



AI Without an Owner: Fifteen Questions to Answer Before Deploying AI Across the Business

AI tools enter a company faster than its leadership hears about them, and the exposure they create lands on whoever's name is on the work. This is not a technology assessment. It is fifteen questions about ownership, exposure, and value, written for a business where a mistake can become a structural, safety, or contractual problem rather than an embarrassing one.

The Ownership Audit

PART 1 · WHO OWNS IT · 3 QUESTIONS

Accountability before capability

Every question below has an answer today, whether or not anyone has said it out loud. The ones that take more than a few seconds are the finding.

1. A bid, a spec, a safety document. If one of them went out with a serious error that AI wrote, **whose name is on the line?** Not who typed it. Who answers for it.

2. What is that person authorized to decide without asking you, and what has to come to you first?

3. If they took another job in 30 days, what walks out the door with them?

If the answer to any of these is "we haven't decided yet," it has already been decided by whoever is closest to the keyboard.

PART 2 · WHAT'S ALREADY HAPPENING · 3 QUESTIONS

Where might AI already be in use?

Check every function where AI could plausibly be in use today, including features quietly switched on inside software you already pay for.

- ☐ Estimating & bid assembly
- ☐ Submittals & closeout docs
- ☐ Purchasing & subcontracts
- ☐ Marketing & website
- ☐ Proposals & RFP responses
- ☐ Safety documentation
- ☐ Customer correspondence
- ☐ Field & crew communication
- ☐ Engineering & drafting
- ☐ Project scheduling
- ☐ Recruiting & hiring
- ☐ Other: _____

TOOL OR VENDOR	DEPARTMENT	WHAT IT DOES	DATA ENTERED	DECISION INFLUENCED	OWNER

4.

Which AI tools are in use across the company right now, and **on whose account?** Company logins, personal ones, or free tiers nobody can see?
5.

What has already been pasted into a chat window? Bid pricing, subcontractor rates, drawings, customer specs, incident reports, employee records?
6.

Do your customer contracts say anything about AI use or where project data may be stored, especially on municipal and government work? Do your own contracts?

PART 3 · WHERE IT CAN ACTUALLY HURT · 3 QUESTIONS

Not all AI risk is equal

An error in a blog post and an error in a structural calculation are different universes. Triage accordingly.

7. Name the three places in the business where an AI mistake becomes a **safety, structural, or legal** problem rather than an embarrassing one.

8. Which documents require a licensed engineer's seal or a qualified person's approval, and does everyone touching AI know which those are?

9. Who reviews AI output before it reaches a customer, an inspector, or a jobsite? Is that a defined role, or whoever happens to notice?

PART 4 · WHERE IT ACTUALLY PAYS · 3 QUESTIONS

The return is rarely where people look first

Risk questions decide what you avoid. These decide what you gain.

10. Bid assembly, submittals, RFP responses, project closeout documentation, safety reporting. **Which three repeatable processes cost the company the most time**, and how many hours a week do they consume?

11. Which of your most valuable knowledge lives **only in the heads of people retiring in the next five years**?

12. What decision would you make differently next quarter if you had better information a week sooner?

PART 5 · WOULD YOU KNOW IT WORKED · 3 QUESTIONS

Measurement before momentum

13. Is your operating data in systems you can actually query, or is it in PDFs, email threads, and shared drives?

14. What number has to move for this to have been worth doing, and who owns that number today?

15. When someone's job changes because of this, what happens to that person?

HOW TO READ YOUR ANSWERS

Answered all fifteen quickly. You have an operating strategy. Write it down and hand it to someone with authority to enforce it.

Hesitated on four or five. This is the common case, and it is not an AI problem. It is an ownership problem, and it does not resolve by handing more tasks to whoever has been quietly absorbing them.

Couldn't answer Part 1. Stop deploying and start there. Everything else compounds on top of an unanswered accountability question.

BEFORE YOU CLOSE THIS

The one decision

The question I could not answer quickly was number _____.

The person I am naming accountable for AI is _____ (name / role).

The first process I want AI to take off our plate is _____.

I will tell them, and the leadership team, on _____ (date).