

LAB NOTEBOOK · dated



THE LAB NOTEBOOK

The Great Cull

On 8 May 2026, one council decision archived 57 superseded projects into cold storage — reversibly, documented, reference-checked — taking 50-plus top-level projects down to 15 living and 3 dormant. The same day, the synthesis that absorbs the survivors was scaffolded. In a field that only ever adds, the defining move was subtraction.

The dated R&D archive



Research — measured, partial

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Every claim carries its tier · nothing faked

PREPARED

8 May 2026

VERIFIED BY

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15 years building safety-critical
systems

HOW TO READ IT

Drafted with AI, verified by a
named human. Sources at the back.

01 The entry, dated



The entry, dated

May 2026

entry date

Method

category

**the discipline, not
the lead**

lead over the world



Public

access

What the world had at the time

The industry reflex is to add — another feature, another model, another repo. Deliberately deleting 57 of your own projects in a single day, reversibly and with a manifest, to force convergence, is close to the opposite of how everyone else behaves.

Everyone else was adding. We deleted fifty-seven of our own projects in one day — reversibly, with a manifest — because you cannot converge what you refuse to prune.

The costly signal

The measured result

Every number carries its own honesty tier — the tiering is the credibility.

57

projects archived in a single day

 RESEARCH

50+ → 15

top-level projects → living (+3 dormant)

 RESEARCH

1 mv

recovery command — fully reversible

 RESEARCH

0

dead references left in the active tree

 RESEARCH

For years the work *widened* — dozens of projects chasing the capability curve, a new architecture every week, thirteen versions in two days. This report is about the day that stopped. It is a **method** report, kept public, because the discipline is the brand: in a market drowning in "we added a feature," the uncopyable move is "we subtracted fifty-seven to ship one."

02 What it was



A single governed decision — **Council 391**, a "cognitive-surface cull" — to **prune the sprawl** so a synthesis could actually close. The animating idea, taken seriously: a career, like a cell, is only alive once it *closes a boundary*. You cannot converge what you refuse to prune. So the launch *is* the pruning.

03 What we built



Less a build than an act of disciplined subtraction, done properly:

57 superseded projects moved into `_archive_2026-05-08/` — the 2023 chat experiments, abandoned 2024–25 SaaS, vendor blobs — each with a **manifest** entry (name, size, date, reason, and a recovery command).

A **cross-check** confirming **zero references** from any active project.

The result: **50-plus top-level projects reduced to 15 living and 3 dormant.**

On the **same day**, the scaffold of the synthesis that absorbs the survivors.



RESEARCH — MEASURED, PARTIAL

The measured facts are unusual for a portfolio: 57 archived, 50+ down to 15, recovery via a **single mv command**, and **no dead references** left behind. Deletion done as engineering — reversible, documented, reference-checked — not as a dramatic gesture.

04 What we learned — including the honest edges

The cull is a correction, not a boast. It was only *possible* because of the over-building that came before it. The discipline earns its authority precisely by admitting what it is cleaning up.

Reversible-by-archive is not "finished." Nothing was destroyed — which is the point, and also a caveat: the synthesis that consumes the survivors was scaffolded and governed, with the full migration still pending. We do not call a beginning an ending.

Subtraction is a CTO-level skill. The judgement to stop supporting work of marginal value, and to say so, is itself the signal — the same instinct that made the AI-written OS teach "decide the bottom of the stack first."

Why keep this public — and lead with it?

Most of what a lab protects is an engine or a weight. This is the opposite: a method, worth far more as a shared, visible story than as a secret. The cull-and- membrane is the honest origin — a safety-critical delivery veteran who subtracted 57 projects to close one boundary. In a market that only adds, that is uncopyable.

05 Where it went / status

Done, dated, and load-bearing. The cull is the hinge of the whole archive: every report before it is part of the sprawl that had to be pruned; everything after runs inside the boundary it closed. It is also the reason this Lab Notebook can be honest about its failures — the same discipline that reversibly archives 57 projects keeps the negatives on the page.

What is still open — kept visible

The honest edges of this lane, shown next to the wins. None of these is a footnote; each is a claim we have not yet earned — and marking it is what earns the right to be believed on the rest.

- ☐ The cull was only possible because of the sprawl that preceded it — the discipline is a correction to our own earlier over-building, not a boast.
- ☐ The synthesis that absorbs the survivors is scaffolded and governed; the full migration of the donor trees was still pending at the time of writing.
- ☐ Reversible-by-archive is not deletion: nothing was destroyed, which is the point, and also a caveat against calling it 'finished'.

06 Sources, glossary & the ledger

Where every claim comes from — and what the plain words mean.

Sources

- 01 **Vocabotics project audit — The Great Cull (Council 391, _archive_2026-05-08/), May 2026** — Vocabotics internal project history (as of 8 May 2026)

THE HONESTY LEDGER

- Shipped — measured, gate-clean.
- 🔬 Research — measured, partial; the gap is shown.
- 🔭 Vision — designed, honest; not yet built.

The bigger claim goes up a tier, never down. We show the eval beside the demo — the tiering is the credibility.

See the operating model behind it

Propose broadly, dispose certainly. The cull is the disposing — the governed method that made it safe and reversible.

</research/agentive-operating-model>

Nothing faked.

A real, dated lab report from our own R&D. Measured, not asserted; the honest negatives are kept on the page next to the wins — because a lab that hides its failures forfeits the right to be believed on its results.

