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DOWNLOADABLE CHECKLIST

STRATEGY & PLANNING

AI Strategy Checklist

Check whether your AI strategy has clear business priorities, executive ownership, investment logic, governance requirements and measurable outcomes.

AI Strategy Checklist

This checklist helps SMEs and public sector organisations across Europe pressure-test an AI strategy against the foundations that most commonly determine whether AI ambition turns into delivered value, or stalls after an initial pilot.

1 Business Case & Ownership

Confirm the strategic and organisational foundations are in place before the detail of the strategy is built out.

- ☐ **Is there a named executive sponsor accountable for the AI strategy?**
  Someone at board or senior leadership level should be accountable, not merely informed of progress.
- ☐ **Does the strategy trace back to specific, documented business priorities?**
  AI activity should serve existing strategic goals rather than exist as a standalone initiative pursued for its own sake.
- ☐ **Has leadership agreed why the organisation is pursuing AI, in terms specific enough to guide trade-offs?**
  General enthusiasm for AI is not a strategy; a clear rationale helps you say no to the wrong opportunities.
- ☐ **Is there a realistic view of organisational AI maturity, rather than an assumed one?**
  An honest baseline — including gaps — produces a far more deliverable strategy than an aspirational one.
- ☐ **Has the strategy been shared and tested with functions beyond IT, such as finance, legal and operations?**
  Strategies built in a technology silo often miss practical delivery and compliance constraints.
- ☐ **Is there a defined process for revisiting the strategy as the organisation's AI maturity changes?**
  AI strategies date quickly; a strategy with no review trigger tends to fall out of use within a year.

2 Strategic Alignment & Priorities

Test whether the strategy sets out clear, prioritised objectives rather than an open-ended list of possibilities.

- ☐ **Are strategic objectives specific enough to be measured, rather than aspirational statements?**
  'Improve efficiency with AI' is not measurable; a named process, metric and target is.
- ☐ **Has the organisation prioritised a manageable number of objectives rather than pursuing everything at once?**
  Five to eight clear objectives are more deliverable, and more credible, than twenty.
- ☐ **Is each objective linked to a named owner accountable for delivery?**
  Objectives without an owner rarely progress beyond the strategy document.

- ☐ **Does the strategy distinguish between near-term quick wins and longer-term strategic bets?**
  Blending both without distinction makes prioritisation and resourcing decisions harder than they need to be.

- ☐ **Has the strategy considered sector-specific or national regulatory priorities relevant to your market?**
  Public sector bodies and regulated SMEs across Europe often face additional sector guidance beyond general AI regulation.

3 Investment & Resourcing

Confirm that ambition is backed by a realistic view of what delivery will actually require.

- ☐ **Is there a defined, even if modest, budget allocated to AI activity?**
  Assumed or informal resourcing is one of the most common reasons AI strategies stall after an initial pilot.

- ☐ **Has the total cost of ownership been considered, not just initial build or licensing cost?**
  Ongoing monitoring, support and governance cost are frequently underestimated, particularly by smaller organisations.

- ☐ **Is there clarity on which skills will be built in-house versus bought in or outsourced?**
  SMEs in particular benefit from being deliberate about this rather than defaulting to hiring specialist roles they may not sustain.

- ☐ **Has capacity — not just budget — been considered, including the time of existing staff?**
  AI initiatives often fail from a shortage of available time from already-stretched staff, not a shortage of funds.

4 Governance Requirements

An AI strategy without a governance foundation tends to stall at pilot stage or scale without adequate control.

- ☐ **Is there a group or committee responsible for governance decisions about AI use cases?**
  Even a small organisation benefits from a defined, if lightweight, decision-making body rather than ad hoc approvals.

- ☐ **Is there a documented AI governance framework, or a plan to create one alongside the strategy?**
  Strategy and governance should be developed together; retrofitting governance after scaling is considerably harder.

- ☐ **Is there a process for assessing the risk of new AI use cases before they proceed?**
  This need not be elaborate for a small organisation, but it should exist and be applied consistently.

- ☐ **Has accountability for regulatory compliance been assigned to a named individual or function?**
  This includes the EU AI Act, GDPR, and any applicable national or sector-specific requirements.

- ☐ **Is there a record of the AI systems already in use across the organisation?**
  Many organisations, particularly larger SMEs, discover they have more AI in use — often via existing software features — than leadership initially assumed.

5 Data & Technology Readiness

Be specific about the gap between current data and technology capability and what the strategy will require.

- ☐ **Has the quality and accessibility of relevant data been honestly assessed?**
  Ambitious AI strategies frequently outpace the underlying data readiness needed to support them.

- ☐ **Is the technology infrastructure needed to support planned AI use cases understood?**
  This includes whether existing systems can integrate with proposed AI tools without disproportionate rework.

- ☐ **Has the organisation considered whether to build, buy or use existing platform capability for each priority?**
  For most SMEs and public sector bodies, buying or configuring existing tools is more proportionate than building custom models.

6 Outcomes & Measurement

Confirm the strategy defines success in terms that can be checked after the fact, not only described in advance.

- ☐ **Does each strategic objective have an associated, measurable success indicator?**
  Indicators tied to business outcomes are far more useful than activity measures such as tools purchased or staff trained.

- ☐ **Is there a baseline against which future progress will be measured?**
  Without a baseline, it is difficult to demonstrate whether the strategy has actually delivered value.

- ☐ **Has the organisation avoided relying solely on usage or login metrics as a measure of success?**
  High usage does not necessarily mean AI is improving outcomes; it may simply mean a tool is open.

7 Review & Evolution

- ☐ **Is there a fixed date for the next formal review of the strategy?**
  Annually, at minimum, is appropriate given how quickly AI capability and regulation are evolving.

- ☐ **Is there a trigger for an earlier review if regulation, technology or competitive conditions change materially?**
  The EU AI Act's phased obligations, for example, are a reasonable prompt for interim review for many organisations.

HOW TO SCORE THIS CHECKLIST

Count the items you can confidently answer Yes to. 80% or more suggests a strong strategic foundation; 50–79% indicates real gaps worth addressing in the next planning cycle; below 50% suggests foundational strategy work is needed before committing further investment to specific AI use cases.

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Need help acting on this checklist?

INTAI works with SMEs, public sector bodies and larger organisations across Europe to turn checklist findings into a practical, proportionate AI governance programme — from strategy and policy through to risk management and regulatory readiness. If you would like support closing the gaps this checklist has identified, our team is glad to help.

www.intai.co.uk | hello@intai.co.uk

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