Beware of the undead Data Science projects

So, your data science endeavour failed again?

Let's be honest, too many data science projects end up in a drawer of forget and disappointment. It is almost comical how so many businesses have leftovers of failed data science projects laying in some sort of zombie status. Even those with mature data science teams have "those" projects. The question is not just why did those projects fail, but also why are they still leftovers of them in your data platform and pipelines?

Most answers to these questions point to the same reason for failure: the assessment of value, requirements and sustainability of the data science project was faulty and there was no real plan build or failback. Simply put, no preparation before deploying, and perhaps the fear of breaking other parts of the pipelines when removing these leftovers, keeps them in your environment, though their value is gone.

Worse, sometimes these now zombie projects keep consuming some serious resources. I remember a situation where a business-critical server was running slow and even failing some jobs. An audit discovered an old Machine Learning model was using the server for retraining, running the same training data every day, and draining computational resources like a parasite. After a lengthy endeavour to understand who owned the model and what it was for, so we could pause, the stakeholder's answer was a simple "oh, we know the model is broken, it was a demo and we haven't used it in many months!" So, for a long time, the forgotten zombie had caused multiple issues to the business, consumed valuable resources and there was never a clear pathway to even pause it!

What can you do to prevent data science projects to fail?

Spend time preparing and planning the project properly. At Fujitsu Data & AI we understand that projects have a full life cycle, and data science projects can have curious ones. For instance, some are "doomed from the start" as they might be useful only for a short period of time (think a campaign) and then need to be removed after they have produced their value. Others will become part of 'BAU' and require no extra input or might need periodical retraining and evaluation. Others

still might need to be audited or require strict security. The combinations are endless, and therefore each project needs to be prepared in a holistic way.

A carefully prepared data science project will not only offer more value to the business but will make it clear why the use of data science and Machine Learning models are so important to resolve your specific business problem. Contact a Fujitsu Data & AI specialist now, to help your business properly plan the start of a new data science project, the revamp of an existing one or the decommission of a zombie left over.

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