Who owns the commercial experiment?

In established businesses, separating sales, delivery and customer success often makes perfect sense. The offering is understood, responsibilities are defined, and the operating model has been tested.

But what happens when none of these conditions exist?

When a company introduces a new service, enters an unfamiliar market or experiments with emerging technologies, the traditional separation between pre-sales and post-sales may become a liability.

At this stage, the objective is not simply to close a deal. It is to discover whether a commercially viable and repeatable business exists.

What if one experienced professional retained commercial accountability throughout the entire journey — from the initial customer conversation to delivery, validation of business value and the decision to continue, change direction or stop?

Not doing everything personally, but working with the relevant specialists while maintaining continuity of responsibility.

The potential benefits are straightforward:

• Fewer assumptions lost in organisational handovers.
• Faster feedback between commercial promises and operational reality.
• Better-controlled experimentation.
• More effective use of limited specialist resources.
• Earlier identification of commercially unviable ideas.
• Learning that directly informs the next customer engagement.

I find this particularly relevant in Finland. With a relatively small domestic market, limited specialist resources and the importance of credible customer references, the quality of the first few customer engagements can significantly influence the future of an entire business initiative.

A failed experiment is not necessarily a problem. Losing a valuable customer relationship because nobody maintained accountability from commercial promise to actual outcome is a different matter.

Once the business becomes repeatable, responsibilities can be distributed and the operating model scaled.

But distributing responsibility before understanding the business may simply institutionalise uncertainty.

AI makes this question increasingly relevant, but the underlying challenge is much older than AI.

Perhaps we should distinguish more clearly between the operating model required to discover new business and the one required to scale established business.

Should these really be the same?

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