

# 5 Questions to Ask Before You Invest in AI

A practical guide for business owners who want to get AI right the first time.

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AI is everywhere right now. Every software vendor is adding it, every consultant is recommending it, and every headline is telling you that you are falling behind if you have not adopted it yet.

But here is the truth: the businesses getting the most out of AI are not the ones that adopted it first. They are the ones that asked the right questions before they spent a dollar.

This guide gives you five questions to work through before you invest in any AI tool, platform, or initiative. They are the same questions we walk through with every Propel Tech client, and they will save you time, money, and frustration.

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## 01

### What specific problem are you trying to solve?

This sounds obvious, but most businesses skip it. They hear about a tool, get excited about the technology, and start looking for ways to use it. That is backwards. AI is a solution. You need to start with the problem.

**Why this matters:**

*Without a clear problem, you will end up paying for a tool that solves something you did not need solved. Or worse, you will automate a process that was already broken, and now it is broken faster.*

**Propel Tip:**

Write it down in one sentence. If you cannot describe the problem in one clear sentence, you are not ready to buy a tool for it.

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# 02

## Is the process you want to improve already working manually?

AI amplifies whatever is already happening. If your process is clean, documented, and consistent, AI can make it faster and more scalable. If it is messy, inconsistent, or different every time someone does it, AI will scale the mess.

### Why this matters:

*This is the number one reason AI projects fail. The technology works, but the underlying process was never ready for automation. You end up blaming the tool when the real issue was the workflow.*

### Propel Tip:

Before you automate anything, have someone walk through the process step by step and document it. If there are five variations depending on who is doing it, fix that first.

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# 03

## What does success actually look like?

If you cannot define what a successful AI implementation looks like before you start, you will never know if it worked. Are you trying to save hours? Reduce errors? Improve response times? Eliminate a manual step entirely?

### Why this matters:

*Vague goals lead to vague results. If your goal is to be more efficient, you will never be satisfied because you can always be more efficient. Define the metric. Set the target.*

### Propel Tip:

Use this framework: We want to reduce [specific task] from [current time or effort] to [target time or effort] within [timeframe]. If you cannot fill in those blanks, keep refining.

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# 04

## Who on your team will own this?

Every AI tool needs a champion inside your organization. Someone who understands why you adopted it, how it works, and who is responsible for making sure the team actually uses it. Without that person, adoption dies within 90 days.

### Why this matters:

*AI tools do not implement themselves. Someone needs to manage the rollout, handle questions, track results, and push through the inevitable resistance. If that person does not exist, the tool becomes shelfware.*

### Propel Tip:

This does not need to be a technical person. It needs to be someone who understands the workflow and has the authority (or influence) to drive change.

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# 05

## What happens to your data?

Every AI tool processes your data in some way. Some store it. Some use it to train their models. Some send it to third-party servers. Before you integrate any AI tool into your operations, you need to know exactly where your data goes and what happens to it.

### Why this matters:

*This is not just a compliance issue, though it can be. It is a business risk issue. If your customer data, proprietary processes, or internal documents are being used to train a public model, you have a problem.*

### Propel Tip:

Ask every vendor three things: Where is our data stored? Is it used to train your models? Can we delete it if we leave? If they cannot answer clearly, walk away.

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## Ready to Put AI to Work the Right Way?

These five questions are just the starting point. At Propel Tech, we help businesses go from asking the right questions to implementing the right solutions. If you are ready to explore

where AI fits in your business, we would love to talk.

**Book a Free AI Consultation**

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