

Before You Add AI

A Decision Guide for Businesses

Most AI advice tells you what tools to use. This guide helps you decide whether to use AI at all and what must be true before it helps.

01

Why Most AI Advice Fails Business Owners

Most AI advice begins with tools. A vendor shows a demo. A consultant recommends a platform. A peer describes what worked in their business.

None of that is diagnosis. It is pattern-matching on surface details.

AI works when it is applied to work that is already defined, stable, and owned. When those conditions are missing, AI does not fix the problem. It accelerates it.

That is why so many AI investments disappoint. Not because the tools are wrong. Because the foundation was not ready.

02

What AI Does Well

AI performs reliably in a narrow set of conditions. Understanding those conditions is the first step toward using it correctly.

Repetitive, structured tasks

Work that follows the same pattern every time with consistent inputs.

High-volume processing

Tasks where speed matters and human review is not required for every output.

Pattern recognition

Finding signals in large datasets that humans would miss or take too long to find.

Draft generation

Creating first versions of documents, summaries, or responses that a human then reviews.

Decision support

Surfacing relevant information quickly — when a human still makes the final call.

03

Where AI Breaks Down

AI does not fix problems in the work itself. It scales whatever is already there — including the errors, the gaps, and the decisions no one wants to own.

Work that is not clearly defined

If the task has no consistent starting point or endpoint, AI cannot improve it.

Processes that already fail

Automating a broken process produces broken results faster.

Decisions that require judgment

AI can inform a decision. It cannot replace accountability for the outcome.

Inputs that vary unpredictably

Inconsistent data produces inconsistent output, regardless of the model.

Work that no one owns

If there is no clear owner, there is no one to catch errors or course-correct.

04

The TAKTOS Rule

Do not automate work that is:

1

Undefined

The decision criteria are not clear.

2

Broken

The process already fails without AI.

3

Inconsistent

Inputs vary too much for reliable output.

4

Unowned

No one is accountable for the result.

05

Five Questions to Ask Before Adding AI

Apply these questions to any workflow you are considering for AI. If you cannot answer them clearly, the work is not ready.

Question 1 Can you describe this workflow from start to finish?

If the answer requires more than a few sentences, the process may not be defined well enough for AI.

Question 2 Does this workflow currently produce consistent results?

If outcomes vary significantly between runs, AI will inherit that inconsistency.

Question 3 Who owns the decision at each step?

If ownership is unclear or shared without accountability, AI will not clarify it.

Question 4 What happens when this workflow fails?

If the failure mode is unknown or unmanaged, automating it creates unmanaged failures at scale.

Question 5 What would change if AI were removed tomorrow?

If the answer is "nothing significant," the workflow may not be a genuine candidate.

06

What Good Foundations Look Like

Before AI belongs in a workflow, the following should be true.

The work is defined.

There is a clear starting point, a clear endpoint, and consistent steps between them.

Ownership is established.

One person is accountable for the output and empowered to stop or change the process.

The inputs are stable.

The data or content going into the workflow does not vary in ways that would produce unreliable outputs.

The process already works.

The workflow produces acceptable results without AI. You are improving it, not rescuing it.

A human is in the loop.

Someone reviews outputs, catches errors, and can override the system when needed.

A FINAL NOTE

If reviewing your business through this lens raises more questions than answers, that is usually the signal to slow down before adding tools.

Most businesses do not have an AI problem. They have a sequence problem. They are trying to add AI before the work it would touch is ready to receive it.

Getting the order right is not a delay. It is the work.

TAKTOS helps businesses work through that process. The starting point is the Business Check — a structured diagnostic that evaluates how your business actually operates before any AI discussion begins.

taktos.ai/businesscheck

TAKTOS is an AI advisory and education firm. We help business owners understand what AI does well, where it breaks, and whether it belongs in the way their business operates. Advisory only. Tool neutral.

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