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ADVISORY

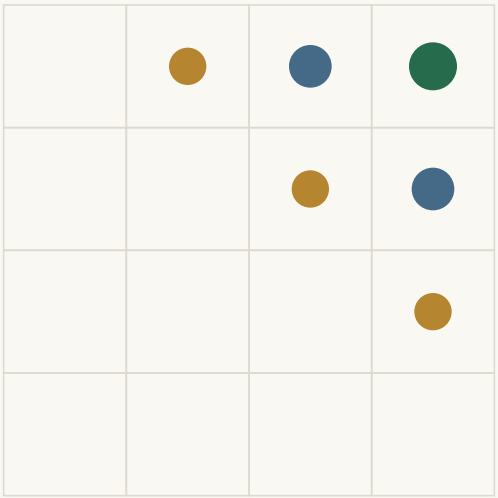
The AI Opportunity Prioritization Guide

How to decide which AI initiatives deserve investment, and which ones don't.

Strategy before spend. Value before novelty.

Updated for 2026

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VALUE x FEASIBILITY

The problem

Most organizations don't have an AI idea problem.

They have a prioritization problem.

There are usually more potential AI use cases than there is capital, executive attention, implementation capacity, or organizational readiness to pursue them.

The result is predictable. Pilots proliferate, teams chase interesting technology, and investment gets spread across initiatives that may be technically feasible but are not especially valuable.

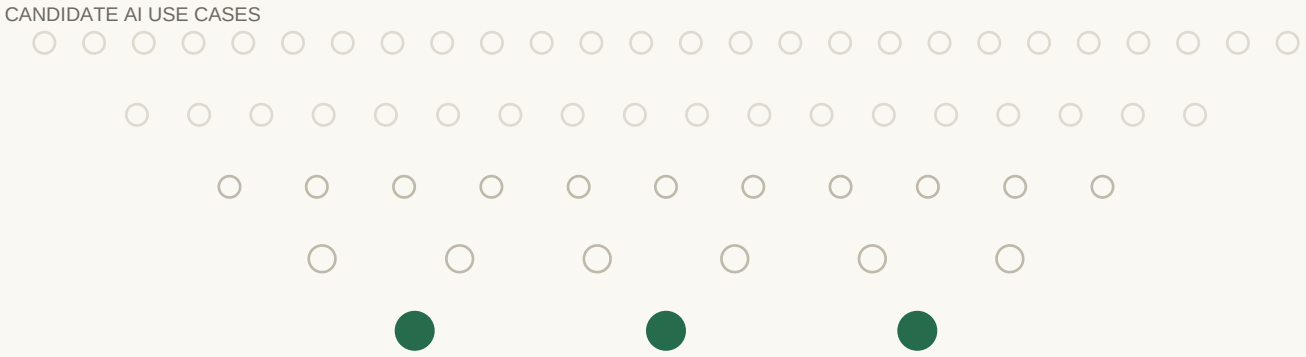
The question is not

“Where can we use AI?”

The better question is

“Where can AI create enough measurable business value to justify investment?”

This guide introduces a practical framework for answering that question.



> **AI strategy should begin with enterprise value, not a list of things the technology can do.**

Start with the business outcome.

AI opportunities should begin with economics, not technology.

Many organizations start by asking what generative AI, agents, or automation can do. That usually produces a long list of technically interesting use cases. A stronger approach starts one level higher: what business outcome needs to change?

Revenue & Growth

Create new revenue, increase conversion, improve retention, expand customer reach, or enable new products and services.

Cost & Productivity

Reduce manual effort, automate repetitive work, improve employee leverage, or lower operating cost.

Speed & Cycle Time

Compress workflows, accelerate decision-making, shorten development cycles, or reduce time to market.

Customer Experience

Improve personalization, responsiveness, accessibility, service quality, or ease of doing business.

Quality & Accuracy

Reduce errors, improve consistency, increase forecasting or decision quality, or strengthen operational performance.

Risk & Compliance

Improve monitoring, controls, documentation, fraud detection, regulatory compliance, or organizational resilience.

THE FIRST PROOFLINE PRINCIPLE

> **If the business outcome cannot be clearly articulated, the AI use case is probably not ready to be funded.**

Before debating models, vendors, platforms, or architecture, leadership should be able to finish this sentence:

“If this initiative works, we expect to materially improve _____.”

If the answer is vague, the business case will be too.

Ask five questions before funding any AI initiative.

01 Is the potential business impact material?

Would success noticeably affect revenue, margin, productivity, customer outcomes, speed, quality, or risk? A use case that saves five minutes for twenty employees may be technically successful and economically irrelevant. One that reduces processing time across 200,000 annual transactions may be transformational. **Scale matters.**

02 Is the underlying workflow ready?

AI does not automatically fix a broken process. If ownership is unclear, workflows vary wildly, inputs are inconsistent, or no one agrees what “good” looks like, automation can simply make dysfunction move faster. Sometimes process redesign needs to come before AI implementation.

03 Is the necessary data available and usable?

Ask whether the data is accessible, sufficiently accurate, available at sufficient scale, legally and safely usable, and present where the workflow needs it. A compelling use case with inaccessible data is not an immediate opportunity. It is a dependency.

04 Can value be demonstrated quickly enough?

Strong early opportunities tend to have a credible path to measurable value within months rather than years. That does not mean long-term bets are bad. It means they should be treated differently from near-term value opportunities.

05 Can the organization absorb the change?

AI transformation changes how work gets done, who makes decisions, where human judgment remains necessary, how employees spend their time, what leaders measure, and sometimes the operating model itself. A technically excellent initiative with no owner, no adoption plan, and no workflow redesign can still fail.

The Proofline Value × Feasibility Matrix

The simplest way to create discipline is to stop treating every AI idea equally. Evaluate each opportunity against two fundamental dimensions.

VALUE

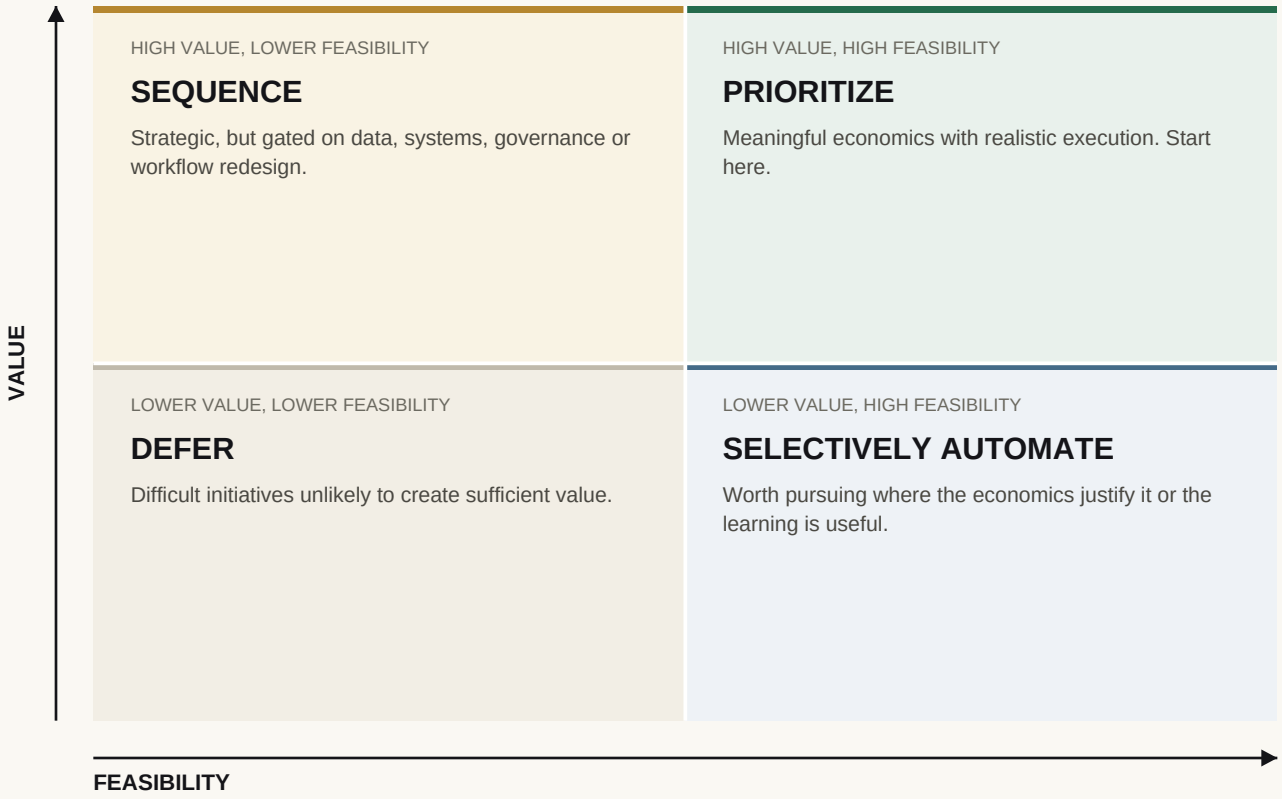
How much measurable business impact could this initiative create?

Revenue · cost · margin · productivity · speed · customer impact · quality · risk reduction · strategic differentiation

FEASIBILITY

How realistic is it to deliver that value?

Technical complexity · data readiness · integrations · regulatory constraints · organizational ownership · adoption complexity · implementation effort · time to value



> **Good AI strategy is partly about deciding what not to fund.**

Decide what role AI should actually play.

Prioritizing an opportunity is only half the decision. The other half is what AI is actually supposed to do once it gets there.

AUTOMATE

Use AI to perform repetitive or rules-heavy work with limited human intervention. Strong candidates often involve document processing, classification, routing, data extraction, repetitive communications, and workflow administration.

Cost · Speed · Consistency

AUGMENT

Use AI to make a human better rather than remove the human from the process. Strong candidates include research, analysis, decision support, drafting, complex customer interactions, and knowledge work.

Leverage · Quality · Better decisions

BUILD

Build proprietary AI capability when it can become strategically differentiated: the workflow is central to competitive advantage, proprietary data matters, off-the-shelf tools are insufficient, or the capability could become part of the product itself.

Do not build simply because your engineering team can.

BUY

Buy when the capability is increasingly commoditized and there is little strategic benefit to owning the underlying technology.

The goal is value creation, not technical purity.

LEAVE IT ALONE

Some processes should remain exactly as they are. AI may introduce unnecessary complexity, low ROI, unacceptable risk, worse customer experience, or additional operating cost.

A legitimate and frequently correct answer.

> **One of the most valuable outcomes of a prioritization exercise is identifying initiatives that should not proceed.**

Is the opportunity ready for investment?

Before funding your next AI initiative, ask whether your leadership team can answer “yes” to most of these.

- [ ] We can clearly state the business outcome this initiative is intended to change.
- [ ] The potential economic or strategic impact is material.
- [ ] We understand the current baseline.
- [ ] We know how success will be measured.
- [ ] The necessary data is accessible and sufficiently reliable.
- [ ] There is a clear executive and business owner.
- [ ] We understand how the underlying workflow will change.
- [ ] We know whether this capability should be built, bought, automated, or used to augment people.
- [ ] We have considered security, regulatory, privacy, and operational risk.
- [ ] There is a credible path to demonstrating value within an appropriate timeframe.

Several “no” answers do not necessarily mean the opportunity is bad. They usually mean more work is needed before significant investment.

Find out where your organization stands.

Take the Proofline AI Opportunity & Readiness Assessment. A six-minute diagnostic across data, process, technology, adoption, risk and leadership.

14 questions · 6 dimensions · ~6 minutes

TAKE THE ASSESSMENT → prooflineadvisory.com/assessment

Need a deeper answer?

Proofline works with leadership teams to evaluate AI opportunity portfolios, quantify the underlying economics, identify implementation dependencies, and determine where capital and executive attention should go first. A full engagement can include a prioritized opportunity portfolio, business-value analysis, feasibility and readiness assessment, build / buy / automate / augment recommendations, implementation dependencies, an executive decision framework, and a near-term transformation roadmap.

TALK TO PROOFLINE → prooflineadvisory.com/contact

About the principal



Senior advice from someone who's done the work.

Mitesh Vashee

Founder & Principal, Proofline Advisory

Mitesh Vashee is an AI, product and business transformation executive with more than two decades of experience building companies, launching products, leading complex transformation programs, and operating at executive level.

He has led more than $3B in technology and AI transformation engagements, including AI and technology transformation associated with an $8B banking-sector merger. He has helped launch and transform products and platforms reaching more than 2 billion users globally, launched more than 130 products, led teams of more than 220 people, built AI and technology innovation hubs for three Fortune 100 companies, and founded three startups.

He has also led technology transformation at a leading nonprofit during a period in which the organization grew revenue by approximately 150% to $400M.

20+
Years of experience

$3B+
Technology & AI transformation engagements

2B+
Global reach of products and platforms launched and transformed

130+
Products launched

220+
Person teams led

3x
Startup founder

3 F100s
AI & technology innovation hubs built

$8B
Banking-sector merger transformation

Global consulting → Enterprise transformation → Founder → C-suite operator → AI advisor

> **Proofline combines enterprise-scale transformation experience with the judgment of an operator who has built products, companies, teams, and AI capabilities from the inside.**

PROOFLINE ADVISORY

Know where AI will create value. Before you invest.

Take the Assessment → prooflineadvisory.com/assessment
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