Which AI is right for you? A practical framework for choosing the right tool for your business

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Introduction

Talking about artificial intelligence is no longer optional. Management boards are applying pressure, clients are asking questions and internal teams feel the expectation to "do something with AI". However, behind the urgency lies a paradox: few organizations have clarity on **why to use it**, **how to measure its impact**, and **what type** of AI aligns with their operational reality.

The strategic conversation has changed. It's no longer about discussing *if* AI is necessary but about understanding *what* type of artificial intelligence generates real value. The companies that will gain an advantage will not be those that adopt the most tools, but those that know how to choose with the correct criteria and focus.

For leadership teams, the key question is not "what can AI do" but **"what business problems are worth solving with AI?"** Without that clarity, the risk lies not in falling behind. It is in moving fast in the wrong direction: investing time, resources and credibility in solutions that impress, but do not transform.

Types of AI in the Market

Artificial intelligence is not a single technology; it is a set of approaches with different purposes. Understanding this distinction is the first step in connecting solutions to real challenges. Practically, we can group them into four main types:

1. AI for Interaction (Chatbots y Virtual Assistants)

- **What it is:** AI focused on improving and automating communication with customers, suppliers, or employees.
- **Ideal for:** Organizations or processes with a high volume of repetitive contact.
- **Common use cases:** Banks and insurance companies that frequently handle similar inquiries; order automation in retail; connection to cloud services for appointment scheduling for doctors and hospitals.
- **Expected results:** Faster response times, better customer experience, and reduced cost per interaction.

2. AI for Excecution (Intelligent Automation)

- **What it is:** AI focused on executing repetitive tasks, combining business rules with machine learning. It's the foundation of intelligent process automation.
- **Ideal for:** Sectors with workflows involving repetitive tasks with structured formats.
- **Common use cases:** Scheduling production lines; planning logistics routes; invoice reconciliation and validation.
- **Expected results:** Increased productivity, reduced errors, more agile operations with greater traceability, freeing up staff time for higher-value business activities.

3. AI for Decision-Making (Predictive Analytics)

- **What it is:** This type of Ai does not execute or converse; it transforms data into knowledge to make better decisions. It anticipates scenarios, identifies patterns and recommends actions.
- **Ideal for:** Companies that need to anticipate future events.
- **Common use cases:** Consumer goods companies forecasting demand; manufacturing companies preventing equipment failures; retailers optimizing prices; distribution centers planning their inventory.
- **Expected results:** Faster decisions, controlled risks, and more assertive planning.

4. AI for Empowering Talent (Productivity Copilots)

- **What it is:** The new generation of generative AI designed to amplify human capabilities, not replace them. They are "copilots" that accelerate cognitive tasks.
- **Ideal for:** Areas that depend on content creation, analysis, or technical development.
- **Common use cases:** Engineering and construction for reviews blueprints; generating reports and KPI dashboards; generating marketing campaigns; drafting contracts; interpreting operational data in manufacturing.
- **Expected results:** Freeing up time from repetitive tasks to focus human attention on judgement, creativity, and innovation.

The Most Common Mistake: Starting with the Technology

Enthusiasm for AI often frustrates implementations due to poor planning and lack of clarity. The real challenge is not "implementing AI," but doing so with a clear purpose. The most common mistake is starting with the "solution" or tool. This leads to costly rework and implementations that fail to meet objectives. Before looking for a solution, one must map the process, identify the pain points, and define tangible objectives.

This lack of focus has cost large companies:

Case 1: Drive-Thru Failures

- **The Attempt:** Since 2021, McDonald's experimented with AI and voice recognition systems at 100 drive-thru locations, aiming to increase efficiency.
- **The Failure:** The technology proved ineffective for the user experience. The AI made absurd mistakes, such as adding products by mistake or confusing customer corrections.
- **The Result:** McDonald's canceled the experiment in June 2024. This represented a loss of time and resources for implementing a cutting-edge solution that was not up to the complexities of the real-world environment.

Case 2: Prediction Error

- **The Attempt:** Zillow, a digital real estate platform, launched its famous AI algorithm called "Zestimate" to buy thousands of homes to renovate and sell them quickly.
- **The Failure:** The algorithm was good at estimating prices in stable markets but could not accurately predict market volatility. The company relied exclusively on its model and ended up overpaying for thousands of properties just before the market slowed down.
- **The Result:** Zillow had to shut down its *iBuying* division in 2021, incurring losses of hundreds of millions of dollars and laying off 25% of its staff. The mistake was overestimating the AI's capabilities in a high-risk environment.

Golden Rules for AI Implementation:

1. **Start with a relevant problem, not a trend.**
2. **Evaluate data maturity before investing in projects.**
3. **Choose technology because it solves problems, not because it impresses.**
4. **Involve people form the design phase.**
5. **Communicate the expected benefits of the changes.**
6. **Measure the real impact on profitability/efficiency.**

The Pratical Decision Framework(Delphus Model)

To avoid these mistakes, the decision of which AI to implement should not be overwhelming. Instead of starting with the technology, we propose a framework based on 4 pillars that evaluates the business *before* the software.

1. Process – Where is the pain?

Before evaluating any application, you must understand your business processes. Identify where the repetitive, low-value tasks are, the bottlenecks, or the critical business decisions being made with little information.

You must start by generating maps of your processes and identifying opportunities with the people responsible for the day-to-day operations *before* seeing any tech demos.

2. Maturity – Is the organization ready for this leap?

AI may become a powerful interface that connects the business' systems, databases and cloud services. However, that capability only materializes when the information is reliable and available.

Before thinking about advanced models, it is essential to assess data maturity and the quality of current integrations. Sometimes, the first AI project is, in reality, a data governance project.

3. Focus – Optimize the present or build the future?

It is vital to define technology's objective: Are we seeking operational efficiency or a new strategic advantage?

The operational focus consists of doing the same thing, but faster and at a better cost. Tech exists that allow for automating reports, improving customer communication, and increasing accessibility to the company's databases. These solutions usually have a quick return on investment and clear cost savings.

The strategic focus seeks to transform the way of working. Predictive models for the supply of critical materials and the agile development and personalization of new products are some examples. These solutions generate a greater long-term return but add complexity to the operation.

4. ROI – How to measure success?

An AI implementation must have concrete objectives and measurable results. It is important to define the KPIs that the initiative must impact. Success should be reflected in business indicators such as cost per transaction, productivity, error rate, and operating margin.

Conclusion: Success is Structure, Not Optimism

AI projects usually fail due to excessive optimism and lack of structure, not a lack of technology. Initial enthusiasm often diverts attention from the foundations, leading companies to fall into avoidable traps.

To ensure your AI investment is successful, avoid these critical errors:

- Error 1: Implementing without data governance: Information is the foundation. Without a clean and accessible foundation, any attempt is destined for failure or costly rework.
- Error 2: Underestimating human change: All automation impacts established roles and routines. Preparing the team and communicating the expected benefits is as important as choosing the right technology.
- Error 3: Automating for the sake of automating. Not every process requires AI. Sometimes, a simple process improvement or a good information system generates more impact.
- Error 4: Designing in a vacuum. Designing solutions without involving the operational team leads to rework and implementation errors.

At Delphus Consulting, we can support you in making the best decision on how to incorporate AI into your organization.