

5 WAYS TO SPOT A DOOMED AI PILOT

**Your AI proof of
Concept is going
to fail!**

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The Pattern

£100k investment

Cross functional team assembled

12 week timeline

Promising use case selected

3 months later

“The technology works, but we’re not going live”

Sound familiar?

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Number 1

“We’re piloting AI”

Why it fails

AI isn't a use case. It's a capability. Nobody knows what problem they're actually solving.

What works

Start with specific, measurable business problem. Test if AI solves THAT problem.



Number 2

"We need to prove AI works"

Why it fails

Wrong question. AI works. Right question: "Can AI solve our problem with our data?"

What works

Define success in business metrics. Revenue. Cost. Time. Things the CFO cares about.

Number 3

“IT will own this”

Why it fails

IT owned pilots fail at 3x the rate.
IT builds tech. The business solves problems.

What works

A business owner with skin in the game. Someone whose bonus depends on it.

▶ Number 4

“We’ll use Synthetic data”

Why it fails

95% accuracy on synthetic data.
60% on real data. Real data has gaps, mess, bias.

What works

Real data from day one. Even if it’s messy. Understanding data problems IS the pilot.



Number 5

**“We’ll decide
success criteria
during the pilot”**

Why it fails

Criteria after results =
rationalisation. No baseline. No
threshold. Circular discussion.

What works

Define before: baseline, target,
decision threshold, timeline.
Written. Agreed.

Notice the pattern?

None are about
technology.

All are about
organisational
readiness, problem
definition and decision
clarity.

AI pilots don't fail
because technology
doesn't work.

What success looks like

✓ Specific problem. Specific metrics.

✓ Business owner with a real stake.

✓ Real data from day one.

✓ Clear success criteria before starting.

✓ Path to live identified upfront.

Before You Start, Ask Yourself These 5 Questions

- 1 Can you state the business problem in one sentence?
- 2 Which leader will lose sleep if this fails?
- 3 Do you have real production data?
- 4 Have you written down what success looks like?
- 5 Do you know what changes if the pilot succeeds?

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**If the answer is “No” or
“Not Sure”**

STOP

**Fix those issues first before you
spend that £100k on confirming
that you weren't ready.**

**If you want some help to get you
back on track, or assessing your
readiness, get in touch.**

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