

The AI Solution Navigator: A Guide to Custom vs. Off-the-Shelf AI

Use this to determine the right AI path for your organization. By engaging with a series of targeted, insightful questions, you will move beyond guesswork to gain crystal-clear clarity on the core elements of your project: the complexity of your challenge, the proprietary nature of your data, the depth of required system integration, and your team's internal AI readiness.

TICK THE BOXES THAT APPLY:

1. CORE NEEDS & COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

- ☐ Is the AI central to a unique business strategy or competitive differentiation?
Custom AI
- ☐ Is the AI for standard, operational tasks (simple data summaries, FAQ chatbots)?
Off-the-Shelf

2. BUDGET & TALENT

- ☐ Can we allocate significant Capital Expenditure (CAPEX) and hire or maintain AI/data science talent? **Custom AI**
- ☐ Do we prefer low upfront costs with predictable Operating Expenditure (OPEX) and minimal internal expertise? **Off-the-Shelf**

3. TIME-TO-VALUE

- ☐ Can we wait months for a fully tailored solution with long-term benefits?
Custom AI
- ☐ Do we need immediate deployment within weeks?
Off-the-Shelf

4. SCALABILITY & FUTURE-PROOFING

- ☐ Do we need full control to scale, modify, and integrate AI long-term?
Custom AI
- ☐ Is vendor-managed scaling acceptable, even with potential lock-in?
Off-the-Shelf

5. DATA SENSITIVITY & COMPLIANCE

- ☐ Are we handling sensitive or highly regulated data (healthcare, finance, defense)? **Custom AI**
- ☐ Can data safely reside in a third-party cloud environment? **Off-the-Shelf**

6. DATA READINESS

- ☐ Do we have clean, structured data ready for use? **Off-the-Shelf**
- ☐ Is our data unstructured, inconsistent, or spread across different formats/systems? **Custom AI**

6. LONG-TERM ROI & ASSET VALUE

- ☐ Do we want to build proprietary IP, unique models, and a strategic asset?
Custom AI
- ☐ Are we focused on cost-saving and operational efficiency? **Off-the-Shelf**

6. DECISION GUIDE:

- ☐ **Mostly Custom AI ticks:** Your initiative is strategic; invest in building a long-term competitive asset.
- ☐ **Mostly Off-the-Shelf ticks:** Your initiative is operational; prioritize speed, predictability, and efficiency.

Ready to roll out AI with confidence?

Use this checklist to avoid common pitfalls and drive real engagement.



Schedule a free consultation with BotsCrew