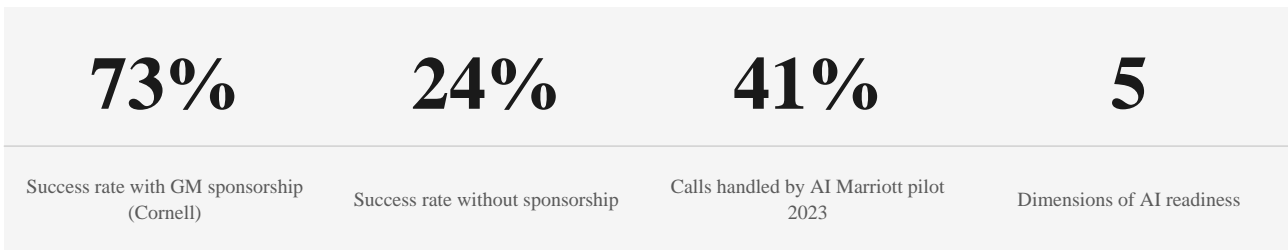


The AI Readiness Framework for Hospitality Operators

A practical guide to assessing your organisation's readiness for AI adoption and identifying the highest-impact opportunities.

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A Framework for Grounded Adoption

Artificial intelligence adoption in hospitality has moved from experimental to commercially imperative in under three years. The range of available applications is broad: demand forecasting, dynamic scheduling, guest personalisation, AI-assisted phone reservations, menu optimisation, inventory management, and predictive maintenance. The challenge for operators is not access to the technology. It is knowing where to start and how to sequence investment for maximum return.

The AI Readiness Framework provides a structured approach to this sequencing question. It assesses an operation across five dimensions: data infrastructure, process maturity, people capability, technology integration, and strategic clarity. Each dimension is scored on a 1-to-5 scale. The aggregate score determines readiness tier and informs which AI applications are appropriate to pursue immediately versus which require foundational work first.

The Five Dimensions of AI Readiness

Data infrastructure is the most fundamental dimension. As explored in the companion article on data foundations, AI systems require clean, consistent, and complete data to function. Operators scoring below 3 on this dimension should prioritise data governance work before investing in AI tools. Process maturity assesses whether core operational processes are documented, measured, and stable. AI augments good processes. It does not fix broken ones.

People capability covers both technical literacy and change readiness. A 2024 Cornell study of 240 hotel properties found that AI implementation projects with active general manager sponsorship and structured staff training achieved target outcomes in 73 percent of cases. Projects without this support achieved target outcomes in just 24 percent of cases. The technology was identical. The human factor determined the result.

“AI implementation with active GM sponsorship achieved target outcomes in 73% of cases versus 24% without it — Cornell, 2024.”

Highest-Impact AI Applications by Readiness Tier

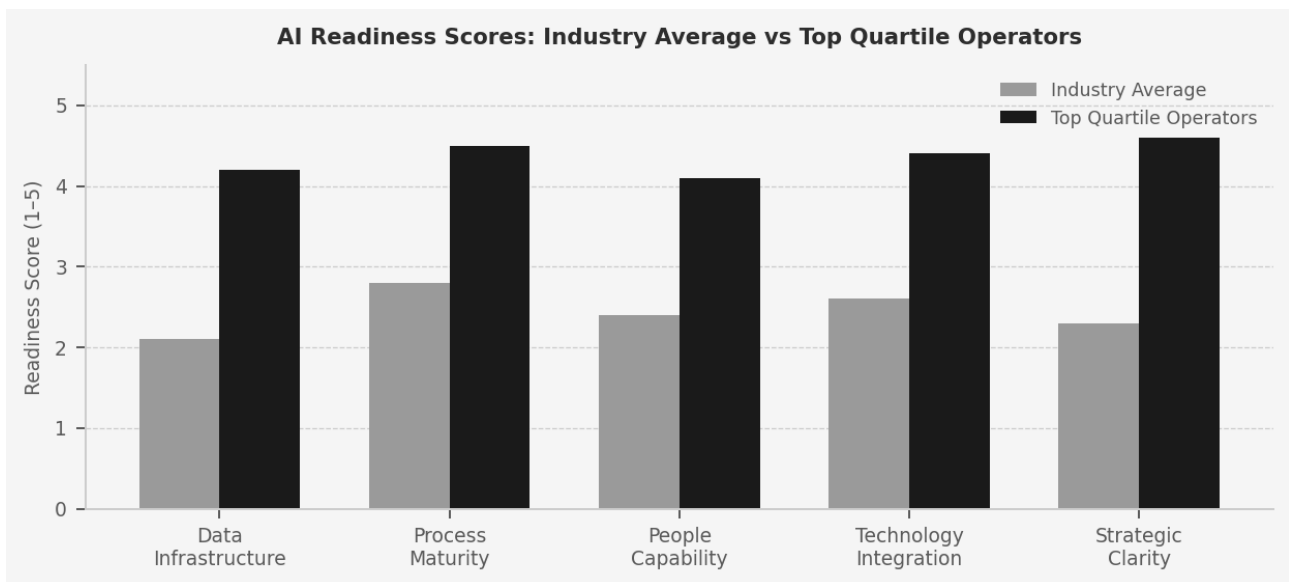
Tier 1 operators (score 1-2) should focus on foundational tools: POS-integrated reporting dashboards, automated rostering based on sales forecasts, and digital checklists replacing paper-based systems. These are not traditionally classified as AI but involve the same data infrastructure and process discipline that advanced AI requires.

Tier 2 operators (score 3) are ready for AI-assisted demand forecasting, recipe cost tracking with variance alerts, and AI phone answering for reservation management. Marriott's AI reservation assistant, tested across 500 properties in 2023, handled 41 percent of inbound calls without human intervention at a guest satisfaction rate of 4.2 out of 5, comparable to live agent scores.

Tier 3 operators (score 4-5) can deploy full revenue management systems, personalisation engines integrated with loyalty programs, and predictive maintenance platforms. These applications require the complete stack of data infrastructure, process maturity, and people capability to deliver return on investment. Deployed correctly, they create compounding competitive advantages that become increasingly difficult for lower-readiness competitors to replicate.

Starting the Assessment

The AI readiness assessment should take no longer than two hours with the right operational team in the room. The output is not a technology roadmap. It is an honest picture of where the operation stands and what it must build before specific technology investments will deliver the returns being promised by vendors. That clarity is the most valuable output of any AI strategy process.



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