

PILLAR GUIDE

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE · FOUNDATIONS

Artificial intelligence in business, explained simply



GXN

Senior expertise · Digital governance

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Value, risks and decisions

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Updated



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Artificial intelligence in business, explained simply

COMPREHENSIVE STUDY · GXN

TL;DR

The answer in one minute

- Today's AI excels at four things: reading text, writing text, classifying information, and extracting data from a document. Almost everything else is marketing.
- It does not replace judgment. It removes mechanical work around judgment.
- The best starting point is never technology. It's a repetitive task that costs you hours every week.
- The majority of AI projects fail for trivial reasons: bad use cases, messy data, no one wants to use the tool.
- If your board asks you to "make AI," the right answer is a question: exactly what process.

BACKGROUND GUIDE · AI IN BUSINESS

Why this guide exists

For three years, everyone has been talking about AI and almost no one is saying the same thing. A supplier promises to cut your costs in half. An article tells you that your job is disappearing. An employee shows you something impressive on his screen. And you have to decide what to do with a real budget.

This guide is written for that moment. Not to sell you something. So you can ask the right questions to anyone selling you something, including me.

I've been doing technology implementation for over twenty years and working with these systems for a decade, with a master's degree in artificial intelligence along the way. What you are about to read comes from real projects, with real budgets, in Quebec companies that resemble yours. Including those that didn't work.

ACTUAL CAPABILITIES

What AI Really Does

Forget two seconds of spectacular demonstrations. In a normal business, the modern AI is good on four task families. Not fifty. Four.

She reads. You give her a 40-page contract and she releases the renewal clauses. You give her 200 emails and she tells you what complaints are. It includes text written by humans, in disorder, with mistakes, in several languages. It's new and it's huge.

She writes. Summaries, draft responses, reformulations, translations, reports. The quality is good for preparatory work, average for final work. A draft in eight seconds that a human corrects in two minutes often beats a perfect text in twenty minutes.

She classifies. Sort incoming requests, categorize documents, send a folder to the right person, detect what comes out of the ordinary. Little glamorous. Very profitable.

She extracts. Remove specific numbers and fields from an invoice, form, order form, report. This is probably the most profitable use that exists in SMEs, and nobody talks about it because it doesn't make a good demonstration.

You will notice the common point. Everything revolves around text and documents. If your problem does not contain text or documents, the current generative AI has little to offer, and someone who tells you otherwise sells you a dream.

The four families of tasks

01

Read

Contracts · emails · free text

02

Write

Drafts · summaries · translations

03

Classify

Sort · route · detect

04

Extract

Invoices · forms · reports

TEXT AND DOCUMENTS

What has really changed

Companies have been automating for forty years. So why now.

Before, automating required structure. Your data had to be in boxes planned in advance. A form, a database, a fixed format. As soon as information arrived in disarray, in the form of a handwritten email, scanned PDF, or voice note, the automation stopped abruptly and a human took over.

This wall has just fallen. Current models work out of order. This is all new stuff, and it's enough to warrant taking another look at processes you classified as "not automatable" in 2015.

Second change, less discussed: cost. Having a machine read a document today costs fractions of a cent. Use cases that made no economic sense five years ago make sense today.

BACKGROUND GUIDE · AI IN BUSINESS

The words you will hear

I'm keeping it short here, a complete guide exists on the subject.

LLM or large language model. Engine. He predicts text from text. ChatGPT, Claude and the others are interfaces placed on LLM.

Agent. A LLM that is given tools and procedures to accomplish a task in several stages, without a human clicking between each step.

RAG. A method for the template to respond from your documents to you, rather than from what it has learned on the Internet. This is the technology behind internal business research.

Hallucination. When the model invents with confidence. It's not a bug that we're going to fix next year, it's a running property. We design around.

Where it really brings back

Here are the cases I see working, over and over again, in companies with 10 to 150 employees.

- **Processing incoming documents.** Supplier invoices, purchase orders, customer forms, site reports. Someone at your home opens these documents and copies the information elsewhere. It's the best first project in nine out of ten cases.
- **Sorting and routing requests.** A info@ box where everything happens, and an experienced person who loses 45 minutes a day to distribute.
- **Internal research.** Your procedures, contracts, estimates and history exist somewhere. Nobody finds them. An employee looking for an answer that already exists, multiplied by your number, hurts.
- **Repetitive answers.** The same twenty questions that come back, with the same answers rewritten each time. A draft prepared automatically, validated by a human before sending.
- **File summaries.** Prepare a decision from 60 pages of documentation.

Where it doesn't pay

Also important, and much less written about.

-
- ◆ **High-stakes decisions without supervision.** Credit approval, diagnosis, hiring decision, contractual commitment. Technically possible. Strategically reckless. The day it goes wrong, it's you who responds, not the supplier.

 - ◆ **Processes that change all the time.** Automating an unstable process is like pouring concrete on sand.

 - ◆ **Small volumes.** Twelve documents per month processed by hand. Leave that alone. The automation will cost more than the problem, and I'll tell you that before I charge you anything.

 - ◆ **Pure replacement of personnel.** Projects designed to remove people often fail, because these are the very people who hold the context necessary for the system to work. Those who succeed free up time and redeploy it.

 - ◆ **Data that doesn't exist.** AI does not invent information that you have never collected. It produces a credible and false answer, which is worse than nothing.

The three questions of a leader

When someone proposes an AI project, ask these three questions. They eliminate the vast majority of bad ideas in one encounter.

First question. What a specific task, done by whom, how many times a week.

If the answer is vague, the project is not yet a project. It's a desire. "Improving customer service" is not built. "Respond to the 60 weekly order tracking requests" is being built.

Second question. What happens when the system makes a mistake?

All AI is wrong sometimes. The real question is the consequences. An error that costs three minutes of correction is acceptable. A mistake that goes to a client under your signature, no. This response determines where to place human validation, and therefore the entire project architecture.

Third question. Who's gonna use this, every day, in six months.

I've seen technically excellent systems die in three months because no one built them with the right people. Adoption is not an end stage of the project. This is a design constraint, from day one.

BUDGET

How much does it cost, really?

Four positions, and we always forget two.

- **The implantation.** Development and integration. A simple internal assistant connected to your documents costs less. Automation integrated with three systems costs more.
- **Use.** Each document processed costs something. Often fractions of a hundred, sometimes more. Multiplied by your actual volume over twelve months, it becomes a real number. Ask for this estimate before signing. A supplier who can't give it to you doesn't understand what they're selling.
- **The interview.** Models evolve, your systems change, the quality of responses must be monitored. Plan a modest but real recurring budget.
- **Training and adoption.** The most forgotten position and the one that decides success. Count your teams' time, not just supplier hours.

A complete cost guide exists in this section, with ranges by project type.

INFOGRAPHIC 02

The full cost doesn't stop at launch

IMPLEMENTATION

USE

MAINTENANCE

ADOPTION

What I see on the ground

The most common portrait, in 2026, in the Quebec companies that I visit.

No one has an official AI project. But three employees already use ChatGPT on their personal account, with company documents in it, without management knowing it. It's not bad faith. They're resourceful people trying to do their jobs faster.

This is the true starting point for most businesses. Not a strategy. A reality already in place, unregulated, with a confidentiality risk that no one has assessed.

If you recognize yourself, your first action is not to buy technology. It's to look at what's already happening in your house. The employees who tinker free show you where your real frictions are. They do your needs analysis without knowing it.

When this advice does not apply

I say it frankly. If your business has a more urgent problem, AI will wait.

- If your basic data is false or scattered, settle it first. A smart system connected to bad data produces bad answers faster.
- If your processes are not written anywhere and no one agrees on how to do them, start there. We can't automate a disagreement.
- If your digital platform is unstable or you don't even have access to your own systems, the foundation is missing.
- If your volume is low, keep your money. Really.

A good diagnosis sometimes concludes "not this year". I delivered it. The client cleaned his database, and the next year's project worked at first.

Where to start, concretely

01

List the repetitive text- or document-based tasks in your business. Ask the people who do them, not the managers.

02

For each, note the weekly volume and approximate time.

03

Keep the three heaviest.

04

For each, ask yourself what happens in case of error.

05

Choose the one that combines high volume and low risk. This is your first project.

06

Make it small and visible. A process, a team, a result measured in weeks.

Large AI transformation programs that need to change the entire business at once almost all end up in a drawer. Small, credible victories open the doors to subsequent ones.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Frequently asked questions

01 Will AI replace my employees?

It moves time, it does not replace judgment. In successful implementations, people spend fewer hours on menial tasks and more hours on work that you would have wanted them to do anyway. Projects designed from the start to cut jobs more often fail, technically and humanly.

02 Is ChatGPT enough for a business?

For individual use, often yes. It's not enough when you need to connect your systems, control where your data is going, guarantee consistency in answers, or deploy to an entire team with rules.

03 **Are our data secure?**

It depends entirely on the architecture chosen, not the brand of the supplier. This is a design decision, to be made at the beginning of the project. A complete guide covers this topic in this section.

04 **What a minimum budget makes sense.**

Enough for a real, measured use case, with adoption support. Below, you are financing an experiment with no follow-up. The diagnosis will give you an honest threshold for your situation.

05 **Should we wait for the technology to stabilize?**

It will not stabilize. But today's profitable use cases, especially document processing and internal research, are mature and will remain so. Waiting is more expensive than moving cautiously over a small area.

06 **How long before you see a result.**

A first targeted project delivers measurable results within a few weeks to a few months. If someone promises you a transformation in two weeks, or asks you 18 months before the first win, beware of both.

CLUSTER ORGANIZATION

This guide is the mainstay of the Artificial Intelligence category. Related content is organized between foundations, risks and governance, architecture and models, then investment and implementation.

OFFICIAL SOURCES

References to be checked according to your situation

These references support the external rules and frameworks cited in this guide. They are not a substitute for legal or professional advice tailored to your organization.

NIST

Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework



ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

GXN

A directly accessible senior expertise, with more than twenty years of experience in technology implantation and a master's degree in artificial intelligence within the company.

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AI OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

You want to know exactly where AI brings you home.

The AI diagnostic examines your processes and identifies two or three concrete opportunities, with costs, risks and a roadmap. And if the conclusion is "not now," you'll have it in writing.

No call required. No sales sequence.