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Scaling AI: The Enterprise Sequencing Checklist

AI adoption has accelerated rapidly. Today, 88% of organizations report using AI in at least one business function, with many moving beyond experimentation into real-world applications.

While only a small percentage of organizations report measurable impact on EBIT today, leading organizations are already pulling ahead, achieving average returns of 4.5x, more than double the industry average.

This is the year of separation.

The organizations realizing meaningful returns are not those experimenting with more tools. They are the ones taking a holistic view of AI and doing the foundational work required to scale it across their organization.

They are aligning AI to business priorities, redesigning workflows, strengthening data and governance, and evolving how work gets done. This is what it means to treat AI as a business transformation, not just a technology deployment.

Adoption is no longer the challenge. The real opportunity, and the differentiator, is how organizations reimagine their ways of working to scale AI effectively.

The checklist below helps leaders evaluate whether their organization is taking the necessary steps in the appropriate order to unlock sustained value from AI investments.

The Right Sequence to Realize AI Value

1. Start With Strategic Clarity

Is AI in service of your business strategy?

Make sure every AI initiative has a direct link to a business priority. Over the last two years many organizations skipped this step, yet it's key to ensuring AI investments translate into real business value.

- ☐ **AI investments are tied to specific enterprise priorities.** We can name the enterprise priority behind every active AI investment.
- ☐ **Outcomes are defined upfront.** We have clear success metrics before the work begins, not reverse-engineer the goal after we saw what the pilot could support.
- ☐ **Governance assesses opportunity and risk.** Our governance structure evaluates both opportunity and risk, directing investments to initiatives with greatest value potential.

If you can't check all three, rethink how AI fits into your strategy before scaling further.

2. Build Enterprise AI Literacy

Can leaders and teams make informed AI decisions?

A governance structure is only as good as the judgment of the people operating it. AI literacy is what closes that gap.

- ☐ **Executives understand AI's potential and limits.** They can articulate where it creates value and introduces risk today, and where it's directionally headed over the next 6–12 months.
- ☐ **Managers can evaluate outputs.** Our managers can tell a reliable AI output from a merely convincing one and have pushed back when it mattered.
- ☐ **Functional leaders own their AI roadmap.** Our functional leaders have identified and actualized an AI opportunity, not just adopted one handed down from IT.
- ☐ **AI literacy exists beyond IT.** Frontline teams across the organization know how to safely use AI tools and evaluate their outputs in daily work.

If you can't check all of these, strengthen AI literacy before expanding adoption. Without the right understanding across leadership and teams, governance frameworks and tools won't translate into sound decisions in practice.

3. Enable Adoption, Not Just Deployment

Are your people actually working differently?

Measure outcomes, not activity. Seat licenses and token spend tell you AI is being used, not whether it's making a difference.

- ☐ **Guardrails are built in.** Our guardrails are designed before deployment, not bolted on later as a response to problems.
- ☐ **We measure value, not volume.** We can point to a business outcome that changed because of AI adoption, not just to usage metrics.
- ☐ **Leadership owns adoption.** We have a named leader who visibly owns adoption at the function or team level and is accountable for it.

True adoption shows up in how work gets done. If the only thing changing is usage rather than outcomes, true transformation hasn't happened.

4. Modernize Data & Governance

Can you trust your data at scale?

Your pilot ran on clean data, but real enterprise data is fragmented, inconsistently governed, and spread across disconnected systems.

- ☐ **Ownership is assigned, not assumed.** We can name the person accountable for every data asset our AI initiatives depend on.
- ☐ **Data works across functions.** Our data successfully supports a workflow that crosses at least two functional boundaries.
- ☐ **Governance is living, not laminated.** Our governance structure has been updated in response to a new AI capability, not just to meet compliance requirements.

Remember, having a policy isn't the same as having governance.



78% of organizations report that AI is already changing how work is organized across teams and functions.

Propeller 2026 People & Change Insights Report

5. Redesign the Organization for Human + AI Work

Have roles and decision rights evolved?

AI adoption will inevitably reshape decision-making across the organization. Clarify how human and AI responsibilities should evolve as the technology becomes more embedded in your processes.

- ☐ **Ownership is documented.** We have documented cross-functional workflows that clearly denote which tasks are owned by AI and which are owned by humans.
- ☐ **Managers supervise agents.** Our managers have had a specific conversation about what it means to supervise a digital agent and how to optimize value for the organization.
- ☐ **The organizational structure has evolved.** We have made at least one structural change (team structure, role, or reporting line) in response to AI new capabilities.
- ☐ **Roles have been updated.** At least one job description or role expectation now explicitly includes AI-enabled work.

AI becomes truly embedded in your organizational design when roles, structures, and decision rights start to shift.

6. Rebuild Workflows Around AI

Have your workflows changed, or just your tools?

Workflow redesign is what transforms AI from a simple productivity tool into a structural business advantage.

- ☐ **Workflows are mapped end-to-end.** We can show how a workflow looked before AI and how it was redesigned because of it and explain the difference.
- ☐ **AI orchestrates across systems.** We have at least one workflow in which AI orchestrates across two or more systems without human intervention at each step.
- ☐ **Autonomy and oversight are explicit.** For every automated decision point, we have documented the triggers for human oversight and who is responsible when they occur.

If the workflows haven't changed, the transformation isn't done.

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Build the Foundation to Scale AI

Organizations seeing the greatest returns from AI are building the foundational capabilities required to scale it and in the right sequence.

The six areas in this checklist represent that work.

Each stage builds on the last.

You cannot scale what has not been adopted, and you cannot adopt what your foundation cannot support.

Understanding where your organization is, and what comes next, is what enables AI to move from investment to measurable impact.

If you're evaluating where your organization sits in this sequence, connect with our team to explore how to translate AI investment into **measurable, organization-wide value.**

