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ROI Estimation Worksheet

For Operational Change, AI Adoption, Commercialization, and Optimization Projects

Purpose. Use this worksheet to estimate the potential return on investment for a proposed operational, AI, commercialization, or process-improvement initiative. The worksheet is designed to help leadership teams organize baseline conditions, expected benefits, cost assumptions, implementation risks, and measurable outcomes before committing to a major change effort.

How to Use This Worksheet

- Define the initiative clearly enough that the costs, benefits, timeline, and affected workflows can be evaluated.
- Document the current baseline before estimating improvement. ROI estimates are only useful when they are grounded in a credible starting point.
- Separate one-time implementation costs from recurring costs, and separate hard-dollar savings from softer strategic benefits.
- Use conservative, expected, and optimistic scenarios where uncertainty is high.
- Treat the worksheet as a planning tool, not a guarantee of financial results.

1. Project Snapshot

Complete this section before performing calculations. The goal is to define the change initiative in practical operational terms.

Field	Response
Organization / Business Unit	
Project or Initiative Name	
Primary Change Driver	☐ AI adoption ☐ Operational optimization ☐ Commercialization ☐ Workflow redesign ☐ Other: _____
Problem Being Addressed	
Affected Teams / Functions	
Estimated Implementation Period	
Primary Decision Owner	
Prepared By / Date	

2. Current Baseline Metrics

Use current data where available. If data is unavailable, note the source of the estimate and mark it as preliminary.

Metric	Current Value	Data Source	Confidence (L/M/H)
Cycle time / turnaround time			
Labor hours required			
Cost per unit / transaction / project			
Error, rework, or defect rate			
Throughput / volume			
Customer or stakeholder response time			
Revenue leakage, missed opportunities, or lost capacity			
Other key metric			

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3. Expected Benefit Categories

Identify potential benefits before assigning financial value. Some benefits may be directly quantifiable, while others may support strategic decisions, risk reduction, or commercialization readiness.

Benefit Area	Examples	Relevant to This Project?
Labor/time savings	Reduced manual effort, faster processing, fewer handoffs	
Cost reduction	Lower operating expense, lower waste, better resource utilization	
Revenue growth	Improved customer conversion, faster market entry, expanded capacity	
Risk reduction	Lower compliance risk, fewer errors, better documentation	
Quality improvement	Improved accuracy, consistency, reproducibility, or reliability	
Decision support	Better forecasting, analytics, prioritization, or leadership visibility	
Commercialization readiness	Improved investor, customer, funder, or partner confidence	

4. Estimated Cost Categories

Include both internal and external costs. For planning purposes, it is often useful to estimate low, expected, and high ranges.

Cost Category	One-Time Cost	Recurring Annual Cost	Notes / Assumptions
Consulting / advisory support			
Technical development / integration			
Software, cloud, data, or licensing costs			
Internal staff time			
Training and documentation			
Change management and communication			
Implementation / migration / testing			
Ongoing support or maintenance			

5. ROI Calculation Worksheet

Use this section to create a basic estimate. Replace the example formulas with project-specific calculations when more precise data is available.

Line Item	Estimate	Formula / Notes
A. Estimated annual financial benefit	$	Annual savings, new revenue, avoided cost, or quantified productivity gain
B. One-time implementation cost	$	Consulting, development, integration, training, and launch costs
C. Annual recurring cost	$	Software, support, maintenance, added staffing, or other ongoing costs
D. Net annual benefit	$	A minus C
E. First-year net return	$	D minus B
F. ROI percentage	%	(First-year net return / one-time implementation cost) x 100
G. Payback period	Months	One-time implementation cost / monthly net benefit

6. Scenario Planning

Use multiple scenarios when the change depends on adoption rates, uncertain market timing, data quality, or implementation complexity.

Scenario	Annual Benefit	Implementation Cost	Recurring Cost	Estimated ROI / Payback
Conservative				
Expected				
Optimistic				

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7. Assumptions and Risk Factors

ROI estimates should make uncertainty visible. Document assumptions so the leadership team can revisit them as new information emerges.

Assumption / Risk Area	Assumption or Risk Description	Mitigation / Validation Step
Adoption rate assumptions		
Data quality assumptions		
Workflow change assumptions		
Customer, market, or revenue assumptions		
Implementation schedule assumptions		
Regulatory, compliance, or security assumptions		
Dependency on vendors, partners, or technical staff		

8. Project Priority Scorecard

Score each item from 1-5. A high-value initiative should show strong strategic value, realistic implementation, and measurable outcomes.

Criteria	Score	Notes
Strategic importance	1 2 3 4 5	
Expected financial benefit	1 2 3 4 5	
Operational impact	1 2 3 4 5	
Implementation feasibility	1 2 3 4 5	
Data / technology readiness	1 2 3 4 5	
Leadership and stakeholder support	1 2 3 4 5	
Risk level after mitigation	1 2 3 4 5	
Measurement clarity	1 2 3 4 5	

9. Decision Summary and Next Steps

Decision Area	Response
Overall recommendation	☐ Proceed ☐ Revise scope ☐ Validate assumptions ☐ Delay ☐ Do not proceed
Top three reasons for the recommendation	1. 2. 3.
Most important data needed before final decision	
Stakeholders who should review the ROI estimate	
Next action / owner / date	

10. Action Plan

#	Action Item	Owner	Due Date	Status / Notes
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

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Using This Worksheet with ScienceDocs

ScienceDocs can help organizations estimate ROI for AI adoption, optimization engineering, workflow redesign, commercialization strategy, and grant-to-market planning. Our team can assist with operational discovery, data review, benefit modeling, implementation planning, stakeholder alignment, and change management support so that ROI estimates are tied to practical execution rather than general assumptions.

Ready to get started? Contact us HERE.