

The Azure AI Readiness Checklist

7 Questions to Ask Before You Deploy AI on Azure

Before you spend \$50K+ on an Azure AI project, answer these honestly.

1. Do you have a clear business problem — or are you chasing "AI"?

AI projects fail when the problem isn't defined. Write down the specific workflow, decision, or bottleneck you want AI to address. If you can't, stop here.

2. Is your data accessible, clean, and governed?

Azure AI services need data. If your data lives in silos, has no schema, or lacks access controls, your AI project will stall at ingestion. Check: Can you query your core data in under 5 minutes today?

3. Have you mapped your Azure AI service options?

Azure has 20+ AI services. Most teams pick the wrong one. Quick guide:

- Document processing → Azure AI Document Intelligence
- Custom chat/search → Azure OpenAI + AI Search
- Predictions on structured data → Azure Machine Learning
- Pre-built models → Azure Cognitive Services

4. Do you have a cost model — not just a budget?

Azure AI costs scale with usage. A RAG pipeline processing 10K documents/day costs very differently than 100/day. Model your expected token volume, storage, and compute before you commit.

5. Who owns the AI system after launch?

If the answer is "nobody" or "the vendor," you have a maintenance problem coming. Define who monitors, retrains, and troubleshoots before day one.

6. Do you have a security and compliance plan?

If your data includes PII, PHI, or financial records, your Azure AI deployment needs RBAC, private endpoints, data encryption at rest, and audit logging. Not optional.

7. Can you ship a useful MVP in 30 days?

If your AI roadmap is 6+ months to first value, scope is too big. The best Azure AI projects ship a narrow, useful tool in weeks — then iterate.

Score Yourself

6–7 "Yes"

You're ready. Time to architect and build.

4–5 "Yes"

You have gaps. A focused audit can save you months.

0–3 "Yes"

You need a strategy reset before spending on AI.

Ready for an expert assessment?

Book a **free Azure AI Snapshot** at bmdpat.com — I'll review your setup and tell you exactly where you stand in 48 hours.

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