Some enterprises could be making a critical mistake with their Generative AI

Why I'm Building 3 Narrow AI Solutions Instead of Buying into One "AI Platform"

Harvard Business Review just validated what I discovered building AI tools: The future isn't one-size-fits-all AI platforms. It's purpose-built, narrow AI that actually works.

Most enterprises are making a critical mistake with the Generative AI fuss. They're buying expensive, general-purpose platforms hoping to solve every problem. Meanwhile, Harvard Business Review's latest research on Chinese AI reveals a completely different approach - one that I've been implementing for months.

Chinese companies like DeepSeek, Alibaba, and Baidu aren't chasing general-purpose AI. They're building **narrow, specialised solutions** that cost less, deploy faster, and actually work in production. As HBR notes: "Chinese firms build for business outcomes. The models and infrastructure are a means to that end."

Sound familiar? It should. Because while a lot of Western companies pour billions into GPT wrappers, I've been building targeted AI solutions that solve specific problems exceptionally well.

The Problem with "AI Platforms"

The Western approach, as HBR describes it, focuses on "building the most cutting-edge infrastructure and models, with the understanding that they will eventually deliver business results."

Translation: We're spending millions on "hammers", hoping everything looks like a nail.

But here's what I learned after 20 years managing enterprise transformations: **Real problems don't need general intelligence. They need specific intelligence.**

My 3-Solution Strategy: Narrow AI That Actually Works

Instead of one bloated platform, I built five narrow AI systems, each optimised for its specific domain:

1. Job Application Intelligence System

Not a general HR platform - A laser-focused system using CrewAI agents trained specifically on job matching and application generation.

- **Result**: 3x efficiency, 70%+ match accuracy
- **Why it works**: It is focused on the specific logic of job hunting, not general conversations

2. Portfolio Performance Optimiser

Not a general analytics tool - A specialised system for resource allocation in project portfolios.

- **Result**: 35% improvement in resource efficiency
- **Why it works**: Following a model of "80% training on general data, 20% on domain-specific" for project portfolio management

3. Content Trend Correlation

Not a general social media tool - A narrow AI that only does one thing: correlate trends with business topics.

- **Result**: Identify content opportunities before they peak
- **Why it works**: It's calibrated for one specific task

The Chinese Lesson: Why Narrow AI Wins

HBR's research reveals three pillars of Chinese AI success that perfectly explain why narrow solutions outperform general platforms:

1. Customisation Over Generalisation "China's AI strategies are not about chasing general-purpose solutions. Instead... AI solution providers are building modular, adaptable infrastructure that is finely tuned to local technical, regulatory, and operational needs."

2. Cost Leadership Through Focus Chinese companies build models "with cost efficiency as a design principle." DeepSeek achieved GPT-4 performance with a fraction of the resources - by staying focused.

3. Real-World Calibration "Chinese firms are obsessed with making sure their models work, not just in theory, but in real, dynamic environments."

The Business Case for Narrow AI

While some Big Western firms chase AGI dreams, practical results come from narrow solutions:

- **BMW** isn't using general AI - they're integrating DeepSeek's specific models for Chinese vehicles
- **Nestlé** uses Western LLMs for logistics but Chinese AI for customer analytics - different tools for different jobs
- **Trip.com** reduced content creation from 8.5 minutes to 15 seconds - with AI trained only on travel data

Why Your "Enterprise AI Platform" could Fall

If your organisation bought a multi-million dollar AI platform that promises to "transform everything," here's why it might not work:

1. **Good at language, but not at tasks** - General models can't match specialised performance
2. **Expensive overkill** - You're paying for capabilities you don't need
3. **Integration nightmare** - One-size-fits-all rarely fits anything well
4. **No clear ROI** - When one project tries to do everything, it's hard to measure anything

The Narrow AI Playbook for Enterprises

Start small, think narrow, deliver fast:

1. **Identify ONE specific problem** (not "improve productivity")
2. **Build or buy a narrow solution** (not a platform)
3. **Measure specific outcomes** (time saved, errors reduced, costs cut)
4. **Prototype** (see what works and what not, understand the stakeholders' expectations)
5. **Scale by adding more narrow solutions** (not by expanding one platform)

You might spot some parities to agile delivery (when done right)

The Competitive Advantage No One's Talking About

As HBR notes: "Companies that fail to align their Gen AI strategies with these new realities may find themselves outpaced by competitors who can move faster for less money."

While your competitors debate which expensive platform to buy, you could be deploying five narrow solutions that actually work. While they wait for IT to integrate their "AI transformation platform," you're

already seeing results.

The Future: A Portfolio of Narrow AI

The next wave of AI adoption won't be about who has the biggest model or the most expensive platform. It will be about who can assemble the right portfolio of narrow, specialised AI tools.

Think of it like this: You don't buy one universal tool for your entire workshop. You buy the right drill for drilling, the right saw for cutting, the right hammer for hammering.

Why would AI be any different?

Ready to move beyond platform thinking?

I'm documenting my journey building narrow AI solutions that deliver real results. Every other week, I share:

- Specific problems I'm solving with narrow AI
- Exact architectures and tools used
- Measurable results and ROI
- Lessons from both Western and Chinese AI approaches

Follow me for practical insights on narrow AI implementation, or reach out if you want to discuss how specialised AI could transform your specific challenges.

Because in the age of AI, the winners won't be those with the biggest platforms, but those with the most focused solutions.

#AI   #NarrowAI   #DigitalTransformation   #ChineseAI   #ProjectManagement   #BusinessStrategy   #Innovation   #PracticalAI   #EnterpriseAI   #AIStrategy

About the Author: Former Head of PMO turned AI builder. I create narrow, specialised AI solutions that actually work, inspired by both Western innovation and Chinese pragmatism. Currently building the future one focused solution at a time.

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