

5 Best Practices for Successful AI Planning

The pressure to adopt AI – and investments to do it – are increasing. According to the Cisco Global AI Readiness Index, 85 % of business leaders with responsibility for AI say they have less than 18 months to deploy an AI strategy, or they’ll see negative business effects. When the pressure is on and budgets are high, you’ll want to act fast.

For your AI investments to make an impact, here are 5 best practices you shouldn’t skip.

1 Start with the business objective

Don’t implement AI just to keep up. Successful AI projects start with an objective, not a product. Define business goals, identify the right use case, and build AI to solve real challenges.

What to do:

Define 1–2 specific use cases with measurable impact

Tie AI efforts directly to quantifiable business goals (e.g., reduce churn, optimize call center efficiency)

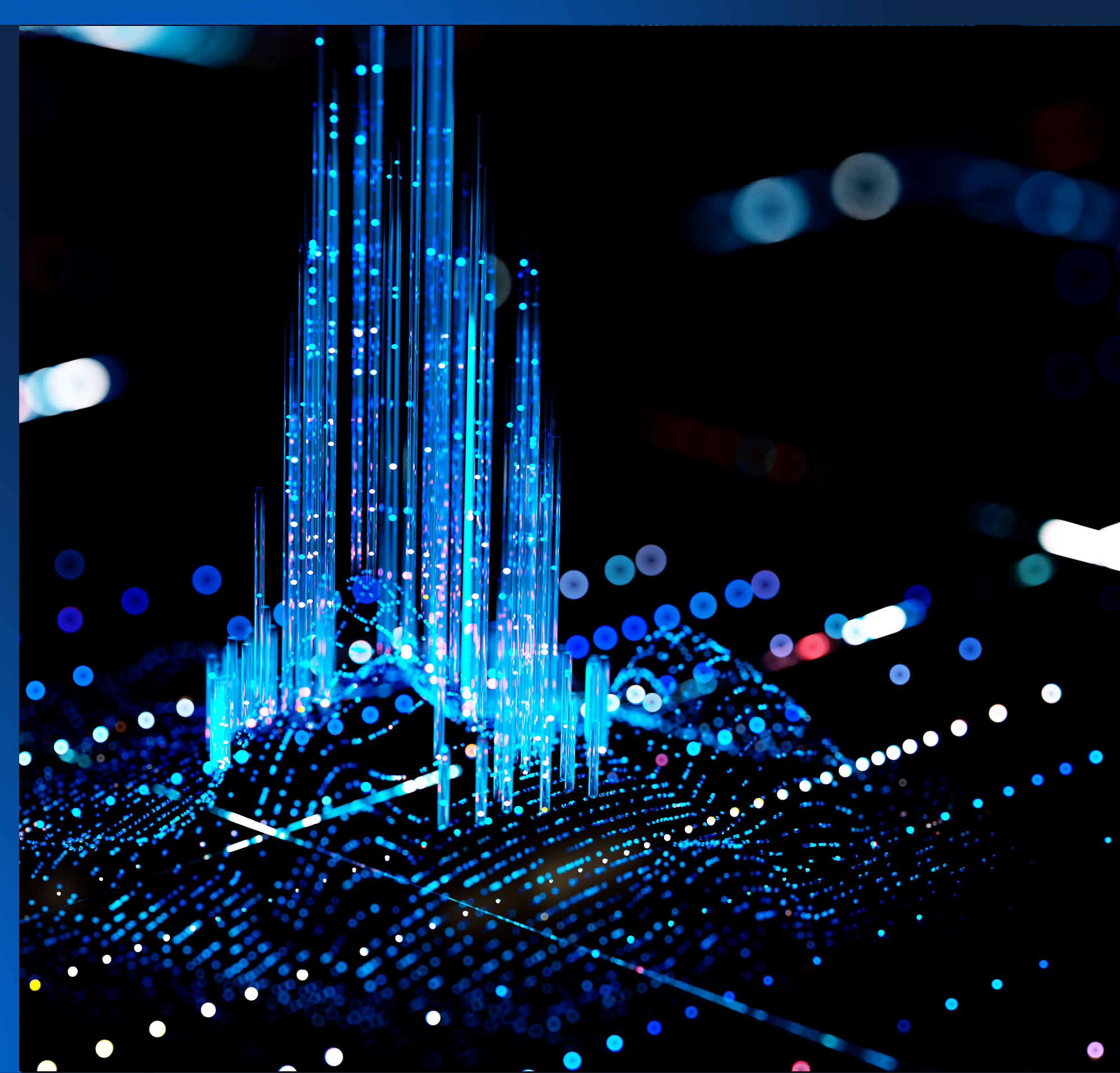
What’s at risk if you don’t:

Misaligned tools drain resources

Disappointing ROI undermines stakeholder trust

Innovation fatigue sets in across teams

Unsuccessful budget expenditures



2 Evaluate data quality and governance

If your data isn’t clean or compliant, your AI won’t be either. Explore [ePlus AI readiness assessments](#) to help you understand data management gaps. Poor governance leads to flawed insights and risky outcomes. Align with standards like NIST and ISO to ensure quality, privacy, and security.

What to do:

Create a data quality and classification framework

Align with NIST, ISO, and regulatory guidelines (GDPR, CCPA, CPNI)

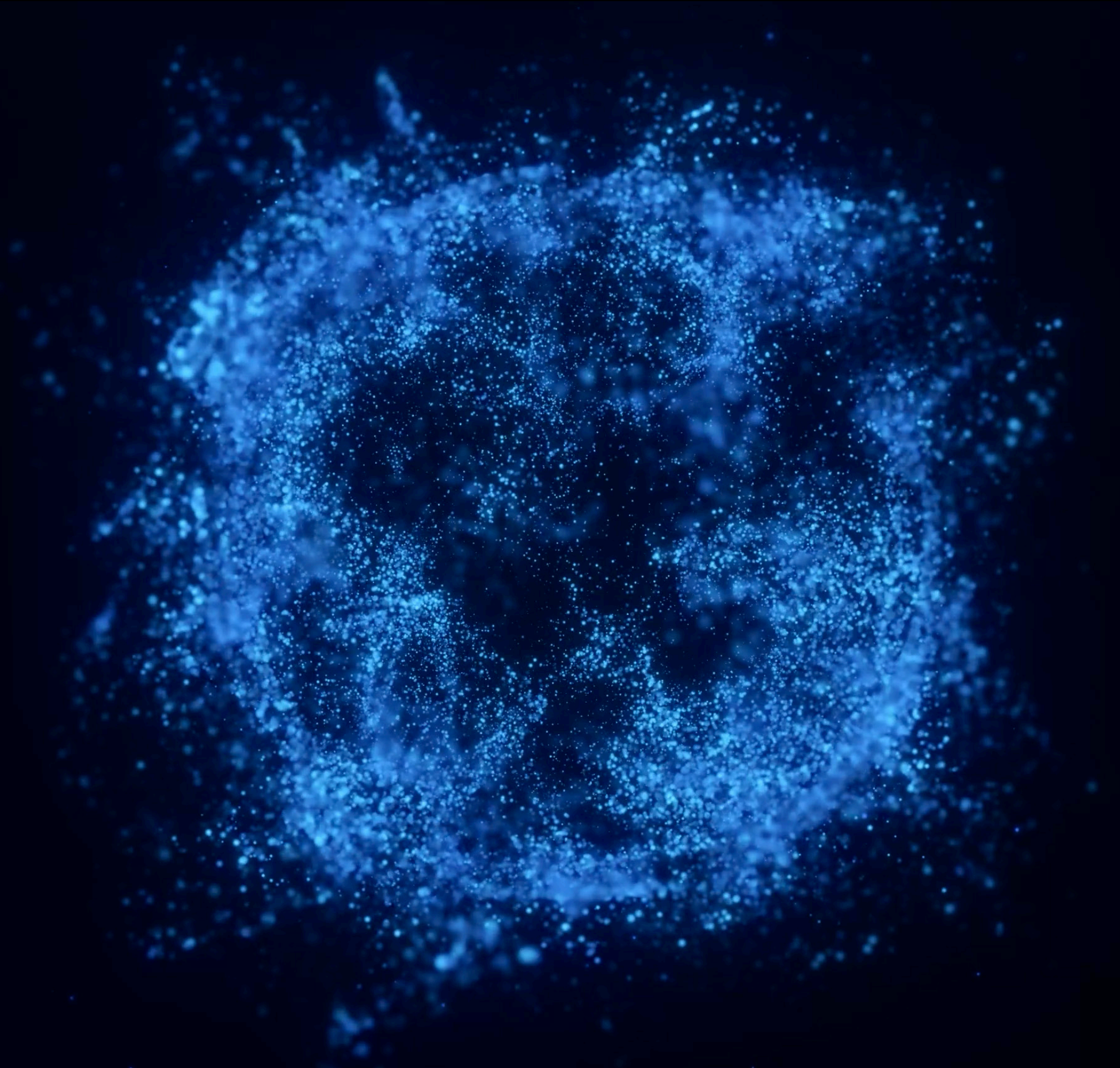
Use secure, auditable data pipelines from the start

What’s at risk if you don’t:

AI models deliver biased, inaccurate results

Fines for privacy violations

Internal data trust erodes



3 Assess your legacy infrastructure

AI workloads don’t necessarily require all-new systems, but they may require some modernization.

What to do:

Evaluate current infrastructure for AI readiness

Leverage refresh cycles to deploy AI-ready infrastructure in preparation

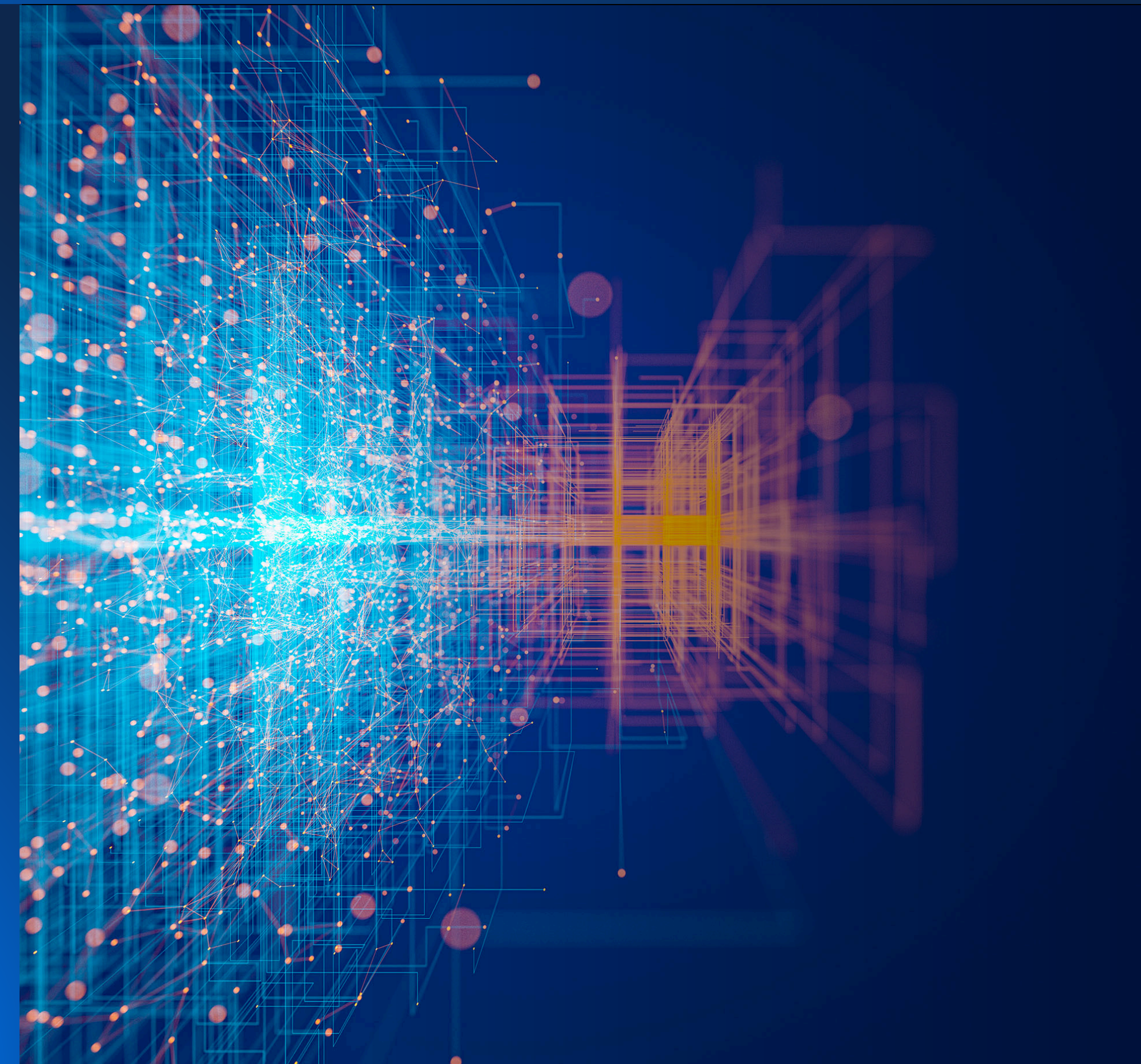
Prioritize phased rollouts over full replacements

What’s at risk if you don’t:

AI projects stall due to lack of resources

Business owners go outside of IT for AI capabilities

Data becomes fragmented as solutions are deployed elsewhere



4 Establish KPIs early

If you can’t measure success, you can’t justify investment. Set clear, quantifiable metrics, so AI value is proven and investment justified.

What to do:

Define measurable success upfront (e.g., MTTR, call deflection, uptime)

Build dashboards to track AI performance across functions

Set short- and long-term KPIs for both tech and customer outcomes

What’s at risk if you don’t:

AI becomes a cost center, not a growth driver

Teams can’t defend ongoing investments

Initiatives stall due to unclear value



5 Set up internal AI policies

Without rules, AI usage can go rogue. Establish usage policies and governance frameworks to ensure accountability, fairness, and ethical AI deployment across your organization.

What to do:

Establish an AI governance policy with clear roles and usage guardrails

Include guidelines for internal tools and customer-facing AI

Offer safe GenAI alternatives to prevent unauthorized use

What’s at risk if you don’t:

Misuse of models or hallucinations go unchecked

Ethics, fairness, and accountability concerns arise

Shadow AI tools crop up across teams



Bridge the gap between AI ambitions and AI readiness

The difference between successful and unsuccessful AI initiatives comes down to planning, clarity of purpose, data quality, and collaboration. Successful AI projects start with clear objectives and a roadmap to achieve them.

Get ready for the AI workload: ePlus + Cisco + NVIDIA

You don’t have to go through your AI journey alone. ePlus and our trusted partners work with you to define your AI use cases, build a path to proof-of-concept with quantifiable metrics, and offer ongoing support through each implementation stage.

With ePlus’s deep technical expertise and Cisco’s industry-leading infrastructure powered by NVIDIA, you can speed up and maximize the value of your AI investments.

Prepare for AI adoption. Meet with an ePlus AI advisor.

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