COMMERCIAL · A WORKING FRAMEWORK BY JAMES TUTTIETT

The BUILD Qualification Lens

Five questions that tell you whether an AI opportunity is real before you spend a week on it.

Most AI opportunities fail qualification for reasons that were visible in the first conversation: no real buyer, a use case chosen for novelty, an incumbent who will absorb the work, or a deal shape the client cannot sign. BUILD is a five-lens check designed for account managers who come from a recruitment or staffing background and need a repeatable way to qualify consulting work.

B: Buyer

Who owns the problem and the budget, and are they the same person? An AI opportunity sponsored by an innovation team without a line-of-business owner will not survive the next budget round. Look for a buyer whose own numbers move if this works.

U: Use case

Is it specific, measurable and painful today? "Explore AI in operations" is not a use case. "Cut the time to produce a client onboarding pack from four days to one" is. If the client cannot name the current cost, there is no business case yet.

I: Incumbent landscape

Who is already in the account and what will they do when this surfaces? The big systems integrators will claim AI work as an extension of what they already run. You need a reason the incumbent cannot or will not do this, or a sponsor who does not want them to.

L: Left-behind appetite

What does the client want to be left with when you leave? Some want a working system and nothing else. Others want capability: a build-operate-transfer model, consultants who convert to permanent, their own teams upskilled. The answer changes the delivery model and the commercial shape, so ask it early.

D: Deal shape

Can this be bought the way it needs to be delivered? Outcome-priced work needs a client who can sign for an outcome. Fixed-scope work needs a scope. If the only contract vehicle in the account is day rates, the proposition has to be shaped to fit that or the deal will stall in procurement.

How to use it

- Score each lens red, amber or green after the first meeting. Two reds means do not invest further until they turn.
- Use the lenses as discovery questions, not a checklist filled in afterwards. They are written so a non-technical account manager can ask them.

- Left-behind appetite is the lens most teams skip and the one that most often decides whether the engagement is a one-off or a relationship.
