Chapter 24. Pilot design for lowest cost, speed and rapid take up at all levels

Introduction

The ideas developed in this book only matter if they can be delivered in the real world. That is the purpose of the pilots. Each pilot takes one practical proposition, applies it in a bounded setting, observes what happens and improves the design from what is learned.

A successful pilot should do two things. It should show the idea working, and it should make the result visible enough for others to copy, adapt and improve. That second task is contagion. The objective is simple: learn quickly, keep what works, correct what does not and help useful practices spread.

How this chapter unfolds

1. **Why pilots -** Explains why the ideas in this book now need to be achieved through small, practical experiments rather than more theory.
2. **Keeping pilots connected to the underlying ideas -** Shows how the core ideas in the book provide useful disciplines for pilot design without dictating the result.
3. **Designing pilots to learn and travel -** Sets out the features that make a pilot useful, visible, testable, easy to copy and capable of improvement.
4. **From ignition to contagion -** Explains how one successful demonstration can create demand for the next and allow useful practices to spread through networks.
5. **What this means for humans -** Shows how pilots give people a practical way to learn, adapt and participate in change rather than waiting for a complete answer from above.
6. **What this means for AI -** Explains how AI can lower the cost of running pilots, strengthen visibility and help learning move from one experiment to another.

1. Why pilots

We have now developed a large set of ideas and tools: brain literacy, visibility mirrors, Periodic Tables, Abacuses, truth-seeking, problem-solving, control and correction, and ways of improving democracy and institutional learning. The next question is not whether the ideas sound attractive. It is whether they work.

A pilot is the simplest way to find out. It takes one idea into a real setting, with real people and real consequences, while keeping it small enough to change or stop. The purpose is to learn quickly before trying to scale.

That means a pilot does not have to prove the whole architecture. It only has to answer a useful practical question. Does the Personal Visibility Mirror help an individual see something important? Does a Group Visibility Mirror improve a team's problem-solving? Does an Abacus make a difficult tension easier to discuss? Does a democracy visibility pilot change the quality of participation? Each successful answer gives us something concrete to build on.

Failure is also useful if it is visible. A pilot that shows why an idea does not work, or works only under certain conditions, saves later effort and improves the next version. The rule is therefore simple: test, observe, learn and correct.

2. Keeping pilots connected to the underlying ideas

Pilots should remain open enough to disprove the thinking that gave rise to them. An experiment that can only confirm its starting assumption is not a useful experiment. But pilots still need some design discipline. The ideas developed earlier in the book provide that discipline.

More Mores for More keeps the aim visible. Levels help locate the problem and the capability required to deal with it. Brain literacy reminds us that people bring threat, status, belonging, competition, cooperation and felt truths into every experiment. Paradox thinking prevents us from forcing one-sided answers where two legitimate goods have to be held together. Truth-seeking helps separate evidence from assertion. Control and Correction keeps attention on aim, sensing, comparison, correction and learning.

The visibility tools then make the pilot easier to see. Personal and Group Visibility Mirrors expose patterns in people and teams. Periodic Tables show level. Abacuses show how competing goods are being held. Truth-verification tools expose the quality of claims and evidence. Problem-solving tools keep attention on the real problem and the process being used to address it.

These tools should not predetermine the answer. Their purpose is to make the experiment clearer, more visible and easier to learn from. A good pilot can therefore strengthen an idea, change it or show that it was wrong.

3. Designing pilots to learn and travel

AI changes the economics of practical experimentation. Research, software development, data analysis, simulation, translation, comparison, documentation and communication can all be done faster and at much lower cost than before. That makes it possible to start with a minimum viable experiment rather than trying to design the finished system in advance.

A useful pilot has two tests. First, it must produce useful learning or a useful result. Second, if it works, the result must be visible and simple enough for somebody else to understand and try. A technically successful experiment that nobody can see, trust or copy may help the original group, but it will not travel.

The best pilots therefore share a small number of practical characteristics. They solve a real problem. They have a clear boundary. The result can be observed. The first step is affordable and reversible. The method is simple enough to explain. The evidence is credible. And the essential mechanism can be copied without requiring every user to accept the whole book.

Design dimensions for pilots that learn and travel. Exhibit 24.1

Dimension	What it means	Design implication
Real value	The pilot addresses a problem people already care about.	Begin with a practical need, not theory.
Visibility	Others can see what was tried and what happened.	Make results, failures and uncertainty visible.
Simplicity	The basic mechanism can be understood quickly.	Remove unnecessary conceptual load.
Credibility	The evidence and participants are trusted.	Use real results and traceable evidence.
Trialability	The first step is small and reversible.	Make it easy to try without a large commitment.
Low risk and cost	The initial exposure is proportionate.	Do not ask people to risk too much too early.
Transferability	The core mechanism can be used elsewhere.	Separate what is essential from what is local.
Learning	The design can change when evidence changes.	Build correction into the pilot from the start.

These disciplines also strengthen truth seeking. Where permissions and confidentiality allow, others should be able to see what was attempted, what assumptions were made, what happened and why the design changed. Visibility improves both learning and credibility.

4. From ignition to contagion

A pilot becomes contagious when its result creates demand for the next experiment. At that point, the programme begins to move from push to pull. A person who gets value from a Personal Visibility Mirror may want a Group Visibility Mirror. A team that sees a useful pattern may want an Abacus or a stronger truth-verification process. A community that sees value in a democracy visibility pilot may want to repeat it in another electorate or level of government.

The mechanism is straightforward. A useful pilot produces a visible result. That result gives the next participant a reason to try. The next participant adapts the idea to a new setting and creates another result. Over time, the evidence base grows and the cost of adoption falls because people can see that the idea has worked somewhere else.

This is why contagion should be designed from the start. A pilot that depends entirely on its original designer, special circumstances or hidden knowledge is difficult to spread. A pilot that is simple, visible, credible and adaptable is much more likely to travel.

A simple contagion loop

Pilot → Visible result → Interest from others → Second pilot → Adaptation → More evidence → Wider spread

The speed of spread will differ by setting. Some ideas will move quickly because the value is obvious. Others will require repeated demonstrations. The practical question is always the same: what would make the next person or organisation want to try this for themselves?

5. What this means for humans

For humans, pilots provide a practical way to deal with uncertainty. We do not have to wait until governments, companies or experts can describe the whole future. We can test bounded changes, see what happens and improve them.

That also gives people more agency. Citizens, educators, businesses, AI laboratories and communities can participate in learning rather than being passive recipients of change. The visibility tools make that participation more useful because they help people see their own behaviour, the level of the problem, the tensions being held and the evidence produced by the experiment.

The human discipline is to treat pilots as learning rather than advocacy. Assumptions have to be visible. Failure has to be admitted. Results have to be compared with the original aim. Useful ideas developed elsewhere have to be copied without pride getting in the way. That is how many small experiments can become a much larger learning process.

6. What this means for AI

AI has two roles in this process. It is one reason we need to learn faster, because technological capability is changing quickly. It is also a tool that can make the learning process much cheaper and faster.

AI can help design minimum viable pilots, retrieve evidence, build software, analyse results, compare one experiment with another, preserve the history of changes and

make findings easier for other people to understand. It can also connect the visibility tools: Personal and Group Visibility Mirrors, Periodic Tables, Abacuses, truth-seeking, problem-solving and Control and Correction.

AI should not decide which social experiments are legitimate or which human ends should be pursued. Humans retain responsibility for aims, permissions, boundaries and final judgement. AI's role is to increase visibility, reduce the cost of experimentation and help useful learning move from one pilot to the next.

Used this way, AI does not design the future for us. It helps us test, learn, correct and spread what works faster than we could before.