



**SHI**

# Leadership in action: Strategic AI planning and implementation

It's a leadership imperative. But what should a vision for success look like, and how do you help your people make it real?

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# Introduction: Overcoming AI anxiety with actionable strategy

Business leaders face an urgent dilemma: Implement AI strategically or risk obsolescence in a rapidly evolving market. The challenge, of course, is how to harness the transformative potential of AI while safely navigating its inherent complexities and risks.

Compounding that challenge is the fact that competitors aren't waiting. While some organizations deliberate AI budgets and talent acquisition strategies, others are already integrating generative AI across operations — optimizing supply chains, innovating drug discovery, enhancing customer relationship management, securing networks, and mastering data integration and analysis.

According to BCG research, 26 percent of companies are achieving measurable value from AI implementations<sup>1</sup>, gaining significant competitive advantages in productivity, decision-making speed, and innovation.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, 74 percent struggle to scale value beyond isolated pilot projects. Anxiety is justified. You want your company in the leading quarter, not the trailing three. That means, AI implementation decisions carry career-defining weight. As PwC reports, "Your company's AI success will be as much about vision as adoption. That means that your AI choices may be the most crucial decisions, not just this year but in your career."<sup>2</sup>

This makes strategic AI planning a leadership imperative. We must start with leadership, build a clear vision, create sound guardrails and processes, and count on our people to work out the details.

If you're a technology or business leader who is excited by the potential of AI but equally concerned about how to adopt it safely and efficiently, we can help. SHI has developed a state-of-the-art AI & Cyber Labs facility where you can fast-track your AI experiments. We can help you with our AI **briefings** and **workshops, labs,** and **implementation services**, so you can successfully identify, prioritize, and execute your top generative AI use cases to deliver meaningful value back to your organization.

<sup>1</sup> BCG, "[AI Adoption in 2024: 74% of Companies Struggle to Achieve and Scale Value](#)", 2024

<sup>2</sup> PwC, "[2025 AI Business Predictions](#)", 2024

# Strategic planning foundations: Building the blueprint for success

Unified execution among key stakeholders is the bedrock for winning with AI. Before the first model is provisioned, executives must lock arms around shared objectives with IT infrastructure teams, data scientists, security, and the revenue-generating business units. Together, they must answer two questions:

- Where will AI move the revenue, cost, or risk needles fastest?
- How will we prove that value—and defend against new threats—within the first 90 days?

The most successful AI programs establish a “beachhead” — a narrowly scoped but high-visibility project that delivers measurable impact and builds cultural momentum, notes Jacob Hoeft, an AI product analyst at SHI. “Trying to solve the billion-dollar problem first almost always stalls progress. Quick wins create believers and free up budget,” Hoeft says.

**At SHI, we know how overwhelming and complex it can feel to deploy generative AI safely and securely to your users. Our experts will help you establish critical guardrails through policy development, employee education, monitoring, and technology implementation. We'll also assess and evaluate AI vendor guarantees against your risk tolerance, regulatory requirements, and specific needs.**

**[Inquire about our AI Readiness Assessment](#)**

# The best AI strategies start with:

- **Crystal clear business goals** that equip the organization to rank use-case ideas by business payoff and data readiness.
- Specific **risks and opportunities** where AI can add immediate value, and using them to build the use cases.
- **Cross-functional governance and change management**, most visibly manifested in an AI Council that includes legal, risk, HR, IT, and at least one P&L owner to approve use cases, allocate funds, and drive communication and training.
- **ROI metrics from day one**, including giving every pilot a single headline KPI.
- **An iterative delivery culture** that works in a “Plan → Pilot → Scale → Optimize” loop, with go / no-go checkpoints reviewed by the AI Council.
- **Assessing organizational skills and competitors**, including auditing your AI/data talent and toolsets, benchmarking them against industry leaders, then targeting the biggest gaps with hiring, upskilling, or partnerships.

SHI can help with you with setting the foundation for establishing your AI strategy with SHI's AI Readiness Assessment.

# Security and data readiness: Fortifying your digital frontlines

Your risks will materialize faster than your opportunities, partly because individual employees can “innovate” faster — by sending your data to non-secure chatbots for their productivity benefit — than you can reengineer your processes. Meanwhile, the most enterprising hackers will quickly weaponize AI tools against you. So, start with a rock-solid defense: Protecting your data and intellectual property must outrank every other AI priority.

**SHI's AI advisory experts provide an AI Readiness Assessment to put you on the path to successful AI adoption. During the session, we'll evaluate your infrastructure, security, data, and business processes to help you build a clear AI strategy.**

**Watch this webinar to gain more insights on "AI readiness: Assessing your starting point"**

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You can't simply outlaw broad categories of AI tools; do that and shadow AI will flourish. As Brian O'Connor, Solution Architect at SHI, explains, "If the business has a hard stance blocking everything, people will go around it or use personal devices." He recommends offering a sanctioned path instead — one that's easier and safer than the rogue alternative.

At the technical level, generative AI introduces threats beyond classic cybersecurity concerns: data poisoning, model manipulation, prompt injection, and bias amplification. Meet them with next-gen controls — zero trust architecture, continuous monitoring, and AI-driven threat detection — backed by rigorous ethics and regulatory compliance (GDPR, CCPA, sector rules).

Review your existing security posture and decide how best to extend it. It's important to build trust by proving you can innovate without violating privacy or governance mandates.

But security is only half the equation; readiness is the other. Model output quality is chained to input quality. "Garbage in, garbage out" is now "garbage in, hallucination out." Reassess and elevate data quality through formal governance frameworks, disciplined data-cleaning techniques, robust integration pipelines, and controlled accessibility. Even outside of AI, those upgrades pay dividends across the business.

# Human and technical readiness: Bridging people and technology

**Another priority is creating** an environment in which your people feel safe to experiment — and inspired to do so. Clear guardrails tell employees what's risky, what's forbidden, and what's fair game. This empowers their curiosity as they test, iterate, and share.

The human dimension of AI implementation is often underestimated. Embracing AI demands a cultural shift — fostering a mindset of innovation, encouraging experimentation, and rewarding employees who share both successes and lessons learned. Nearly half of workers want more formal training, according to McKinsey.<sup>3</sup> Yet most organizations still treat enablement as an afterthought.

Leading organizations flip that script. The BCG research referenced earlier shows that successful AI adopters invest 70 percent of their resources in people and processes, versus only 10 percent in algorithms and 20 percent in technology and data. Extensive new research from Harvard, Wharton, and Procter and Gamble<sup>4</sup> on the benefits of adding AI “teammates” to business teams echoes the findings. In short, combined teams delivered bigger wins, higher productivity, better interdisciplinary thinking, and were happier.

An SHI AI Readiness Assessment and our AI & Cyber Labs can help you bring together IT, data, security, and line-of-business leaders to prioritize use cases, map required data assets, and define your first quick-win pilot — complete with success metrics and an action plan.

[Explore SHI AI & Cyber Labs](#)

Expect different patterns of collaboration between IT and businesspeople for leading-edge AI applications, compared to traditional non-AI software or older machine learning techniques. Today's LLMs are so capable that applications can be simpler — think ChatGPT versus legacy ERP customization.

<sup>3</sup> McKinsey, [“Superagency in the workplace: Empowering people to unlock AI's full potential”](#), 2025

Accordingly, division of labor shifts: Domain experts craft prompts; IT secures data pipelines; the AI Council approves reuse. Beyond being smart, today's AI is also more like a person than traditional software. It can't balance your checkbook, but it can provide useful advice about raising kids. Businesspeople often have a better sense of how to apply these new capabilities than do technologists.

This is not to say that AI applications aren't technology-intensive — they absolutely are. Consider your organization's capabilities, resources, and requirements when making build-versus-buy decisions. O'Connor advises, "Start with the needs and goals. Do you have the in-house expertise to support this and build it out? Consider the level of customization and control required, along with long-term implications."

For organizations just beginning their AI journey, cloud-based solutions typically offer the fastest path to implementation. Larger enterprises with dedicated resources may find building their own solutions more cost-effective in the long run. In either case, working with an experienced partner — one that has guided dozens of AI deployments — mitigates early missteps and accelerates time-to-value.

IDC recommends leveraging a "leading technology solutions provider, offering customers a wide range of products, solutions, and services spanning IT and datacenter infrastructure, cybersecurity, workplace productivity tools, and IT cost optimization" when deploying AI solutions.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Dell'Acqua, et al, "[Working Paper 25-043 The Cybernetic Teammate: A Field Experiment on Generative AI Reshaping Teamwork and Expertise](#)", 2025.

<sup>5</sup> IDC, "[The Role of a Partner in Deploying AI Use Cases into Production](#)", 2025

The right partner can make all the difference in helping guide you in choosing the right platform. SHI's experts can guide your AI implementation and **bring your AI strategy to life** by helping you navigate complexity, reduce risk, and unlock real business value.



# Implementation approach

A phased implementation approach helps organizations manage risks, demonstrate value, and build momentum. Start with high-value, lower-complexity use cases that deliver quick wins while you build the skills, data discipline, and guardrails needed for more advanced work. “Don’t expect positive ROI initially – view early projects as learning investments,” advises O’Connor. “Focus on quick wins and avoid year-long projects because AI changes so quickly.”

Just as with any capital project, the hard dollars arrive later. Early dividends are tougher to book but just as real: broader AI literacy, faster cycle times, higher employee engagement, and cleaner data pipelines. Those gains compound into cost savings and profit lift over time – exactly how any solid business case matures.

SHI recommends a five-phased framework for developing AI implementation:

- 1 Discover:** Educate your team on AI capabilities, brainstorm potential use cases, and link each idea to explicit business goals
- 2 Prioritize:** Score each use case based on business impact and technical feasibility.
- 3 Design:** Map AI solutions to desired outcomes and establish success metrics.
- 4 Build:** Deploy secure infrastructure and develop AI applications.
- 5 Empower:** Train administrators and frontline workers on effective AI use.

As you move through the phases, establish processes for continuous improvement and expansion. Adopt agile methods – iterative development, rapid prototyping, and continuous feedback loops – to refine models, prompts, and guardrails every sprint. Design each solution to be scalable and flexible (containerized models, modular APIs), so it can grow with demand and swap in next-gen models without a rebuild.

Commit to this cycle of innovation, measurement, and adjustment, and the payoff scales quickly: IDC says enterprises will enjoy \$1 trillion in productivity gains using GenAI and automation by 2026.<sup>6</sup> This potential can only be realized through systematic, well-planned implementation.

<sup>6</sup> IDC, ["The Role of a Partner in Deploying AI Use Cases into Production"](#), 2025

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No matter where you are in your AI journey, SHI has the right support. Our [AI Readiness Assessment and AI Use Case Workshop](#), will empower you to create an actionable AI strategy.

# Next steps — and how SHI can help

Embarking on AI governance can feel overwhelming, but SHI provides a clear path forward. Focus on practical actions delivering immediate value. SHI's [AI Readiness Assessment](#) offers a structured approach, meeting you where you are and guiding you toward comprehensive, confident AI adoption. Here's how SHI helps you take those crucial first steps:



## Step 1

**Develop an AI governance charter.** SHI facilitates focused executive workshops to secure senior sponsorship that clarifies roles, responsibilities, and decision rights — laying the foundation for your AI governance



## Step 2

**Implement a use case capture system.** SHI works with you to establish and enable your AI Council, implement a use case capture system, and develop a mature ROI analysis process to support innovation.



### Step 3

**Establish a data strategy.** SHI's experts work with your teams to create a data governance plan that enables innovation while protecting sensitive information.



### Step 4

**Create an AI literacy program.** **SHI can help you** implement frameworks like the META AI Literacy Scale to ensure employees understand safe and effective AI use.<sup>7</sup>



### Step 5

**Inventory current AI usage and implement technical guardrails.** We use specialized tools and our own proprietary methodology to help you uncover both sanctioned and shadow AI, across all departments, to identify any existing governance gaps. SHI helps select and implement essential controls around approved AI tools, including DLP and access management, that balance security with productivity.

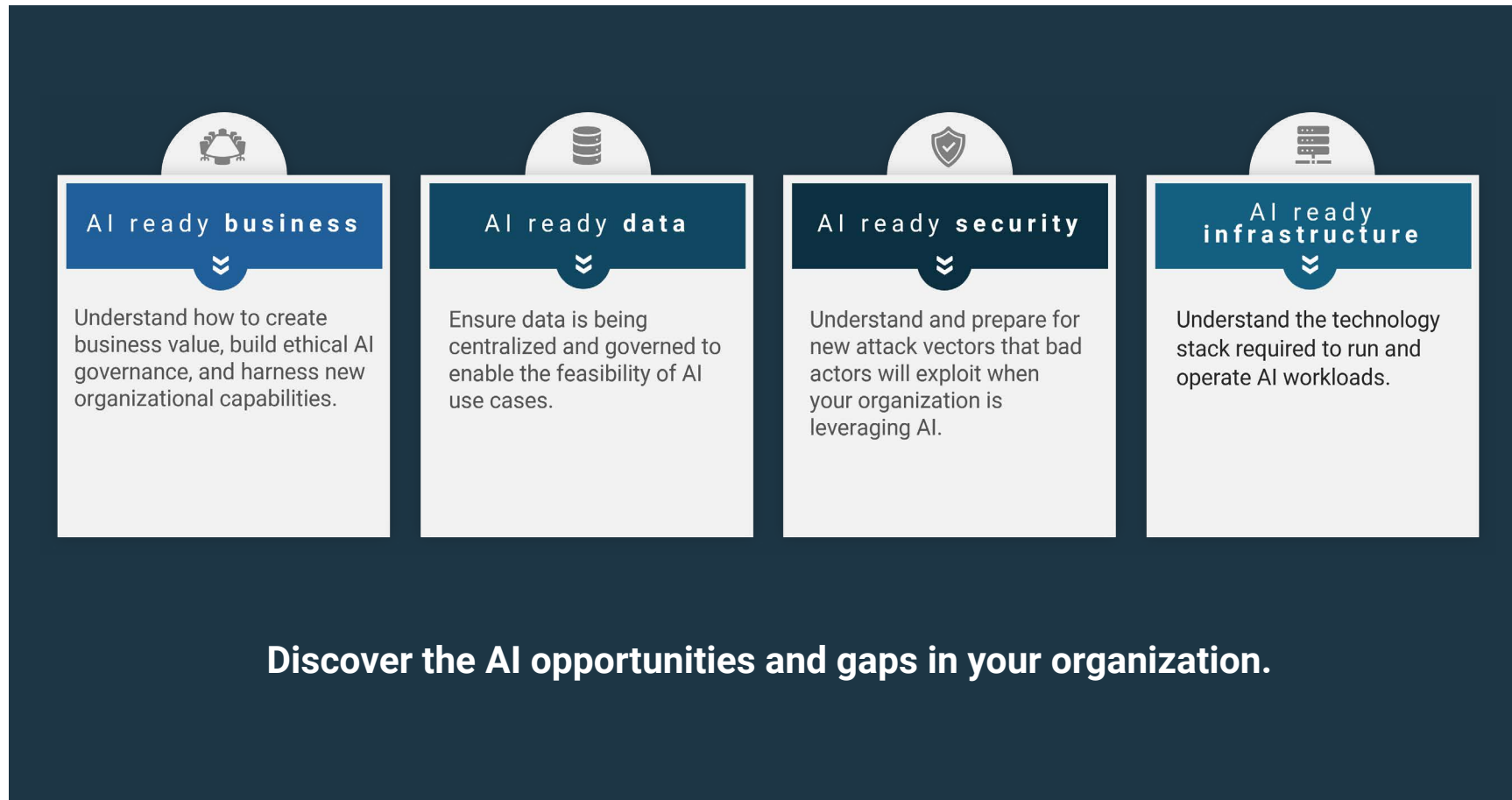
<sup>7</sup> SHI AI Literacy Blog, ["Here's why AI literacy is easily the best thing you're not doing."](#) 2024

SHI also offers expertise and implementation capability to support an enterprise's entire AI journey. This can begin with AI readiness assessments that evaluate an organization's security posture, data readiness, and infrastructure capabilities. AI governance workshops bring together key stakeholders to develop tailored frameworks that align with specific business objectives. "Most organizations stumble on where to start," says Aaron Richmond, senior solutions architect and AI governance expert at SHI. "They need help writing policies, putting together comprehensive plans, and selecting the right vendors for their needs."

To dig deeper, [SHI's AI & Cyber Labs experience](#) is an excellent next resource.

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# AI Readiness - Evaluate your capabilities across four pillars



Proven frameworks can provide additional guidance, such as the National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST's) AI Risk Management Framework,<sup>9</sup> Mitre's ATLAS (Adversarial Threat Landscape for Artificial-Intelligence Systems),<sup>10</sup> the Open Worldwide Application Security Project's (OWASP's) top 10 AI risks and mitigations,<sup>11</sup> Google's Secure AI Framework, (SAIF),<sup>12</sup> and, again, Microsoft's Responsible AI Standard.<sup>13</sup> These established resources provide approaches that can be adapted to specific business contexts and industry requirements.

<sup>9</sup> NIST, "[Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework \(AI RMF 1.0\)](#)", 2024

<sup>10</sup> Mitre, "[Navigate threats to AI systems through real-world insights](#)", 2025

<sup>11</sup> OWASP, "[OWASP Top 10 for LLM Applications 2025](#)", 2025

<sup>12</sup> Google, "[Google's Secure AI Framework \(SAIF\)](#)", 2025

<sup>13</sup> Microsoft, "[Microsoft's framework for building AI systems responsibly](#)", 2022

# Unlock Your AI potential with HPE Private Cloud AI

Beginning your AI journey is easier than ever with HPE Private Cloud AI (PCAI). Co-developed with NVIDIA, HPE PCAI is a turnkey, integrated platform that gets your private AI cloud up and running in just one day. This all-in-one solution combines hardware, software, and services, removing complexity so you can focus on innovation from day one. With ongoing hardware refreshes and simple, one-click software upgrades, your AI environment stays secure and up to date as your needs grow.

## Key Benefits:

- **Rapid deployment:** Go from planning to production AI in just one day.
- **Start small, scale fast:** Launch quickly and expand AI use across your organization with confidence.
- **End-to-end support:** Run ML and advanced AI with automated infrastructure and data management.
- **Security and control:** Keep your data and IP protected with unified cloud management and zero-touch security.
- **Continuous innovation:** Always access the latest AI tools, models, and hardware without disruption.



Reach out to SHI to accelerate your path to AI innovation with HPE PCAI -  
your secure foundation for enterprise AI

# About SHI & HPE

SHI is your strategic partner across leading AI platforms, technology providers, and security solutions. Through our partnership with HPE, we deliver world-class infrastructure, cloud, and AI solutions designed to accelerate digital transformation. Together, we offer access to cutting-edge AI technologies and a comprehensive support journey from concept to large-scale deployments. Our hundreds of AI-certified engineers, architects, and technicians deliver end-to-end services, enabling you to run nearly any workload in the cloud, on-premises, or at the edge.

As a global technology reseller, SHI has guided enterprise partners through complex technology shifts for more than 35 years. By working closely with HPE, we help organizations modernize IT, optimize costs, and unlock innovation, turning uncertainty into clear, actionable strategies for success.

[www.uk.shi.com](http://www.uk.shi.com)

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