



## HOW TO EVALUATE AI COMPETENCY

# 6 Questions to Ask Before Hiring an AI Consultant

Whether you're evaluating your current Managed IT Service Provider or you're vetting an AI consultant, these six questions can help you distinguish real operational depth from surface-level AI enthusiasm.

### 1 CAN YOU TRACE EXACTLY WHERE OUR DATA GOES?

#### A STRONG ANSWER:

- Names the tools being considered
- Explains data retention, storage, and model-training behavior
- Distinguishes consumer-tier settings from enterprise protections

#### RED FLAG

- They talk about features, but not where your data sits afterward

### 2 IS THERE AN ACTUAL PROCESS FOR APPROVING NEW AI TOOLS?

#### A STRONG ANSWER:

- Includes defined review steps before a tool connects to email, files, or business systems
- Clearly defines ownership: someone is responsible for evaluating the tool

#### RED FLAG

- "We're open to trying new things" with no approval workflow behind it

### 3 HAVE YOU MAPPED AI USE TO THE COMPLIANCE RULES WE ALREADY FOLLOW?

#### A STRONG ANSWER:

- Names the frameworks that apply to your business
- Explains how AI changes exposure under those rules
- Includes examples such as HIPAA, CMMC, PCI DSS, or GLBA

#### RED FLAG

- Generic "AI ethics" language with no reference to real regulatory obligations

### 4 WHAT HAPPENS IF SOMEONE PASTES SENSITIVE DATA INTO A PUBLIC AI TOOL?

#### A STRONG ANSWER:

- Explains actual controls, not just good intentions
- Includes examples such as blocked tools, data classification rules, or clear staff guidance

#### RED FLAG

- A policy exists "somewhere," but employees were never trained on it and nothing enforces it

### 5 DO YOU SEPARATE AI THAT ASSISTS FROM AI THAT ACTS?

#### A STRONG ANSWER:

- Defines clear boundaries between draft assistance and autonomous action
- Explains which tasks require human approval before execution

#### RED FLAG

- They treat all AI use as if it carries the same level of risk

### 6 CAN YOU SHOW US REAL GOVERNANCE WORK AT OUR SCALE?

#### A STRONG ANSWER:

- Shows a framework, tool review, or real client example
- Addresses SMB realities, not just enterprise theory

#### RED FLAG

- Everything stays at the slide-deck level with nothing concrete behind it