AI-Readiness Checklist for business and tech leaders

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Labs

AI-Readiness Checklist for Business and Tech Leaders

An enterprise guide to evaluating and accelerating AI adoption

Adopting AI begins with clarity not just curiosity. This readiness checklist is designed to help executive teams assess their organization's preparedness across strategic, technical, and operational dimensions. Whether you're early in the journey or scaling AI capabilities, this tool provides a practical lens for evaluating opportunities, addressing gaps, and prioritizing action.

I. Strategic Readiness

☐ **Define Business Objectives**
Identify specific areas where AI can add measurable value — such as process automation, predictive insights, or improved customer experiences.

☐ **Assess AI Fit with Strategic Goals**
Evaluate how AI initiatives will support your long-term business priorities and competitive positioning.

☐ **Executive Sponsorship**
Secure leadership commitment around AI investment, governance, and ethical boundaries.

☐ **Phased AI Roadmap**
Develop a timeline that balances quick wins with long-term innovation milestones.

II. Product Strategy & Ownership

☐ **AI Product Vision**
Clarify how AI supports your product or service strategy — e.g., personalization, smart features, or decision support.

☐ **Designated Product Ownership**
Assign clear accountability for AI features (such as a product manager or cross-functional owner).

☐ **Customer-Centered AI Use Cases**
Prioritize AI initiatives that solve real user pain points or unlock meaningful customer value.

☐ **Agile AI Development**
Use short iteration cycles to prototype, test, and refine AI-powered features.

☐ **Cross-Team Collaboration**
Ensure engineering, design, data science, and business teams work together from

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concept to rollout.

☐ **Feature Prioritization**
 Balance low-effort, high-impact AI enhancements with long-term transformational bets.

☐ **Define KPIs for AI Features**
 Track impact with relevant metrics (e.g., task automation rates, accuracy improvements, or user engagement).

☐ **Ongoing Lifecycle Planning**
 Anticipate the need for model updates, user feedback integration, and technical maintenance.

III. Data Readiness

☐ **Data Availability**
 Confirm that the data you need (from internal systems, customer interactions, or third-party sources) is accessible.

☐ **Data Quality & Bias Management**
 Ensure data is clean, well-labeled, and representative to prevent skewed results or unfair outcomes.

☐ **Integrated Data Pipelines**
 Enable secure and efficient access to data across systems through ETL pipelines or APIs.

☐ **Data Governance & Compliance**
 Align data practices with regulations like GDPR, CCPA, or sector-specific mandates.

IV. Technical Infrastructure

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- ☐ **AI Infrastructure Capability**
  Evaluate whether your current cloud or on-prem infrastructure can support compute-intensive AI tasks.

- ☐ **Technology Stack Assessment**
  Understand the tools and frameworks needed (e.g., TensorFlow, Azure AI, Amazon SageMaker) and where gaps exist.

- ☐ **Cloud vs On-Prem Decision**
  Choose hosting strategies based on your priorities around control, cost, scalability, and security.

- ☐ **API & Integration Readiness**
  Ensure your systems can connect seamlessly to AI services via APIs, allowing real-time or batch processing.

V. UX & Human-Centered AI Design

- ☐ **User Experience Research**
  Understand real user needs and workflows before introducing AI solutions.

- ☐ **Human-AI Interaction Design**
  Ensure AI tools are intuitive, predictable, and support — not complicate — user tasks.

- ☐ **Explainability & Trust**
  Provide clear rationale for AI-driven outcomes, especially in high-stakes scenarios.

- ☐ **Continuous User Feedback**
  Collect and act on user feedback to improve the relevance and usability of AI features.

- ☐ **Accessibility & Inclusion**
  Ensure AI interfaces meet accessibility standards (e.g., WCAG) and work for users of all abilities.

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VI. Talent & Capability Development

☐ **Internal AI Expertise**
  Assess current skill levels across data science, engineering, product, and leadership.

☐ **Upskilling & Training**
  Offer hands-on AI education for both technical teams and business stakeholders.

☐ **Strategic Hiring**
  Identify where new roles (e.g., ML engineers, data engineers) may be needed — or where partners can fill gaps.

☐ **Cross-Functional Enablement**
  Promote collaboration between IT, finance, operations, and product teams for shared AI ownership.

VII. Ethics, Security & Compliance

☐ **Bias & Fairness Controls**
  Review and test models for unintended bias or discriminatory outcomes.

☐ **Transparency & Explainability**
  Adopt interpretable models where appropriate and ensure stakeholders understand how decisions are made.

☐ **Cybersecurity & Privacy Protections**
  Apply encryption, role-based access, and data minimization to protect user privacy and secure AI systems.

☐ **Regulatory Awareness**
  Track evolving AI legislation (e.g., EU AI Act, sector-specific rules) and adapt governance accordingly.

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VIII. Change Management & Adoption

☐ **Cultural Readiness**
 Cultivate a workplace mindset that embraces experimentation and cross-disciplinary innovation.

☐ **User Adoption Planning**
 Anticipate change fatigue; communicate how AI complements, not replaces, human roles.

☐ **Pilot Programs**
 Start small with defined success metrics before expanding AI use across departments or business units.

☐ **Iterate Based on Business Results**
 Measure AI outputs in real business terms and refine models over time based on results.

IX. Financial Planning & ROI

☐ **Dedicated Budget**
 Ensure adequate funding for AI tools, infrastructure, training, and external partnerships.

☐ **ROI Modeling**
 Assess both qualitative and quantitative returns, such as cost reduction, time savings, and customer retention.

☐ **Scalability Cost Planning**
 Project the financial impact of scaling models enterprise-wide, including infrastructure and retraining costs.

☐ **AI Monetization Paths**
 Explore whether AI can enable new products, data-driven services, or operational

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efficiencies that generate revenue.

X. Vendor & Partnership Strategy

☐ **Buy vs Build Analysis**
 Decide whether to create AI capabilities internally or license them from vendors, based on cost, speed, and expertise.

☐ **Vendor Vetting**
 Evaluate potential partners for data security, product roadmap transparency, technical support, and ethical practices.

☐ **Ecosystem Engagement**
 Build relationships with cloud providers, AI startups, and academic institutions to stay on the cutting edge.

XI. Performance & Continuous Improvement

☐ **AI KPI Framework**
 Define metrics that link AI outputs to business objectives (e.g., conversion uplift, downtime reduction).

☐ **Model Performance Monitoring**
 Track accuracy, relevance, and drift over time; set thresholds for retraining or retirement.

☐ **Measure Business Impact**
 Tie AI efforts to real outcomes like revenue, cost, time savings, or customer satisfaction.

☐ **Plan for the Future**
 Stay ahead of the curve with regular reviews of your AI strategy, emerging tools, and potential disruptions.

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