



AI Readiness Guide

5 Critical Questions to Ask Before Starting Any AI Project

Before investing time and resources into an AI initiative, organizations must honestly assess their readiness. This guide presents five essential questions that will help you understand your data landscape, team capabilities, and success criteria—ensuring your AI project is built on solid foundations.

Question 1: What Problem Are We Actually Solving?

Why This Matters: Many AI projects fail not because of technical limitations, but because they begin without a clear problem definition. AI should be a solution to a specific business challenge, not a solution looking for a problem.

What to Consider:

- Can you articulate the problem in one clear sentence?
- What is the current cost of this problem (time, money, customer satisfaction)?
- Have you tried non-AI solutions first?
- Will solving this problem create measurable business value?
- Who are the stakeholders affected by this problem?

Red Flags:

- "We want to use AI because our competitors are"
- "Let's see what AI can do for us"
- Inability to quantify the problem's impact

Green Lights:

- Clear, measurable problem statement
- Documented current state and desired future state
- Alignment between business goals and the AI solution

Question 2: Do We Have the Right Data?



Why This Matters: AI models are only as good as the data they're trained on. Poor data quality, insufficient volume, or biased datasets will result in unreliable AI systems—regardless of how sophisticated your algorithms are.

What to Consider:

- **Quality:** Is your data accurate, complete, and consistent?
- **Quantity:** Do you have enough data to train a reliable model? (Requirements vary by use case, but typically thousands of examples minimum)
- **Accessibility:** Can you access and extract this data easily?
- **Labeling:** For supervised learning, is your data properly labeled?
- **Relevance:** Is the data representative of the scenarios where the AI will be used?
- **Privacy & Compliance:** Does your data usage comply with GDPR, CCPA, and other regulations?

Red Flags:

- Data scattered across disconnected systems
- No data governance policies in place
- Historical data that doesn't reflect current business conditions
- Sensitive data without proper protection measures

Green Lights:

- Centralized, accessible data infrastructure
- Documented data lineage and quality metrics
- Regular data audits and cleaning processes
- Clear data ownership and governance



Question 3: Does Our Team Have the Necessary Capabilities?

Why This Matters: AI projects require a unique blend of skills that many organizations lack. Understanding your capability gaps early allows you to plan for hiring, training, or partnering with external experts.

What to Consider:

Technical Skills:

- Data science and machine learning expertise
- Software engineering for production deployment
- Data engineering for pipeline development
- MLOps for model monitoring and maintenance

Domain Knowledge:

- Deep understanding of the business problem
- Ability to translate business needs into technical requirements
- Knowledge of industry-specific constraints and regulations

Soft Skills:

- Change management capabilities
- Communication between technical and business teams
- Ethical AI considerations and bias awareness

Questions to Ask:

- Do we have data scientists with relevant experience?
- Can our engineering team deploy and maintain ML models in production?
- Who will monitor model performance and retrain when necessary?
- Do we have budget for external consultants or training?

Red Flags:

- Expecting one person to handle all AI responsibilities
- No plan for knowledge transfer or documentation
- Underestimating the complexity of production deployment

Green Lights:

- Cross-functional team with diverse skills

- Investment in training and development
- Clear roles and responsibilities
- Willingness to bring in external expertise when needed



Question 4: How Will We Measure Success?

Why This Matters: Without clear success metrics, you cannot determine if your AI project is delivering value or identify when it's time to pivot or shut down. Success criteria should be defined before development begins, not after deployment.

What to Consider:

Business Metrics:

- Revenue impact (increased sales, new revenue streams)
- Cost reduction (operational efficiency, automation savings)
- Customer satisfaction (NPS, retention rates)
- Time savings (process acceleration, faster decisions)

Technical Metrics:

- Model accuracy, precision, recall (depending on use case)
- Latency and response time
- System uptime and reliability
- False positive/negative rates

Implementation Metrics:

- User adoption rates
- Time to value
- ROI timeline
- Integration success

Questions to Ask:

- What is our baseline performance today?
- What improvement would make this project worthwhile?
- How long until we expect to see results?
- What would cause us to stop or pivot this project?
- How will we monitor ongoing performance?



Red Flags:

- Vague goals like "improve efficiency" without numbers
- Only technical metrics without business impact
- No plan for ongoing monitoring
- Unrealistic expectations (expecting 100% accuracy)

Green Lights:

- SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)
- Alignment between business and technical metrics
- Regular review cadence established
- Clear success thresholds and failure criteria

Question 5: Are We Prepared for the Organizational Change?

Why This Matters: AI implementation is not just a technical change—it's an organizational transformation. Even the most sophisticated AI system will fail if your organization isn't ready to adopt it, trust it, and integrate it into existing workflows.

What to Consider:

User Adoption:

- Will end users trust and use the AI system?
- Have you involved users in the design process?
- What training will users need?
- How will you handle resistance to change?

Process Integration:

- How does AI fit into existing workflows?
- What processes need to change?
- Who owns the AI-enhanced process?
- How will you handle exceptions and edge cases?

Governance and Ethics:

- Who is accountable for AI decisions?
- How will you ensure fairness and avoid bias?



- What transparency is required?
- How will you handle AI mistakes?

Cultural Readiness:

- Does leadership support AI adoption?
- Is there a culture of experimentation and learning?
- Are teams comfortable with data-driven decisions?
- How will you celebrate wins and learn from failures?

Questions to Ask:

- Who are the champions and skeptics in our organization?
- What happened with our last major technology implementation?
- How will this AI project affect people's jobs?
- What's our plan for communicating about the AI project?
- How will we maintain human oversight?

Red Flags:

- "We'll figure out adoption after we build it"
- No change management plan
- Ignoring ethical considerations
- Lack of leadership buy-in
- No plan for communicating with affected stakeholders

Green Lights:

- Dedicated change management resources
- Clear communication plan
- Ethics framework in place
- Early user involvement
- Leadership commitment and sponsorship

Your AI Readiness Checklist



Use this checklist to assess your readiness before starting your AI project:

Problem Definition

- ☐ Clear problem statement documented
- ☐ Business value quantified
- ☐ Stakeholders identified and aligned
- ☐ Non-AI alternatives considered

Data Readiness

- ☐ Data quality assessed
- ☐ Sufficient data volume confirmed
- ☐ Data accessibility verified
- ☐ Privacy and compliance reviewed
- ☐ Data governance in place

Team Capabilities

- ☐ Required skills inventory completed
- ☐ Capability gaps identified
- ☐ Training or hiring plan established
- ☐ Roles and responsibilities defined
- ☐ External expertise identified if needed

Success Criteria

- ☐ Business metrics defined
- ☐ Technical metrics established
- ☐ Baseline measurements documented
- ☐ Success thresholds set
- ☐ Monitoring plan created

Organizational Readiness

- ☐ User adoption strategy developed
- ☐ Process integration planned
- ☐ Change management resources allocated
- ☐ Ethics and governance framework established
- ☐ Leadership commitment secured



Next Steps

If you answered "yes" to most items above: You're ready to move forward with a pilot project. Start small, measure carefully, and scale what works.

If you have significant gaps: Don't start building yet. Address the foundational issues first. It's far better to delay a project than to fail because you weren't ready.

Need Help? AI readiness is complex, and every organization's situation is unique. Consider engaging with AI consultants who can provide objective assessment and help you build the capabilities you need.

About This Guide

This AI Readiness Guide is designed to help organizations make informed decisions about AI investments. By honestly answering these five critical questions, you can avoid common pitfalls and set your AI projects up for success.

Remember: The goal isn't to check every box perfectly—it's to understand your gaps and address them proactively. The best time to identify problems is before you invest significant resources, not after.

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