

AI initiatives can be a reality – not a costly mirage.

Modern AI is built on a foundation of information. Yet, many firms remain in a state of 'Informational Debt' - applying strategic goals to disorganised data management.

The **AI Readiness Canvas** provides the framework to close this gap. By establishing clear success criteria and rigorous asset management, we transform AI from a speculative technical expense into a measurable strategic engine.

This document outlines the eight critical domains of execution necessary for success in AI initiatives.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT			
PURPOSE	USE CASES	VALUE REALIZATION	NEGATIVE IMPACTS
<p><i>"Do not describe what the AI does; describe how it advances the company's existing goals. The Board needs to see that this isn't a 'science project,' but a strategic lever."</i></p>	<p><i>"Define the scope clearly. A board's biggest fear is 'scope creep' and 'black box' logic. Be surgical about the problem being solved."</i></p>	<p><i>"Avoid vague terms like 'better experience.' Use the 'Three Pillars of Value': Revenue Growth, Cost Efficiency, or Risk Reduction. The Board needs to see a clear path to ROI."</i></p>	<p><i>"Transparency builds trust. A Board will be more skeptical of a 'perfect' plan than one that acknowledges real risks. Focus on the structural, ethical, and financial pitfalls."</i></p>

DELIVERY READINESS			
CULTURE READY	INFORMATION (DATA) READY	TECH READY	INVESTMENT READY
<p><i>"AI fails more often due to culture than technology. The board needs to see a plan for psychological safety and literacy. Show that the organization isn't just 'buying' AI, but 'adopting' it."</i></p>	<p><i>"AI is only as good as the data it consumes. Prove that our data is an asset, not a liability. Boards fear 'Garbage In, Garbage Out' leading to flawed executive decisions."</i></p>	<p><i>"Avoid the 'shiny object' trap. Explain the architecture simply: Is it secure, is it scalable, and do we own the results? Focus on 'Buy vs. Build vs. Partner'."</i></p>	<p><i>"AI costs are often 'hidden' and recurring. The board needs to see a total cost of ownership (TCO) and a clear trigger for when to stop or scale the investment."</i></p>



How to use this document?

You have been tasked with completing the AI Readiness Canvas to ensure our organization is fully prepared before any significant investment is made.

This framework is designed to close the gap between technical aspiration and strategic reality by transforming AI from a speculative expense into a measurable engine for the business.

Your objective is to work through the eight critical domains of execution. Please follow the guide to complete the canvas.



Guide to complete the canvas – part 1

Pillar 1: Purpose

Goal: Align AI with the corporate mission to move it from a technical aspiration to a strategic reality.

Guidance: Do not describe what the technology does; describe how it advances approved strategic objectives.

Board Expectation: A clear articulation of why this specific initiative furthers the mission statement.

Executive Action: Explicitly state if there are simpler, non-AI ways to achieve these goals to prove this is the most efficient path.

Pillar 2: Use Cases

Goal: Define a surgical, well-scoped solution to a specific business problem.

Guidance: Define the scope with precision to avoid the Board's fear of "scope creep" or "black box" logic.

Board Expectation: A clear understanding of the specific friction point being solved and who the internal "customers" are.

Executive Action: Detail the proposed solution and how it integrates into existing workflows.

Pillar 3: Value Realization (Benefits)

Goal: Define measurable financial and operational returns.

Guidance: Avoid vague terms like "better experience"; use the three pillars of value: Revenue Growth, Cost Efficiency, or Risk Reduction.

Board Expectation: Hard metrics such as increased revenue, reduced costs, or improved profitability.

Executive Action: Outline the "Value Pillars" and the specific KPIs that will be used to track success.

Pillar 4: Negative Impacts

Goal: Demonstrate intellectual honesty regarding risks.

Guidance: Transparency builds trust; boards are more skeptical of a "perfect" plan than one that acknowledges potential pitfalls.

Board Expectation: A deep dive into structural, ethical, and financial risks, including "hallucinations" or algorithmic bias.

Executive Action: Detail specific mitigation strategies for every identified negative impact.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT



Guide to complete the canvas – part 2

Pillar 5: Culture Ready

Goal: Ensure the organization is ready to "adopt" rather than just "buy" AI.

Guidance: Address the psychological safety of the workforce and the plan to foster an innovative culture.

Board Expectation: Documented evidence of required skillsets, fluency programs, and executive advocacy for Information Assets (IAs).

Executive Action: Establish incentives and recognition for staff who effectively manage and share information.

Pillar 6: Information (Data) Ready

Goal: Manage data, documents, and knowledge as true business assets.

Guidance: If finances are managed at a "tertiary" level while data is at a "primary" level, the project is set up for failure.

Board Expectation: Clear accountability and governance (strategy, policy, security, privacy, data sovereignty) in place.

Executive Action: Define and measure data quality—including availability, correctness, and relevance—across all identified sources.

Pillar 7: Tech Ready

Goal: Verify the infrastructure is fit for purpose and scalable.

Guidance: Avoid "shiny object" syndrome; explain the architecture simply in terms of security and ownership of results.

Board Expectation: Confirmation that hardware, software, and networks can deliver the right information at the right time.

Executive Action: Specify the technical approach (e.g., Narrow AI vs. GenAI) and define integration capabilities with existing data lakes or warehouses.

Pillar 8: Investment Ready

Goal: Establish financial accountability and "Go/No-Go" discipline.

Guidance: AI costs are often hidden and recurring; the Board needs a total cost of ownership (TCO) view.

Board Expectation: A single person held ultimately accountable for managing Information Assets, mirroring the rigor of financial oversight.

Executive Action: Define investment gates and a justification model for continuous improvement and contingency funds.

DELIVERY READINESS



AI-Powered Predictive Revenue & Demand Intelligence.

Executive sponsor – Jane Doe, CFO

Date – 15 January 2026

PURPOSE

To shift our commercial strategy from **reactive to proactive**. By moving beyond traditional backward-looking reporting, we will use AI to anticipate market shifts, customer churn, and demand surges before they hit the balance sheet.

USE CASES

Implementation of a **"Revenue Engine"** that analyzes 5 years of historical sales, real-time CRM interactions, and external market indicators (e.g., inflation rates, competitor pricing) to provide sales teams with "Next Best Action" recommendations.

VALUE REALIZATION

Financial: Projected 8% increase in cross-sell revenue and 12% reduction in preventable churn.

Efficiency: Sales reps save 4 hours/week previously spent on manual lead prioritization.

Strategic: Improved inventory management, reducing "dead stock" holding costs by 15%.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS

Algorithmic Bias: Risk of the AI neglecting smaller, emerging market segments.
Mitigation: Quarterly fairness audits.

Decision Over-reliance: Sales teams losing the "human touch."
Mitigation: AI insights are treated as "suggestions," not mandates.

CULTURE READY

Fluency: Mandatory "Data-Driven Selling" workshop for the commercial team.

Advocacy: The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) is the executive sponsor, ensuring adoption is tied to performance bonuses.

INFORMATION (DATA) READY

Asset Management: We are consolidating three siloed CRM databases into a "Single Source of Truth" that will be hosted in Australia.

Quality: Data cleaning has already improved the "completeness" of customer records from 60% to 94%.

TECH READY

Architecture: Leveraging an enterprise-grade cloud AI platform to ensure data stays within our protected and trusted environment.

Approach: Using a hybrid of **Machine Learning** (for forecasting) and **Generative AI** (for drafting personalized sales emails).

INVESTMENT READY

TCO: \$1.2M initial setup + \$200k/year recurring cloud and maintenance fees.

Go/No-Go Gate: A 6-month pilot with the "Enterprise Accounts" team. If the 5% revenue lift isn't achieved, the project will be sunset before the full rollout.

