

One operating system. A different diligence question for every executive.

A practical checklist for owners, CEOs, COOs, CFOs, and technology leaders evaluating a consequential AI system - before architecture becomes scope and a demo becomes production.

OWNER / CEO

COO

CFO

CTO / CIO

THE DECISION THIS GUIDE PROTECTS

Do not approve an AI tool. Approve a bounded operating mission with named authority, source systems, acceptance evidence, failure behavior, ownership, and an investment path.

Use pages 2-4 during sponsor alignment, vendor diligence, architecture review, and final scope approval.

FOUR DILIGENCE LENSES

The same installation must survive four different questions.

If one answer is missing, the risk has not disappeared. It has moved into delivery, adoption, support, or executive trust.

01 / OWNER / CEO**What stops returning to the owner?**

ARTIFACT TO REQUIRE

Command and authority map

Signals, exceptions, approvals, escalation, and closure show who owns the next action and when the owner enters.

02 / COO**Where does work lose a trusted state?**

ARTIFACT TO REQUIRE

Current-to-future workflow

The normal path, exception path, process owner, queues, handoffs, and first live operating cycle are explicit.

03 / CFO**What is bought, measured, and at risk?**

ARTIFACT TO REQUIRE

Cost, milestone, and baseline model

Scope drivers, payment gates, change control, usage cost, acceptance evidence, and defensible measurement are separated.

04 / CTO / CIO**Who owns production when the model or API changes?**

ARTIFACT TO REQUIRE

Architecture and assurance pack

Identity, data, secrets, environments, model policy, retries, monitoring, rollback, support, and transition are reviewable.

THE FIRST PURCHASE

Buy down uncertainty in stages.

01

Operating Architecture Sprint

\$7.5k-\$12.5k

Map the mission, systems, authority, evidence, feasibility, and acceptance plan before committing to a build.

02

First Operating System

\$35k floor | typical \$50k-\$85k

Install the smallest complete signal-to-record system. Representative delivery: 6-14 weeks, depending on scope and access.

03

Owner Command - Phase One

\$90k-\$175k

One recurring owner question across 2-4 companies and anchor systems. Representative delivery: 16-24 weeks.

04

Managed Command

\$2.5k-\$7.5k / month + usage

Defined monitoring, model/API change handling, support boundaries, and controlled expansion after acceptance.

ARCHITECTURE SAMPLE

One loop. Six required layers.

01

Signal

Exact event and source

02

Context

Facts, age, conflict, missing evidence

03

Decision

Rules, model output, uncertainty

04

Human command

Approve, edit, override, decline

05

Execution

Calls, retries, exceptions, writeback

06

Operating record

Actor, time, evidence, closure

Authority rule: consequential actions require a named person. Uncertainty becomes a visible exception.

REJECT OR REDIRECT

A native feature or one automation may be the right answer when the mission does not require cross-system context, durable state, human command, or a purpose-built operating surface.

BEFORE SIGNING

Twenty answers that should survive the demo.

- 01 ☐ One recurring operating event is named.
- 02 ☐ The last real occurrence has been reconstructed.
- 03 ☐ An executive sponsor and process owner are named.
- 04 ☐ Normal and exception paths are mapped.
- 05 ☐ Source-of-truth boundaries are explicit.
- 06 ☐ Required system access is feasible and owned.
- 07 ☐ Standard, enhanced, and advanced connections are separated.
- 08 ☐ AI is used only where judgment or language benefits the mission.
- 09 ☐ Deterministic rules remain outside probabilistic output.
- 10 ☐ Allowed, review-required, and prohibited actions are written.
- 11 ☐ Identity, tenant, and least-privilege scope are defined.
- 12 ☐ Secrets, environments, and production ownership are defined.
- 13 ☐ Retries, duplicate suppression, and failure state are visible.
- 14 ☐ Monitoring, incident ownership, and API/model changes are scoped.
- 15 ☐ Acceptance proves a complete live cycle, not a screen tour.
- 16 ☐ Baseline and outcome definitions use available reliable data.
- 17 ☐ Price, payment gates, usage, and change control are explicit.
- 18 ☐ Stabilization, warranty, and Managed Command are separated.
- 19 ☐ Data, code, credentials, documentation, and transition are assigned.
- 20 ☐ The no-build or native-feature alternative has been considered.

THE MINIMUM ACCEPTANCE STATEMENT

The selected signal entered, the required context was assembled, the allowed decision was made, a person retained authority where required, the action moved, exceptions stayed visible, and closure left a durable record.

Next: bring one real operating break to the 20-minute fit path or prepare the full AI-guided Operating Underwrite at lionwork.ai/contact.