Message to Executives: **AI Won’t Fix That**

The questions smart organizations are asking before they invest

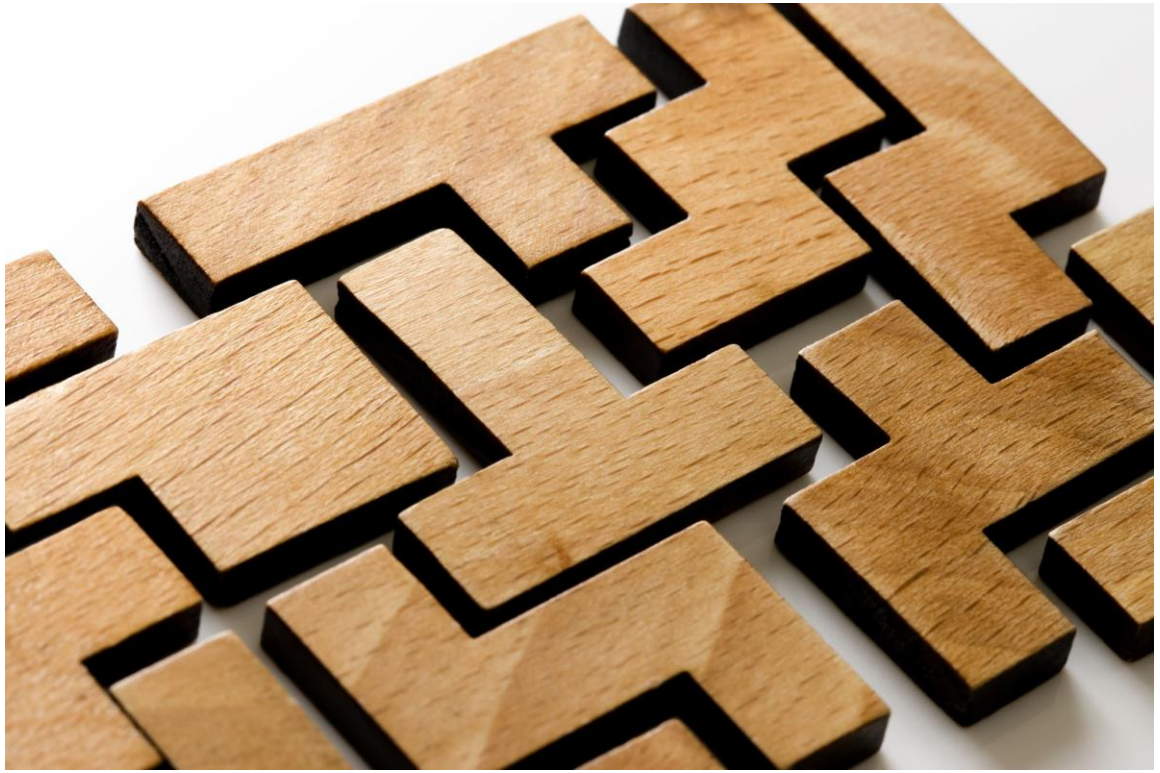
“Where can we use AI?” vs **“Where does it make sense to use AI?”**

For organizations trying to integrate AI in an impactful way, **the starting point is NOT technology**.

The clearer you are on what matters to your business, the easier it becomes to spot the use cases that make sense.

Key considerations

- **What** you deliver
- **Who** you serve
- **Where & how** your people spend their time



Step 1: Ground Yourself in Your Business Model

Before exploring AI, step back & assess:

- What are our **key offerings**?
- Who are our **customers** today - & who are we trying to reach next?
- What **capabilities** will help us grow, retain, or differentiate?

Direction & Intentionality

AI should reinforce your strengths, not distract from them.

Step 2: Look for the Right Kind of Work

- AI adds the most value when it frees up your people to focus on judgment, creativity, or relationships. Look for:
- Repetitive workflows that take time but require little decision-making
- Manual handoffs that introduce lag or error
- High-volume interactions where personalization matters (e.g., support, intake, triage)

Can we use AI for this?

If it’s repeatable, predictable, & time-consuming, it’s a good candidate.

Step 3: Apply a Simple Filter

For each idea, ask:

- Is the outcome **business-relevant**?
- Do you have **the right data** to make this work?
- Will this **amplify the impact of our team**, not sideline it?

AI works best when it supports your people - not when it tries to replace them.

The right use cases free up capacity & strengthen judgment, creativity, & human connection. That's where real value lives.

Do you have the right data to make this work?

Volume

Most AI models, especially those based on machine learning, need a decent amount of data to learn patterns, make predictions, & automate decisions. If you're trying to use AI for something like predicting customer churn automating invoice classification summarizing support tickets, you'll need a critical mass of examples. **If you've only got 40 records or a few months of data, you may not get meaningful results.**

Quality

Even clean data can be the wrong data for the job. For example, you want to personalize customer emails, but all you have is transaction history - not behavior or preferences. You want to predict late payments, but don't track payment timing at all. **The most successful use cases start with a clear outcome in mind & work backward to identify the data needed to support that outcome, not the other way around.**

Relevance

This is where many orgs stumble. If your data is full of duplicates inconsistently labeled manually entered with errors scattered across five tools, AI will reflect that mess back to you. Models trained on noisy data will hallucinate patterns or produce unreliable outputs. **The old rule applies - garbage in, garbage out.**

Step 4: Understand the ROI Reality

~ 25% of companies are currently seeing ROI from their AI investments, while the remaining **75%** have yet to realize significant returns.[1]

Some companies report an average return of **$3.70** for every dollar spent on AI, with some achieving up to **$10.30** per dollar.[2]

AI holds immense potential, but realizing its return on investment (ROI) requires strategic planning & execution.

- **Clear Objectives**: Define what success looks like for your AI initiatives.
- **Data Readiness**: Ensure you have enough quality data to train & support AI systems.
- **Scalable Use Cases**: Start with projects that can demonstrate value & scale over time.
- **Change Management**: Prepare your organization for the shifts in workflow & culture that AI adoption entails.

1: Forbes: Why 75% Of Businesses Aren't Seeing ROI From AI Yet. Jan 30, 2025.

2: Technology Record: AI adoption boosts ROI by $3.7 for every dollar spent, finds IDC.

Step 5: Involve the Right People

AI initiatives often start with a small circle: strategy leaders, innovation teams, & IT. To move from pilot to production without unnecessary friction or risk, you need a broader set of voices at the table from day one.

Business Process Owners	**They know how work gets done.** They'll surface edge cases, hidden dependencies, & what success really looks like.
CISO	**Your CISO will help you shape safe design choices & manage risks.**
End Users or Customers	**They can provide the reality check.** Their feedback confirms whether the AI experience is usable, helpful, & worth scaling.
Privacy or Compliance	**They'll spot regulatory risk before it becomes a headline**. They can help you navigate legal boundaries & build confidence with stakeholders.

What your CISO may be thinking

“Here we go again.”

If the CISO has been around a while, they’ve seen this movie before: Cloud. DevOps. RPA. Shadow SaaS. Now AI. The excitement feels familiar, but so does the risk of being brought in after someone’s already signed a contract or exposed sensitive data. ***“Why am I always the last to know… & the first expected to fix it?”***

“Where is this data coming from?”

A good CISO hears "AI" & immediately thinks: **Is customer or employee data being used? Are we feeding in proprietary or regulated information? Have we thought about how outputs are stored, logged, or re-used?** They know that AI isn’t just another app, it’s often a new surface area for data exposure, leakage, or theft.

“Is anyone thinking about guardrails?”

Especially with GenAI or customer-facing AI, they’ll worry: **Can the system be tricked into saying the wrong thing? What if it gives advice that leads to legal exposure? What’s the rollback plan if something breaks?** The CISO sees the trust cost.

A smart CISO isn’t anti-AI. They just want it deployed deliberately. They’re thinking: “Let’s make this a competitive advantage, not a compliance nightmare.”

Want to use AI the smart way?

Let's talk about your **business goals, data readiness, & team alignment**.