision → Re-baseline

CCB reviews changes to protect scope, schedule, cost, and quality

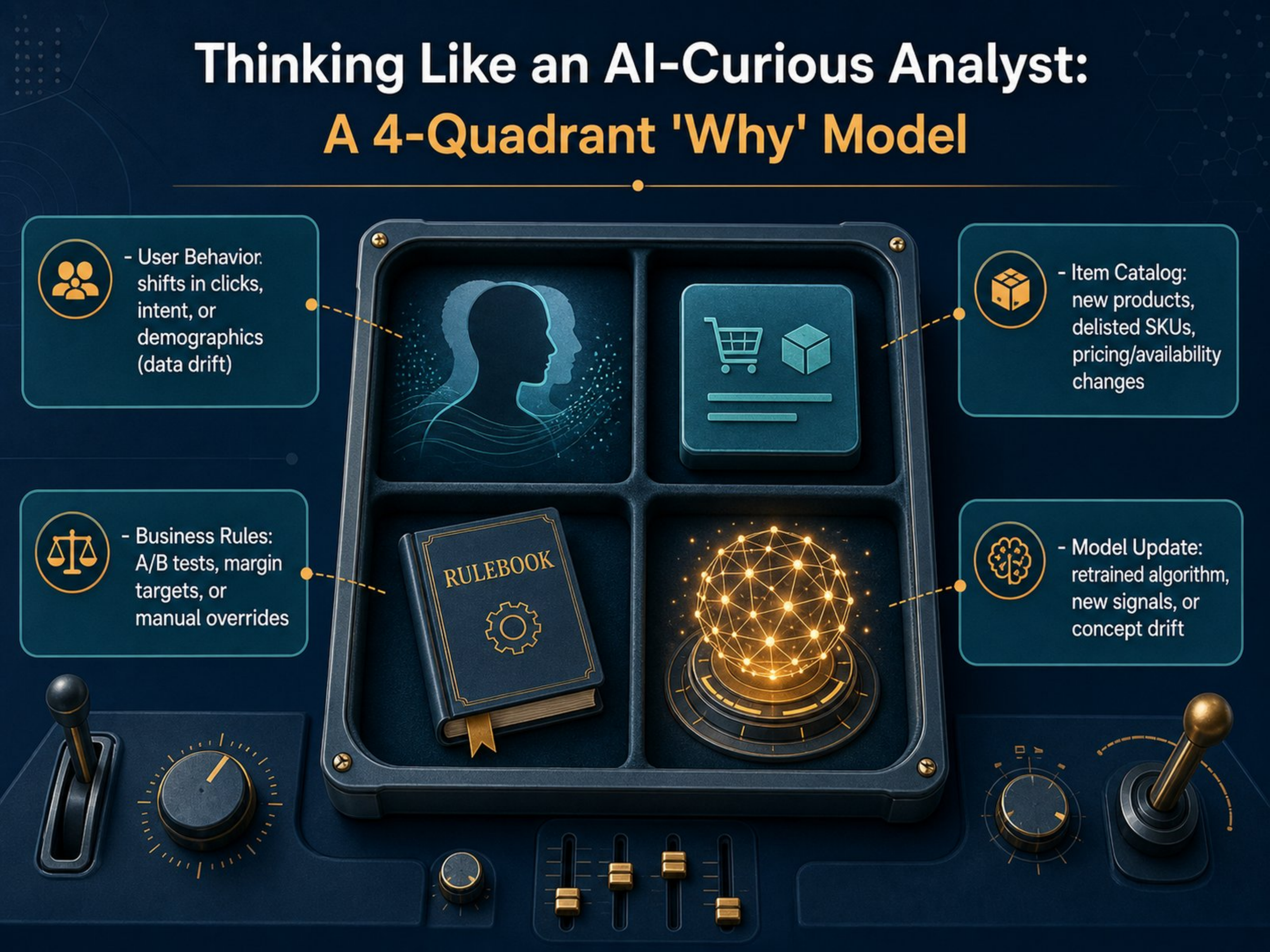
Key principles: formal documentation, integrated impact, stakeholder communication

Common failures: undocumented changes, scope creep, and large-IT 'fat tail' risk

A Tale of Two Boards: The CCB Meets the Model Review Board

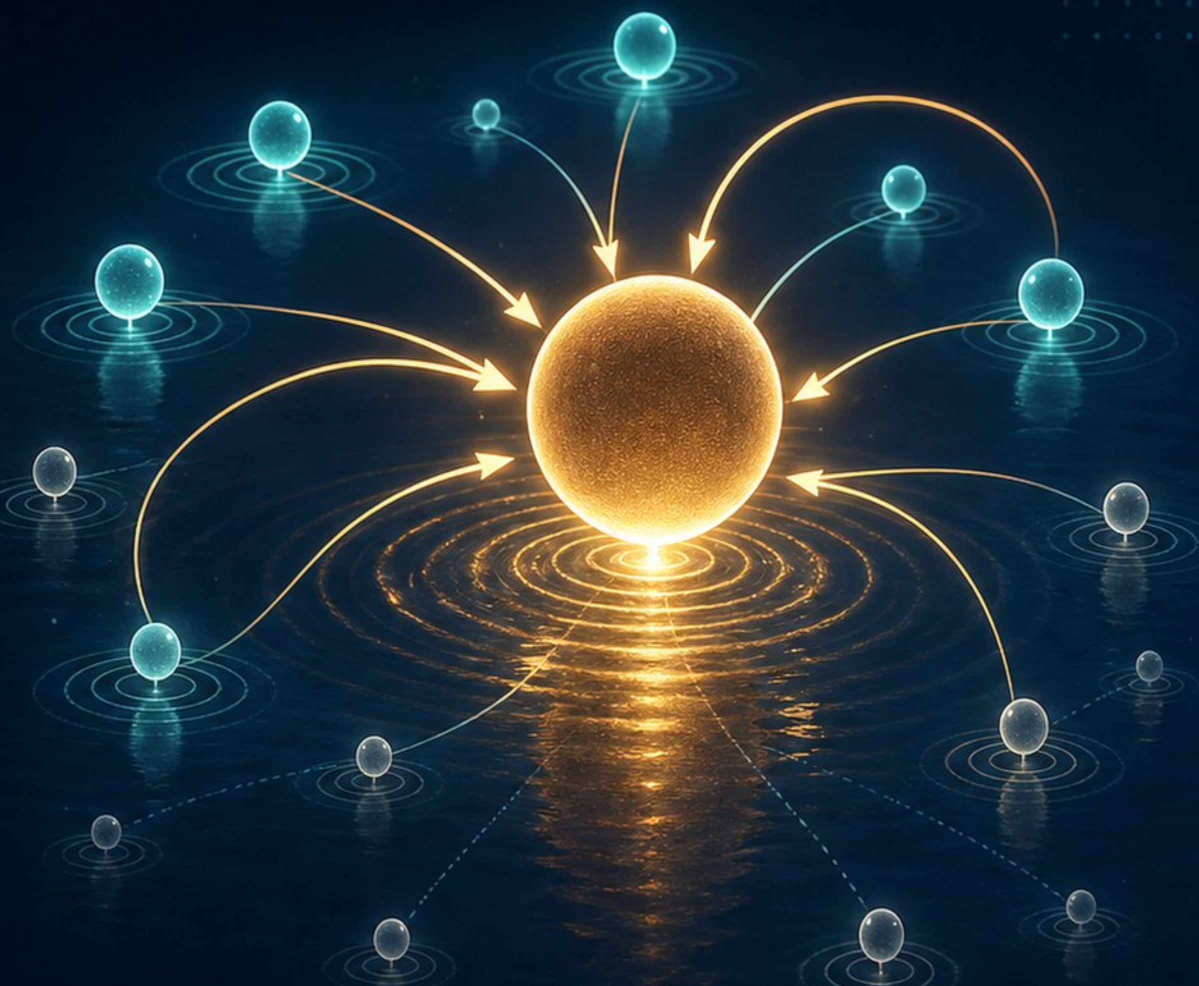
Both boards ask: **'What changed, why, and what is the impact?'**

- Project CCB: freezes baselines after scope, schedule, cost approvals
- Model Review Board: governs continuously learning, drifting models
- AI governance mirrors project governance (versioning, testing, rollback)
- Your skill: question a recommender change like a scope change request


Thinking Like an AI-Curious Analyst:
A 4-Quadrant 'Why' Model
- User Behavior: shifts in clicks, intent, or demographics (data drift)
- Item Catalog: new products, delisted SKUs, pricing/availability changes
- Business Rules: A/B tests, margin targets, or manual overrides
RULEBOOK
- Model Update: retrained algorithm, new signals, or concept drift

The Invisible Engine: How Feedback Loops and Bias Shape What You See

- "Clicks train models, which shape recommendations, reinforcing what gets popular"
- "Popularity bias creates 'rich-get-richer' dynamics, amplifying top items"
- "Feedback loops reduce diversity: filter bubbles and suppressed niche interests"
- "Optimizing for engagement alone degrades user satisfaction over time"



Anticipating and Governing the Unexpected:
Risk, Observability, and AI

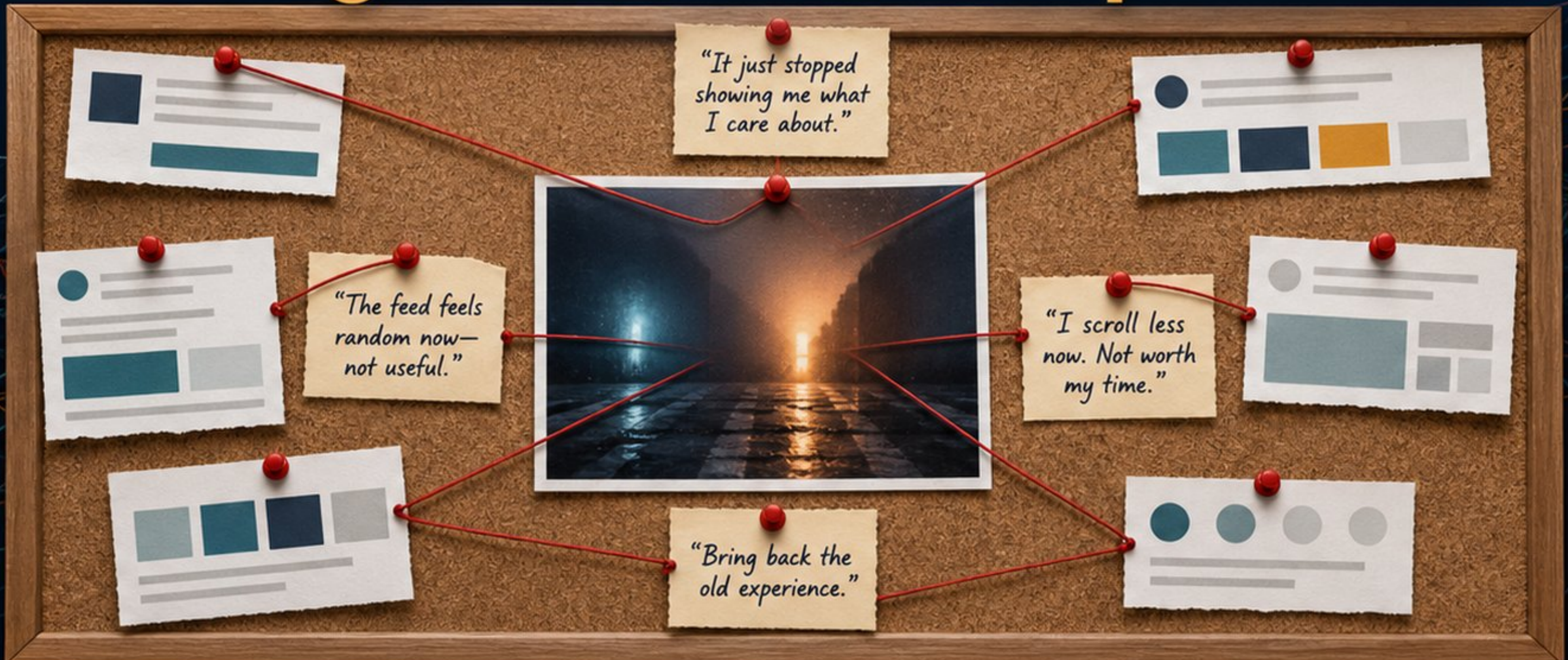
- Track AI risk like project scope: use a risk register and contingency reserves.
- Watch for system-specific threats: model degradation, adversarial inputs, and runaway feedback loops.
- Use drift detection as scope trend analysis; monitor data drift, concept drift, and model drift.
- Without observability—monitoring, logging, alerting—AI governance is just guesswork.

The Human Dimension: From Change Resistance to Change Literacy

- Resistance is often about losing control, not rejecting technology
- AI feels less objective when it acts *on* you rather than *for* you
- Use your levers: feedback tools, preference settings, and transparency dashboards
- Move from 'why did it change?' to 'how can I influence what I see?'

Case Study Deep Dive:

When a Model Update Changed a Product Experience

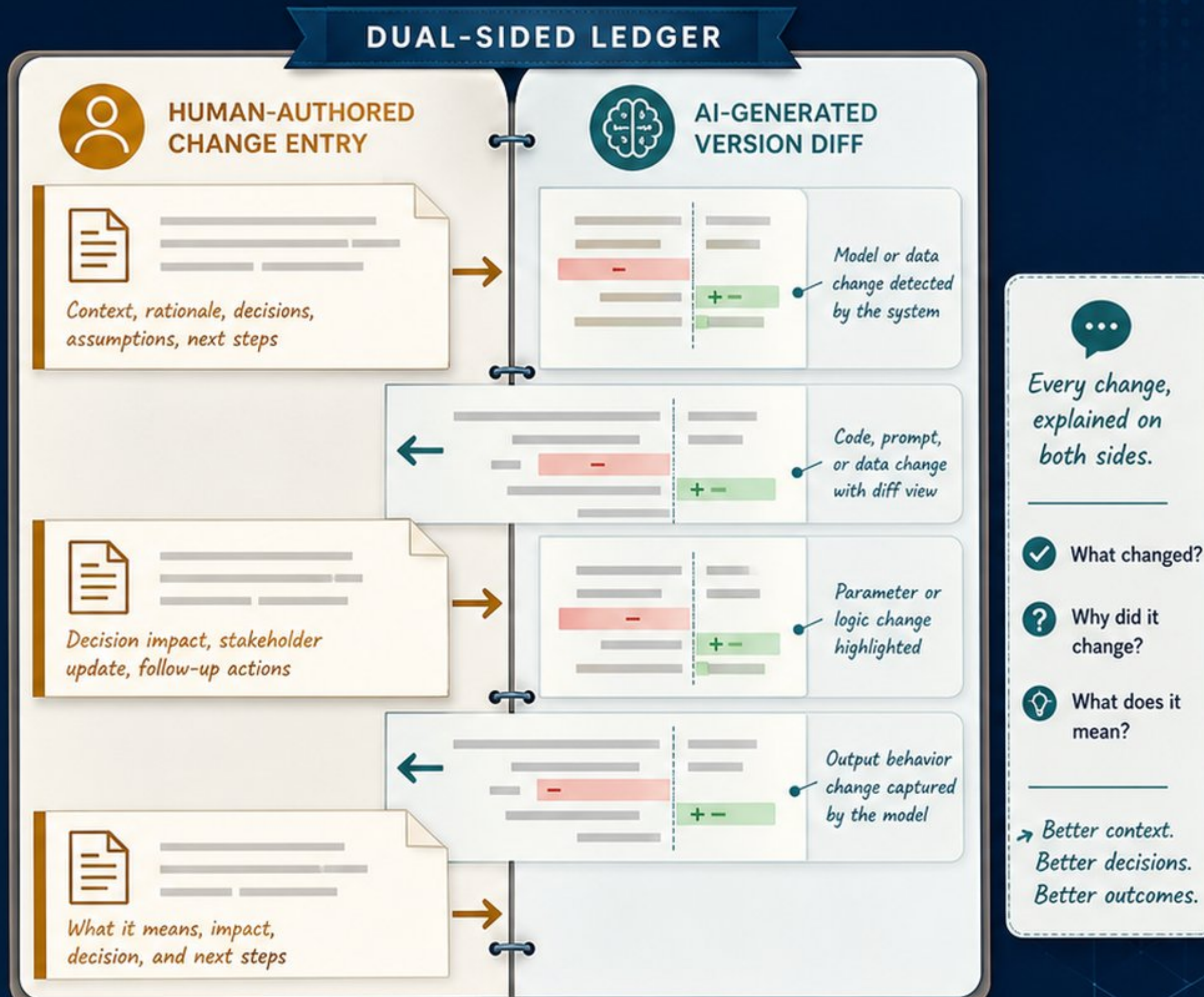


- \- Model retrained → ranking shifted overnight → engagement plummeted, users protested
- \- Timeline: silent launch → traffic anomaly flagged → stakeholder alarm → rollback review
- \- Root cause via 4-Quadrant Model: 'Model Update' quadrant, not user behavior or items
- \- Governance gap: no Model Review Board gate matched to the deployment
- \- Alert signals missed: drift metrics absent, no user feedback loop pre-launch

Practical Strategies: Leading and Tracking Change in Hybrid (Human + AI) Environments

Practical Strategies

- Maintain a Hybrid Change Log: track scope changes and recommender tweaks
- Translate AI output shifts into business impact for stakeholder alignment
- Use a "what changed, why, and what it means" template for all updates
- Build a lightweight dashboard monitoring both project and model KPIs



Human judgment and AI insight—captured together,
for transparent change management and stronger outcomes.

Your Toolkit: Synthesizing a Unified View of Change and Influence

- Synthesize project scope, AI behavior, and user experience into one governed change surface
- Personal Action Plan: questions, signals, and levers when recommendations shift
- Team Readiness Checklist: align change control with AI governance touchpoints
- Go deeper: AIPGF, ISO 42001, NIST AI RMF, AI Literacy certifications