

Is your business AI-ready? A 10-point checklist

Ashish Mishra · October 2026 · 1 page · for leadership teams

Most AI projects that disappoint were not short of technology. They were short of a clear number, usable data, an owner and a plan for what happens next.

Tick each statement that is true for your business **today**, not what you plan to do. Be strict: if you have to argue for it, leave it unticked. Your score updates as you go.

The number 1 - 2

1 ☐ **We can name the one business number AI should move.**
Sales in a segment, customers kept, staff retained, hours spent on reporting. We know today's value, the target and the date.

2 ☐ **A senior person owns that number and will judge the work by it.**
Not "the AI project", but the result. They have the authority to change how the team works.

The data 3 - 5

3 ☐ **We know where the data behind that number lives, and who owns each source.**
CRM, ERP, finance, HR, support tickets, the spreadsheet someone updates every Friday.

4 ☐ **The data is reasonably complete and means the same thing everywhere.**
A customer, product or employee is defined the same way across systems, and the main fields are filled in.

5 ☐ **We can get the data out without weeks of requests, and we know what is confidential.**
Exports or connections exist, and personal or client data has clear rules on what can go to an AI tool.

The people 6 - 7

6 ☐ **The team that will act on the AI's output is named, and has time to act.**
An insight that lands on nobody's desk is a cost, not a result.

7 ☐ **Leaders use AI tools themselves, and staff know what they may use.**
A short, plain usage policy exists, and people are not hiding the tools they already use.

The process 8 - 10

8 ☐ **We know where the AI's signal will land, and what action follows.**
Inside a tool people already open: the CRM, the inbox, the Monday report. Not a new dashboard nobody visits.

9 ☐ **We have picked one small first use case that can show a result in 6 to 8 weeks.**
Narrow, contained and low-risk, with the data already in hand.

10 ☐ **We will measure the number before and after, and agreed in advance what counts as success.**
We know what result means "scale it" and what means "stop", before the money is spent.

Your score

/10

Tick what is true today, then find your band below.

8 - 10

Ready

Start a focused pilot on item 9 now, and measure it against item 1.

5 - 7

Close

Fix the unticked items first. Most take weeks, not months, and they decide whether the pilot pays.

0 - 4

Not yet

Start with the number and the data. AI on top of unclear goals only makes the confusion faster.