



A FREE CHECKLIST FOR BUSINESS OWNERS

Before You Buy: 20 Questions to Ask

A plain-language checklist for owners to use before signing with any AI tool or solution provider, so you know what problem it solves, what happens to your information and how you will see the result.



? ? ?

YES

PARTLY

NO

Ed Becker

Founder, Growth Right Solutions, LLC

Version 1 · October 10, 2026

growthright.solutions · +1 (307) 288-6880

CONTENTS

What is in this checklist.

1	Start with the problem, not the product	3
2	Questions 1 to 5: the problem and the result	4
3	Questions 6 to 10: your information	5
4	Questions 11 to 15: your team	6
5	Questions 16 to 20: the cost and the way out	7
6	Your score and the red flags	8
7	When you want help	9
	Copyright, license and limits	10

THE WHOLE THING IN ONE SENTENCE

Ask every provider these twenty questions, mark each answer yes, partly or no, and sign only when the problem is diagnosed, the baseline is set and the answers are in writing.

Start with the problem, not the product.

You are about to spend your money and your team's time on AI. These twenty questions help you know, before you sign, whether a tool or a provider will solve the problem you have, protect your information and show you the result in numbers you can check.

What most owners never get asked

Most AI sales conversations start with the product: a demo, a feature list and a monthly price. Very few start by diagnosing the problem, and fewer still measure the work before and after. Without a diagnosis, nobody knows whether the tool fits. Without a before and an after, nobody can say whether the money paid off.

Diagnose

Name the problem and what it costs you now, in hours, errors, missed calls or lost customers.

Measure

Record a baseline on your own work before anything changes, so there is something to compare.

Prove

Take the same measure the same way after the change, and look at the numbers together.

How to use this checklist

1. Ask every question, in order, and write down the answer you hear.
2. Mark **Yes** when the answer is clear, specific and something you could check.
3. Mark **Partly** when you hear a promise without the details behind it.
4. Mark **No** when there is no answer, or when the answer changes the subject.
5. Add up your marks on the scoring page before you sign anything.

ASK FOR THE ANSWERS IN WRITING

A provider who answers well in a meeting will put those answers in writing. Attach them to the contract, and they become part of what you bought.

SECTION TWO

The problem and the result.

These five questions show whether the provider understands your business or is selling the same product to everyone. They come first because every other answer depends on them.

#	ASK THIS	A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE	YES	PARTLY	NO
1	What problem will this solve for my business, in your words?	They describe your problem back to you, using your numbers, before naming a single feature.	☐	☐	☐
2	How will you diagnose the problem before you recommend anything?	A defined step, such as an assessment or a working session with your leaders, that happens before any proposal.	☐	☐	☐
3	What will you measure before we start?	A baseline taken on your own work: hours, response times, errors or cost per job.	☐	☐	☐
4	What result should I expect at 30, 60 and 90 days?	A specific change in that baseline measure, with dates attached.	☐	☐	☐
5	How will we compare the before and the after?	The same measure, taken the same way, with the numbers shown to you and your team.	☐	☐	☐

Notes on their answers

HOW GROWTH RIGHT SOLUTIONS ANSWERS THESE

We diagnose before we recommend. The Check and The Map look at your business with your leadership team before anything is built. We record a baseline on your own work before a single step changes, and we show you the result against that same baseline.

SECTION THREE

Your information.

Your customer records, pricing and employee files are some of the most valuable things your company owns. These five questions show whether a provider will treat them that way.

#	ASK THIS	A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE	YES	PARTLY	NO
6	Where does my information go, and where is it stored?	Named companies and locations, in writing. "The cloud" is not an answer.	☐	☐	☐
7	Is my information used to train your AI or anyone else's?	A clear no, or a clear yes with a way to turn it off, written into the contract.	☐	☐	☐
8	Who owns what we build together: the data, the instructions and the workflows?	Your company does, and the contract says so.	☐	☐	☐
9	Who on your side can see my information, and how is that controlled?	Named roles, protected sign-ins and a record of who looked at what.	☐	☐	☐
10	If something goes wrong with my information, how and when will you tell me?	A notice time in writing and a named person to call.	☐	☐	☐

Notes on their answers

HOW GROWTH RIGHT SOLUTIONS ANSWERS THESE

Before anything is built, your leadership team receives a written AI governance policy that says what information may enter an AI tool and what never may. We help you hold every provider to that policy, and we hold ourselves to it first.

SECTION FOUR

Your team.

A tool your team does not use is the most expensive tool you own. These five questions show whether the provider has a plan for the team members who will live with it every day.

#	ASK THIS	A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE	YES	PARTLY	NO
11	How will my team learn to use this, and who trains them?	A training plan with names, dates and hours, not a link to videos alone.	☐	☐	☐
12	What happens when the AI gets something wrong?	A named person reviews the work, and there is a clear way to correct and report a mistake.	☐	☐	☐
13	Which decisions stay with a person on my team?	A clear list, including anything that touches a customer's money, safety or trust.	☐	☐	☐
14	How does this connect to the tools we already use?	Named systems, who builds each connection and who keeps it working.	☐	☐	☐
15	Who do we call when it stops working, and how fast will they respond?	A named contact, support hours and a response time in writing.	☐	☐	☐

Notes on their answers

HOW GROWTH RIGHT SOLUTIONS ANSWERS THESE

We automate a step only after the process is clear and your team agrees on it, and a named person on your team owns every decision that matters. The 30-Day Team Adoption Plan, free at growthright.solutions/resources, is how we bring your team along.

SECTION FIVE

The cost and the way out.

The monthly price is only part of what you pay. These five questions show the full cost, including your team's time, and what happens if the result never arrives.

#	ASK THIS	A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE	YES	PARTLY	NO
16	What will this cost in year one and in year two, including every fee?	One total for each year, covering setup, licenses, usage, support and changes.	☐	☐	☐
17	How much of my team's time will this take to set up and run?	Hours by role, by week, for the first ninety days and after.	☐	☐	☐
18	How long is the contract, and how do I cancel?	A short first term, clear cancellation terms and no automatic renewal you did not agree to.	☐	☐	☐
19	If we part ways, how do I get my information and workflows back?	The format, the timeline and any cost, in writing.	☐	☐	☐
20	What happens if we do not see the result you described?	A specific remedy: a written fix plan, a pause in payment or a way out of the contract.	☐	☐	☐

Notes on their answers

HOW GROWTH RIGHT SOLUTIONS ANSWERS THESE

We tell you what each step costs before it starts, and you decide whether to take the next one. Every plan and policy we write for you belongs to your company, whether we keep working together or not.

SECTION SIX

Your score and the red flags.

Count your Yes marks in each group. A low score in any one group deserves attention, even when the total looks good.

QUESTIONS	YES MARKS	WHAT TO DO NEXT
1 to 5: the problem and the result	___ of 5	
6 to 10: your information	___ of 5	
11 to 15: your team	___ of 5	
16 to 20: the cost and the way out	___ of 5	
Total	___ of 20	

16 to 20

A strong provider. Move forward, and attach their written answers to the contract.

11 to 15

Promising, with gaps. Ask again on every Partly and every No, and wait for written answers before you sign.

10 or fewer

Walk away for now. Start over with a diagnosis of the problem, then talk to providers again.

Red flags at any score

- The demo starts before anyone asks about your business.
- Nobody can tell you what will be measured, or when.
- Results are promised with no baseline to compare them to.
- A discount depends on signing this week.
- The contract is long, and there is no way out tied to results.
- The conversation is about replacing your team instead of giving them time back for the work that needs their judgment.

ONE QUESTION TELLS YOU A LOT

Ask, "What would make you tell me not to buy this?" A provider who has a thoughtful answer is thinking about your business, not only the sale.

When you want help.

The best time to talk with us is before you sign. Every engagement with Growth Right Solutions starts where this checklist starts: with the problem, a baseline and a clear picture of what success looks like for your business.

The Check

Twelve questions and about two minutes, with your results on screen. It shows where AI can help your business first.

The Map

A working session with your leadership team that diagnoses the problem and ends with a written plan and your AI governance policy.

Chief AI Officer

Fractional leadership that stays with you to build, measure and improve, so every dollar you spend on AI has a before and an after.

Already talking with a provider?

Bring their answers to these twenty questions to a free conversation with Ed Becker. We will go through them with you, point out what is missing and help you decide your next step, whoever you choose to work with.

Why owners start here

- We diagnose the problem before we recommend anything.
- We measure your work before and after, so you see the result in your own numbers.
- Your leadership team decides, and a person on your team owns every decision that matters.

START WITH THE CHECK

Twelve questions, about two minutes, with your results on screen. It is free, with no sales and no obligation.

growthright.solutions/check

Companion resources: The Baseline, The AI Governance Policy Template and The 30-Day Team Adoption Plan, all free at growthright.solutions/resources.

Copyright, license and limits.

Copyright and permission to share

© 2026 Growth Right Solutions, LLC. All rights reserved.

You are welcome to share this. You may copy, print, forward and distribute this document freely, in whole and unaltered, including inside your own organization and to colleagues and advisors, with attribution to Ed Becker and Growth Right Solutions, LLC as it already appears on the pages.

You are welcome to use it. Your team may complete this document, adapt the contents to your own circumstances and use the result internally as your own working material. What you write in it belongs to you.

Two things are reserved. Please do not publish, distribute or offer a modified or rebranded version of this document, and please do not present it or its framework as your own work. Requests for anything beyond these permissions are welcome at ed@growthright.solutions.

Not legal or financial advice

Growth Right Solutions are not attorneys and not accountants. Nothing provided here is legal, financial or tax advice. It is process engineering, change management and technology work. Compliance items go to your attorney, and accounting or finance items go to your CPA, before you sign or adopt anything.

No warranty

This document is provided as is. Growth Right Solutions, LLC makes no representation as to what any organization will achieve by using it.

About the author

Ed Becker is the founder of Growth Right Solutions, LLC. He spent more than twenty years in education, including as a school principal, before leading technology programs and running a managed services company, and he now leads AI adoption for owner-led companies and Arkansas school districts.

Version 1 · October 10, 2026

Growth Right Solutions, LLC · Serving Arkansas from Independence County · Sheridan, Wyoming
growthright.solutions · +1 (307) 288-6880 · ed@growthright.solutions