# AI ROI:
# The business case driving AI sales

## FOUR NUMBERS THAT DECIDE THE RETURN

Supplier headlines are targets. These are what actually happens after you sign.

**30-60%**
**Real adoption at 12 months**
Logged in once is not using it

**40-70%**
**ROI lost at 50% adoption**
Doubles your time to return, or kills it

**90 days**
**Critical adoption window**
So training starts before go-live, not after

**2-3x**
**Hidden cost per $1 signed**
Implementation, training, governance, ongoing

## COSTS YOUR MODEL HAS TO CARRY

The quote covers the first line only

| | |
|---|---|
| DIRECT | Licensing and seats \| API and token consumption \| Model tier selection \| Geography premiums \| Volume overage |
| INDIRECT | Implementation \| Change management \| Prompt engineering \| Process redesign \| Supplier management |
| ONGOING | Output review overhead \| Model drift re-validation \| Governance and compliance \| Re-licensing \| Turnover ramp-up |

Model the token line directly. Roughly **$3 per million input tokens and $15 per million output**, and weak prompts add 20-30% to output volume.

## STRONG CASE VS WEAK CASE

Everything on the left is a real number. Everything on the right is an estimate or a vague claim.

| COMPONENT | A STRONG CASE SAYS | A WEAK CASE SAYS |
|---|---|---|
| **Process Baseline** | 4.2 hours a week per analyst, across 12 FTEs | *We spend "significant time" on reporting* |
| **Proposed Outcome** | Down to 1.5 hours a week by month 6 | *About 40% more efficient* |
| **Adoption Assumption** | 60% by month 3, 85% by month 12, with a plan | *Full adoption assumed from Day 1* |
| **Direct Cost Total** | Licensing, API use, geography, overage buffer | *The per-seat price off their slide* |
| **Indirect Cost Total** | Integration $85K, training $22K, prompts 80 hrs | *Setup cost deferred to IT budget, not ours* |
| **Ongoing Cost Total** | 0.2 of an FTE, plus re-testing each update | *The current team will absorb it (assumed)* |
| **Timeline to Breakeven** | Month 11, and still works at 50% adoption | *ROI positive in Year 1* |
| **Owner and Review Date** | Procurement lead, 6-month review booked | *Business case filed with IT approval request* |

## SIX THINGS TO DO BEFORE YOU SIGN

**Demand a fully-loaded TCO**
Not just license. Setup, training, governance.

**Baseline before you approve**
No current cost, nothing to check the case against.

**Model adoption honestly**
The case should still hold at 50% adoption.

**Put a review date in the contract**
Book the 6 and 12 month check-ins the day you sign.

**Own the data handling terms**
Do they train on it, how long is it kept, can you delete it?

**Build the capability in-house**
Trading compute for token spend is now on the table.

**THE TAKEAWAY:**
Do not believe supplier-provided ROI. Use real numbers from your own company, tied to real use cases, with governance accounted for.

GREEN CABBAGE