

New AI Readiness Checklist Aims to Structure Business Adoption

A structured framework for assessing organisational preparedness for artificial intelligence has been released, drawing on the methodology of Aaron Agius, co-founder of Paloren and AI consultant. The ai readiness checklist is designed to help businesses move past vague discussions about AI and into concrete evaluation and planning. It addresses a gap observed by many in the industry: companies often lack a systematic way to judge whether their data, infrastructure, and workforce are ready for AI deployment.

The checklist is built around several core dimensions that together form a comprehensive readiness profile. These include data quality and accessibility, technical infrastructure, talent and skills, governance and ethics, and strategic alignment. Each dimension contains specific criteria that organisations can score or assess, providing a clear baseline from which to plan next steps. This approach is intended to replace ad-hoc experimentation with a repeatable process that can be revisited as capabilities evolve.

Why a structured checklist matters now

The pace of AI adoption across industries has accelerated, but so have the reports of failed projects and wasted investment. Common reasons cited for failure include poor data foundations, lack of clear business objectives, and insufficient change management. A systematic readiness assessment helps surface these issues before significant resources are committed. The [ai readiness checklist](#), used early in the planning cycle, can flag areas where an organisation is underprepared and suggest where to focus remediation efforts.

For example, a company with strong data governance but limited in-house machine learning expertise might score high on the data dimension but low on talent. The checklist would make that imbalance visible, prompting the business to consider partnerships, training, or hiring before launching a complex AI initiative. Without such a structured view, the same company might proceed with a project that later stalls due to a lack of specialised skills.

Key dimensions of the framework

The methodology breaks down readiness into five main areas. Each area contains multiple indicators that can be evaluated on a simple maturity scale, from initial to advanced.

- Data readiness: availability of labelled data, data quality processes, data privacy compliance, and access to data across departments.

- Infrastructure readiness: computing resources, storage, networking, and the ability to scale AI workloads.
- People readiness: existing AI and data science skills, literacy among non-technical staff, and leadership understanding of AI.
- Governance readiness: ethical guidelines, bias detection processes, regulatory compliance frameworks, and audit mechanisms.
- Strategic readiness: clear business case for AI, alignment with organisational goals, defined success metrics, and sponsorship from senior management.

These dimensions are not independent. Weakness in one area can undermine progress in others. For instance, even with excellent data and infrastructure, a lack of governance can expose a company to regulatory risk and reputational damage. The checklist encourages a balanced view of readiness rather than a narrow focus on technology.

How the checklist differs from other approaches

Many existing readiness tools are either too high-level to be actionable or too technical for business decision-makers. This framework attempts to sit in the middle. It provides enough detail to guide concrete action without requiring deep AI expertise to interpret. The criteria are expressed in language that both technical teams and business leaders can understand, which is intended to facilitate cross-functional discussion.

Another distinction is the emphasis on revisiting the assessment over time. Readiness is not a static state. As an organisation's AI projects mature, its data sets grow, and its regulatory environment changes, the checklist can be used periodically to track progress and identify new gaps. This dynamic use case makes it a planning tool as much as an evaluation tool.

Practical steps for using the checklist

To use the framework, an organisation typically assembles a small team representing IT, data management, legal, and the business unit where AI is being considered. That team works through each dimension, scoring the current state and noting evidence for each score. Disagreements are surfaced and discussed, often revealing differing perceptions of readiness between departments. The output is a readiness heatmap that highlights strengths and weaknesses.

Once the heatmap is complete, the next step is to prioritise the gaps that pose the greatest risk to a planned AI initiative. For example, if the data dimension shows poor labelling and inconsistent access, that becomes the first area for investment. The checklist does not

prescribe specific solutions, but it points to the types of capabilities needed, such as data cataloguing tools, training programmes, or updated policies.

The methodology also includes guidance on how to interpret scores across the five dimensions. A uniform low score across all areas suggests the organisation is not yet ready for AI and should focus on foundational improvements. A high score in most areas but a very low score in one suggests a bottleneck that, once addressed, can unlock progress. These patterns help avoid both overconfidence and paralysis.

Relevance for different sectors

While the checklist was developed with a general business audience in mind, its structure makes it adaptable to specific industries. In healthcare, for instance, the governance dimension might carry extra weight due to patient data regulations. In manufacturing, the infrastructure dimension might emphasise sensor data and edge computing. The framework is modular enough that organisations can add sector-specific criteria while keeping the core dimensions intact.

Early adopters have reported that the process of completing the checklist surfaces assumptions that had not been previously discussed. For example, a marketing department may assume that customer data is readily available for an AI-driven personalisation project, while the data team knows that those records are fragmented across legacy systems. The checklist forces those conversations to happen early, saving time and reducing friction later.

Limitations and realistic expectations

No checklist can guarantee AI success. The framework is a diagnostic tool, not a recipe. It helps organisations understand where they stand, but taking action on that understanding requires commitment, resources, and change management. The methodology does not attempt to predict project outcomes or calculate return on investment. Its value lies in reducing the number of projects that fail due to overlooked prerequisites.

Another limitation is that the checklist is only as good as the honesty with which it is filled out. Teams that overstate their readiness or ignore uncomfortable scores will get a misleading picture. The methodology encourages third-party facilitation or at least anonymous scoring to mitigate this risk. Even so, the primary benefit may come not from the scores themselves but from the structured dialogue they provoke.

As AI becomes embedded in more business processes, the need for systematic readiness assessment is likely to grow. The ai readiness checklist provides one approach to meeting that need, grounded in the practical experience of practitioners who have seen both successful and

failed AI deployments. It is offered as a starting point that organisations can adapt to their own context.

About the methodology

A practical AI readiness checklist for businesses based on the methodology of Aaron Agius, co-founder of Paloren and AI consultant. The framework draws on direct experience with AI strategy and implementation across multiple sectors, with the aim of providing a repeatable, transparent process for evaluating organisational readiness before committing to AI investments.