

The Jonesi Consultancy | Houston, TX

EXECUTIVE DECISION GUIDE · PURCHASE RESOURCE

BEFORE YOU BUY ANOTHER AI TOOL



10 Questions to Answer Before the Purchase Order

Most AI software is not oversold. It is under-decided.

A two-minute discipline that costs nothing and prevents a recurring line item. Start with the work, not the software.

WHY AI PURCHASES DISAPPOINT

Very little AI software fails because it does not work. It fails because nobody established what it was for, whose job it changed, or what would be different afterward. The demo was impressive, the price was defensible, and a year later somebody finds it on the renewal list and cannot name anyone who logs in.

AI tools are easy to buy and difficult to integrate. Tool-first adoption often produces more activity without producing better work: overlapping licenses, inconsistent use, employees learning multiple platforms, and leaders unable to explain what changed because of the investment.

1 What Tool-First Decisions Create

SHELFWARE

A tool is purchased because it looks capable, but the workflow never changes enough for sustained use.

DUPLICATION

New AI features overlap with capabilities the organization already owns in existing platforms.

FRAGMENTATION

Different teams solve the same problem with different tools, prompts, and standards.

WEAK ROI

Success is measured by access, logins, or enthusiasm instead of changes in time, quality, risk, or decision-making.

START HERE

6 Questions Before Any Feature Comparison

› What problem are we trying to solve?

› Where does that problem occur in the current workflow?

› Who will use the tool, and what will they need to do differently?

› What data, decisions, or risks will the tool touch?

› What human review must remain in place?

› What measurable outcome should improve if the purchase succeeds?

DECISION STANDARD

If the organization cannot answer these questions clearly, it is not ready to evaluate features. It is still defining the problem.

Use this before a demo, pilot, or procurement discussion. If you cannot answer one of these in a sentence, that is the finding.



PROBLEM + OUTCOME

1. What specific problem does this solve, described without naming the product?

If the answer contains the tool's name, you have a solution looking for a problem.

TEST OF A GOOD ANSWER: *We can name the friction in plain language and describe the improvement we want without a vendor in the sentence.*



WORKFLOW + USER

2. Whose work changes, and have we asked them?

The people whose day this affects are rarely in the buying conversation, always in the failure.

TEST OF A GOOD ANSWER: *The people expected to use this have been in the room, and the tool fits how the work actually happens.*



BASELINE

3. What does that work cost us today, in hours, errors, or delay?

Without a number here there is no way to tell afterward whether this was worth it.

TEST OF A GOOD ANSWER: *We know the current steps, handoffs, and delays, and we captured them before anything changed.*



ADOPTION + FIT

4. How often will it actually be used? Daily, weekly, or twice a year?

Frequency, not impressiveness, is what determines whether a license pays for itself.

TEST OF A GOOD ANSWER: *The frequency of use is high enough that the workflow requires the tool rather than tolerating it.*



DUPLICATION

5. Do we already own something that does this?

Check what is bundled into platforms you already pay for. Many AI purchases duplicate entitlements you own.

TEST OF A GOOD ANSWER: *Someone has checked the approved stack and confirmed the capability is not already licensed.*

The Questions Nobody Asks Until After Signature



DATA + RISK

6. What data has to go into it, and how sensitive is that data?

Answer this before the demo, not during the security review three weeks after signature.

TEST OF A GOOD ANSWER: *We have identified confidential, regulated, or proprietary data involved, and which uses should stay outside the tool.*



HUMAN REVIEW

7. Who reviews the output before it counts as work?

If the answer is nobody, you have not bought a tool. You have bought a risk.

TEST OF A GOOD ANSWER: *A named human owner remains accountable, and employees know when AI may assist and when judgment must lead.*



ACCOUNTABILITY

8. Who administers it, and who removes access when somebody leaves?

Unowned software becomes unmanaged software, usually within a quarter.

TEST OF A GOOD ANSWER: *Roles, permissions, and offboarding are assigned to a person, not to a department in general.*



READINESS

9. What has to be true for people to use it, and is that true today?

Training, time, permission, and a workflow that requires it. Miss one and usage peaks in week two.

TEST OF A GOOD ANSWER: *Leaders can explain why this is being introduced, and support for learning and feedback exists after launch.*



MEASUREMENT + VALUE

10. What will be different in ninety days, stated in a number we already track?

This is the question that separates a purchase from a hope.

TEST OF A GOOD ANSWER: *Measurement has an owner, a review date, and a condition under which we stop, redesign, or replace.*

Ask these before the contract, in writing, and keep the answers. Every one of them is routine for a reputable vendor and awkward for the others, which is the point.

TOPIC	ASK THEM
DATA	Is our data used to train your models or anyone else's, and can that be disabled in the agreement rather than in a settings menu?
RETENTION	Where is our data held, for how long, and what happens to it when we terminate?
PORTABILITY	Can we export everything we put in and everything it produced, in what format, without your assistance?
ADMINISTRATION	What roles, permissions, and audit logs exist? Can we see who used it and what they did?
INTEGRATION	How does the product work with the systems we already use, and what breaks if we leave the platform?
COMMERCIALS	What happens at renewal? Is there price protection, and what is the cost of adding twenty more users?
REFERENCES	Who in our sector and roughly our size uses this, and may we speak with them without an account manager on the call?
IMPLEMENTATION	What is the honest effort on our side, in hours from our staff, before this is in production?
SUPPORT	What does support look like at four o'clock on the last day of a month when it stops working?

ANSWER THIS BEFORE THE DEMO, NOT DURING THE SECURITY REVIEW

Data handling, exit terms, and administration are cheap to negotiate before signature and expensive to raise afterward. If a vendor will only commit in a settings menu rather than in the agreement, that is your answer.

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What Should Change If This Succeeds

Write this down before you buy, and give a copy to whoever signs the invoice. Defining success afterward is how organizations end up defending purchases instead of evaluating them. Use a measure you already track; one invented for the purchase will be abandoned within two quarters, and everyone in the room knows it at the time.

OUTCOME	BASELINE QUESTION	SUCCESS QUESTION
TIME	How long does this take today?	What time reduction would be meaningful?
QUALITY	Where do errors or revisions occur?	What should become more accurate or consistent?
RISK	Where are exposures or uncontrolled workarounds?	What should become easier to control or observe?
CAPACITY	What higher-value work is crowded out?	What capacity should be released?
DECISION-MAKING	Where do leaders wait for information?	What should become faster or better informed?

Commit It to Paper Before Approval

WHAT WE WILL MEASURE	WHERE IT STANDS TODAY	WHERE IT NEEDS TO BE, AND BY WHEN

A disciplined decision does not always end in a purchase. One of four outcomes may be appropriate.

BUY IT

You answered all ten questions, the frequency of use justifies the cost, and somebody has put their name against the ninety-day number.

PILOT IT

The problem is real and the value is a guess. Set a fixed end date, a named owner, and the condition under which you will stop. A pilot without a kill criterion is a purchase with extra steps.

FIX THE WORKFLOW FIRST

The process is unclear, undocumented, or broken. Software applied to a broken process produces the same result faster and makes the underlying problem harder to see.

DO NOTHING YET

Nobody owns the problem, or the answer to question one was a product name. Waiting costs almost nothing here. The purchase costs the license, the implementation, and the credibility of the next request.

A Final Pre-Purchase Test

› Can we explain the problem without mentioning the product?

› Do we know what must remain under human judgment?

› Would we still make this purchase if the demo were less impressive?

› Can the people doing the work explain why this would help?

› Do we know what success will look like after implementation?

THE CHEAPEST PURCHASE YOU WILL EVER MAKE

It is the one you decided against in the ninety seconds it took to answer the first question. We help leadership teams decide whether the problem is a tool problem before the money moves.

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**Practical AI for real work. Business-driven.
People-focused.**

Looking at a purchase right now? A short conversation will tell you whether this is a tool decision or a workflow decision.

