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Choosing an AI tool for your business: five questions to ask before you pay

AI in Your Business

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Choosing an AI tool for your business: five questions to ask before you pay

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Before paying for an AI tool, answer five questions: **which task it solves, which data it receives, what happens when it is wrong, whether you can leave it, and what it costs in your real use**. Tools and versions change every month; these questions do not. A tool that passes all five will do, whatever its name.

The five questions

Question	What to check	Warning sign
1. Which task does it solve?	Write the task in one sentence, and what a good result would be	"It will help us with everything." Without a task there is nothing to measure.
2. Which data does it receive?	The data terms: training, retention, where it is kept. See **how to read the terms**	No clear policy, or no way to delete.
3. And when it is wrong?	Who reviews, how you see the source, how it gets corrected	It does not show where it got the answer.
4. Can I leave?	Exporting your data and content; cancelling without penalty	Your data stuck in a format only it can read.
5. What does it cost in my use?	Work it out with your real volume. Prices are on the provider's page	Pay-per-use with no ceiling and no spending alert.

A one-hour test

1. **Gather ten real cases** of the task, with the right answer you already know. Remove personal data.

2. **Run them through the tool** (and a second one, if you are comparing), in your language and with the typos of the people who write to you.

3. **Compare the answers with the right ones**, without looking at who gave them. Count the wrong, the partial and the invented.

4. **Measure the review work.** If reviewing takes nearly as much work as doing it, the tool does not pay off.

5. **Try the hard cases:** what it should not know (it should say so), what it should not answer (it should refuse) and local names.

An AI tool can change behaviour without warning: the provider updates the model and the answers change. So keep the ten cases as your test and **repeat it from time to time**, especially before automating anything that depends on it. If the tool stores your documents or contacts, also check how you would take them with you if you ever switch.

Do not buy on the advert or the feature list.
Many features that impress in a demo will not serve your task. The measure is the test with your own cases.

For a general idea of what each family of tools does well, see **which AI tool suits which task**. Start with the free or trial version, if there is one, before subscribing.

NEED A HAND?

Want help deciding whether your idea needs AI, a server, or neither? Tell us the case.

Open a support ticket →

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