CAN AI GOVERNANCE...

ENABLE INNOVATION

...Rather than slow it down?



Mike Rankin - CDAIO Conference October 20 2026

uncertainty slows innovation

Teams slow down when they do not know:

- What they may do
- What data they may use
- Who can decide
- What happens if something goes wrong

Late governance creates late surprises



Create a safe space to experiment.

Good governance defines:

- Where teams can experiment freely
- Where additional controls apply
- When specialist advice is required
- Who can accept or escalate risk

Clear boundaries create room to innovate



Adaptive oversight

Static governance

- Annual policy reviews
- Fixed approval gates
- Controls based on the original use case

Adaptive oversight

- Continuous monitoring
- Reviews triggered by meaningful change
- Controls adjusted as risk changes



Shared accountability

One use case. One accountable owner. Several expert contributors.

- Business owns the purpose and outcome
- Data owners confirm data fitness and permitted use
- Technology and security protect the solution
- Legal, privacy and risk define obligations and limits
- Governance provides consistency and visibility



No two use cases are created equal

Low consequence

Productivity assistance

Fast path with basic safeguards

Moderate consequence

Operational recommendations

Testing, ownership and human review

High consequence

Customer or regulated decisions

Independent challenge and
continuous monitoring



Alignment before approval

Earlier collaboration produces faster decisions

- One intake process
- Common risk language
- Specialists involved during design
- Reusable decisions and approved patterns
- Clear escalation thresholds



Governance inside the workflow

Make the safe action the easy action

- Approved AI tools
- Data and access controls
- Built-in testing
- Human checkpoints
- Logging and monitoring
- Automatic escalation triggers



Safe experimentation

1. Explore

Approved tools and controlled data

2. Assess

Risk based on use and consequences

3. Deploy

Required controls and accountable ownership

4. Monitor

Performance, behaviour and change



Permission to learn differs from permission to deploy

Confidence creates speed

Governance enables innovation when it provides:

- Clear boundaries
- Proportionate oversight
- Named accountability
- Control's embedded into work
- A safe path from experiment to production



What could your organisation enable if people knew where the boundaries were?