

The AI-Ready Blueprint

Six questions to help your AI project
succeed before it starts.

1. Why are we implementing AI?
2. Where should we host our data?
3. What state is our data in?
4. How will we govern AI?
5. Who are our critical stakeholders?
6. When should we implement AI?



Understanding the challenge

Despite extraordinary potential—McKinsey estimates AI could contribute \$4.4 trillion annually to the global economy¹—organisations worldwide face a sobering reality. More than 50% of generative AI (GenAI) projects are failing, with at least 30% abandoned after proof of concept by the end of 2025.²

1

Organisations invest \$5-20 million developing custom models, plus \$8,000-\$21,000 per user annually³

2

Only 1% of companies report “mature” AI deployments delivering substantial business outcomes

3

Failed projects represent lost opportunities in competitive positioning

Yet this isn't a technology problem—it's a preparation problem. The distinction between AI success and failure rarely depends on algorithmic sophistication. Instead, success centres on foundational decisions made before implementation.

Through extensive client engagements and our partnerships with leading cloud providers, SoftwareOne has identified six strategic questions that determine AI success.

The six-question framework

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1. “Why are we implementing AI?”

Strategic alignment

The challenge

The single biggest cause of AI failure is implementing AI without clear business objectives. Strategic misalignment creates cascading consequences: organisations cannot evaluate appropriate solutions, struggle to establish success metrics, lose executive sponsorship, and fail to scale successful pilots.

The solution

Establish measurable business alignment spanning five dimensions: business alignment, value definition, success metrics, resource requirements, and timeline expectations.

The proof

With help from SoftwareOne, Orange County United Way established specific objectives for their 2-1-1 crisis response service and achieved an 85% reduction in wait times—from 11 minutes to under 2 minutes.

2. “Where should we host our data?”

Infrastructure accessibility

The challenge

AI implementations fail when they cannot access required data trapped in legacy systems or on-premises storage, creating critical bottlenecks for cloud-native AI services. Data gravity and data inertia can also make large datasets difficult to relocate, constraining AI deployments to existing data repositories.

The solution

Cloud modernisation provides the accessibility AI requires. SoftwareOne research demonstrates that 92% of successful AI implementations follow cloud modernisation.

The proof

Oxygen Finance delivered their complete AI solution in just 2.5 months through Azure-based architecture, achieving 60% faster data processing and 40% more comprehensive analysis whilst maintaining over 90% accuracy.

The six-question framework

3-4

3. “What state is our data in?”

Data quality and application readiness

The challenge

According to Gartner, 30% of generative AI projects will be abandoned due to poor data quality and unclear business value. Legacy applications compound this complexity, creating integration bottlenecks that prevent seamless data flow to AI systems.

The solution

Address data across five critical dimensions: quality, governance, security, maturity, and integration capability. Simultaneously modernise applications to support AI integration.

The proof

Camper, a leading Spanish footwear brand transitioned from fragmented data silos across multiple legacy systems to unified Google Cloud architecture centred on BigQuery, reducing analysis times from hours to minutes whilst enabling real-time machine learning recommendations.¹⁰

4. “How will we govern AI?”

Security, compliance and cost management

The challenge

Without proper frameworks, even well-planned AI projects can expose sensitive data, escalate beyond budgets, or breach compliance requirements. Conversely, research demonstrates that organisations establishing governance frameworks from project inception achieve significantly higher AI success rates.¹¹

The solution

Implement integrated governance through SoftwareOne's Intelligence Fabric methodology, encompassing AI strategy development, robust data management, security enforcement, and lifecycle management as one integrated approach.

The proof

FinOps disciplines provide complete visibility into cloud spending, optimising resource utilisation, and ensuring AI investments deliver measurable returns.¹²

The six-question framework

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5. “Who are our critical stakeholders?”

Business line champions

The challenge

AI projects drift without empowered leadership. Successful initiatives typically feature business line champions who identify specific operational challenges and drive solutions through to implementation.

Cross-industry success examples

Education

Worldreader generates thousands of reading activities in minutes rather than weeks using AWS serverless architecture¹³

“We have a very lean team. We have a wealth of books and a wealth of ideas, but the creation of activities—meaningful activities that are specifically aligned with a book—that’s a labour-intensive effort. We had been thinking, ‘What are some ways we can leverage GenAI to be an extra hand in the factory here?’”

Sonny Lacey

Director of Product, [Worldreader](#)

Hospitality

AmRest accesses real-time insights across 2,100+ restaurants through Azure enterprise data warehousing¹⁴

Understanding the potential of its data and the limitations of its current systems, the company decided to strategically reinvent its reporting and create a single, consistent data platform where everyone could access the information they needed.

Retail

Camper optimises inventory and personalises customer experiences through Google Cloud’s BigQuery integration¹⁰

“We knew we could modernise and improve how our teams communicate and collaborate by moving to a cloud solution. With its ease of use and track record, Google Workspace was the clear choice for us.”

Cristina Frontera Rossello

Business Technology Project Manager, [Camper](#)

The six-question framework

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6. “When should we implement AI?”

Strategic sequencing

The challenge

Many organisations assume rapid deployment captures competitive advantages, but this frequently backfires, creating technical debt and operational inefficiencies.

The solution

Strategic phasing—starting small, learning, scaling based on real results—integrates with SoftwareOne’s cost-optimised innovation flywheel, creating self-sustaining cycles where incremental improvements fund subsequent development.

The payoff

Organisations implementing within structured frameworks are twice as likely to see improved ROI on digital initiatives⁷.

Business outcomes



Operational transformation

85% reduction in response times (Orange County United Way)

60% faster data processing with **90% accuracy** (Oxygen Finance)

Analysis times reduced from **hours to minutes** (Camper)

Thousands of outputs generated in **minutes rather than weeks** (Worldreader)



Financial performance

Self-sustaining innovation cycles where **early wins** fund subsequent development

Twice the likelihood of **improved ROI** through structured implementation

Cost-optimised approach eliminating traditional budget constraints



Competitive positioning

Accelerated development cycles (2.5 months vs traditional multi-year programmes)

Enhanced accuracy and comprehensive analysis capabilities

Sustainable scaling without proportional resource increases

Implementation pathway

Phase 1: Foundation assessment

Evaluate current capabilities across strategy, infrastructure, data, governance, stakeholders, and timing readiness using the six-question framework.

Phase 2: Strategic gap analysis

Identify specific preparation requirements and prioritise based on business impact and implementation complexity.

Phase 3: Phased deployment

Execute strategic implementation through cost-optimised innovation principles, ensuring early wins fund subsequent development whilst maintaining continuous optimisation.

Next steps:

1

Download the comprehensive white paper

(AI-Ready Blueprint: Six questions to help your AI project succeed before it starts) for detailed guidance across all six preparation areas, complete with additional case studies covering major hyperscalers.

2

Assess your organisation's current position using the six-question strategic framework.

3

Contact SoftwareOne for an initial conversation to evaluate your AI readiness and develop a tailored implementation strategy based on proven methodologies.

Any questions?

Let's talk

SoftwareOne's systematic approach has guided successful implementations across industries, consistently transforming AI potential into measurable competitive advantage. Rather than joining the statistics of failed AI projects, organisations can leverage proven frameworks to flatten the AI learning curve and achieve sustainable success. The choice is clear: [systematic preparation](#) or [expensive disappointment](#).

The six-question framework provides the foundations for an AI ready blueprint.
How will you build on it?

Find out more:

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References and further reading

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