

The Ultimate AI Vendor Questionnaire for Construction: What to Ask Before You Buy

Construction leaders are bombarded with AI promises, but most lack the framework to separate transformative technology from hype. This guide gives you the exact questions to ask any vendor — across operational fit, technical depth, long-term viability, and data security — so you can invest with confidence and put AI to work where it matters most: on the jobsite.

Table of Contents

Introduction	03
How to Use This Questionnaire	04
Not All AI Is Created Equal	05
AI Vendor Questionnaire	07
Interpreting Your Results	13
The Opportunity: An AI Partner to Guide You Forward	14

Introduction

Every week, another vendor promises that AI will revolutionize your construction business. Your inbox is full of cold outreach. Your LinkedIn feed is cluttered with bold claims. Conference booths are draped in “AI-powered” banners. And yet, behind the buzz, a few critical questions remain unanswered:

1. How do you separate the tools that will genuinely transform your operations from the ones that are just riding the AI hype wave?
2. How can you prove the ROI of AI solutions on projects that can span years?
3. Will my business be left behind if we fail to adopt AI now?

This guide exists because the construction industry deserves better than trial-and-error when it comes to technology adoption. It’s designed to arm you—whether you’re a business leader, a project executive, or a technology leader within a construction company—with the precise questions you need to cut through the noise and make confident decisions about AI investments.

What follows is a structured evaluation framework built from hard-won experience working alongside construction teams. It’s not theoretical. Every question in this guide maps to a real pitfall that real construction companies have encountered when evaluating AI vendors.

The construction industry is at an inflection point. The builders who invest wisely in AI today will define the next era of how projects are delivered. This questionnaire is your tool to make sure you’re one of them.



How to Use This Questionnaire

Before your next vendor meeting or RFP evaluation, print or share this guide with your evaluation team. Align on the questions before the conversation starts, so you're evaluating consistently across vendors.

During the demo, ask these questions directly. Watch for specificity in the answers. Vendors with genuine depth will welcome the scrutiny. Vendors who are packaging commodity AI will struggle.

After the evaluation, score each vendor against this framework. Compare results side-by-side. Let the data—not the demo—drive your decision.



Not All AI Is Created Equal

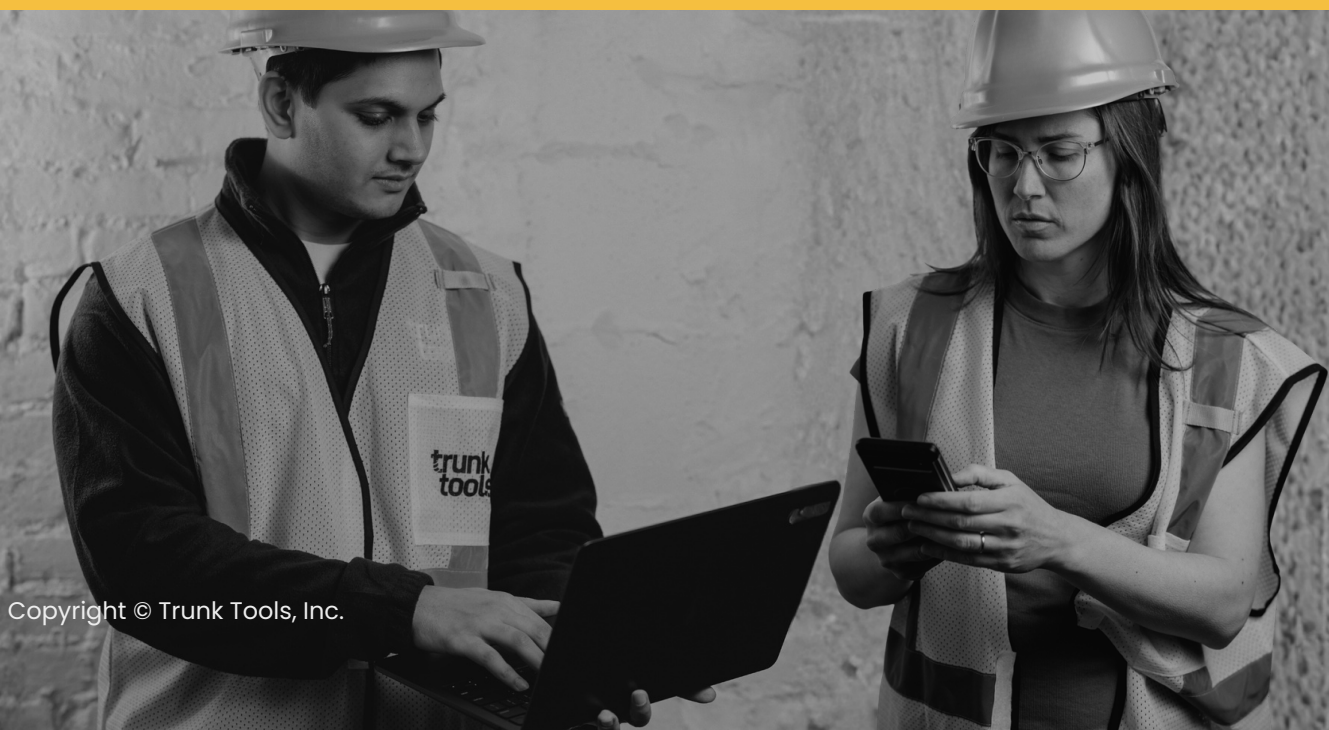
Before diving into the questionnaire, it's critical to understand that the term "AI" covers an enormous spectrum of sophistication. Not every product with an AI label delivers the same value—and the differences matter enormously for your business.

Level 1: The White-Label Wrapper

Some products marketed as "AI" are simply white-labeled versions of foundational large language models like ChatGPT or Claude. There is no construction-specific intelligence whatsoever. You're paying a markup for a branded interface on top of a general-purpose tool that anyone can access directly. These tools can be useful for basic tasks, but they bring zero domain expertise to your construction workflows.

Level 2: The Prompt Engineering Layer

A step above white-labeling, some vendors add lightweight prompt engineering on top of foundational models—essentially pre-written instructions that frame questions in a construction context. While this can improve relevance marginally, there's no construction-specific training. The underlying model has never seen your submittals, your specs, or your RFIs at scale. It's guessing, not reasoning.



Level 3: Adapted but Incomplete

Some vendors have taken the meaningful step of adapting their AI to construction. They may have fine-tuned models on industry data or built custom pipelines. But without a robust pre-processing engine that structures the unstructured data buried in construction documents—drawings, multi-hundred-page specifications, complex schedules—the outputs are less than useful. The AI might understand construction language, but it can't reliably extract and cross-reference the information your teams actually need.

Level 4: Comprehensive, Workflow-Integrated AI

At the highest level, you find robust, comprehensive AI-powered workflows that are automatically triggered, deeply integrated into the platforms your teams already use, and purpose-built to offload the manual, tedious, time-intensive work that nobody came into the construction industry to do. These systems are trained on millions of real construction documents, reason across multiple file types simultaneously, and deliver results in minutes—not hours or days.

The questionnaire that follows is designed to help you identify exactly where any given vendor falls on this spectrum.



AI Vendor Questionnaire

1. Functionality & Use Case

The first phase is all about operational reality. Before evaluating the sophistication of anyone’s AI model, you need to establish whether the product will actually function in your environment and solve real problems your teams face. Can your teams use it without becoming software developers? Will it work at the speed your projects demand? Does it meet the data requirements your owners impose?

A “no” on any of these questions doesn’t necessarily mean the product is worthless—but it does mean you should proceed with extreme caution, negotiate aggressively on pricing, and understand that you’re likely not getting a premium AI solution.

	Question	Why it matters	What “good” looks like	Vendor response
1.1	Does the vendor’s offering actually solve a problem my construction business faces?	Impressive demos and theoretical product roadmaps can distract from real value. The most technically advanced AI in the world is a waste of money if it doesn’t address a real pain point in your daily operations.	The vendor’s agents and offerings improve specific, repetitive workflows and can help you quantify the time and costs their customers save. Users of their platform share similar challenges to people within your organization and the vendor’s solutions meaningfully improve their day-to-day.	
1.2	Are the vendor’s agents deeply integrated in existing workflows?	Without the ability to read and write data to and from your other core platforms, AI agents cannot trigger automatically or automate significant portions of your workflows.	Yes — Agents plug into your existing platforms (Procore, Autodesk, Sharepoint, etc.), trigger automatically, and read/write data without manual steps.	

	Question	Why it matters	What “good” looks like	Vendor response
1.3	Are the vendor’s agents immediately deployable and maintained by them, not you?	Many “AI” vendors have custom agent templates you must build and maintain to meet your business needs, shifting the responsibility to you.	Yes — The vendor deploys, configures, and maintains the agents. Your team uses them; you don’t build them.	
1.4	Is the average turnaround time for an agentic task less than 30 minutes?	If the turnaround time is 24+ hours, it is most likely that their “AI” is actually human reviewers. Unfortunately, some vendors will make false claims to ride the AI hype wave.	Yes — Tasks complete in minutes, not hours. Consistent speed is a hallmark of genuine automation.	
1.5	Are the vendor’s employees / contractors onshore in the United States?	Many owners require that their data not be shared with offshore teams.	Yes — The vendor’s workforce is U.S.-based, ensuring compliance with data sovereignty requirements from owners.	

2. Technological Defensibility and Sustainability

This is where you separate vendors with genuine technical moats from those who are essentially reselling commodity AI they built in one weekend with a construction-themed paint job. The questions here probe processing capacity, multimodal reasoning, and whether the vendor has access to the proprietary data that makes construction-specific AI meaningfully better than general-purpose alternatives.

Further, construction projects are long. A technology partner that disappears—or stagnates—mid-project is worse than having no partner at all. It is also important to assess whether the vendor has the AI/ML engineering talent to sustain, improve, and scale their AI over time based on your feedback.

	Question	Why it matters	What “good” looks like	Vendor response
2.1	How many files can the vendor’s AI process at once? (≥ 10 to pass)	Anything less than 10 likely indicates a model with little pre-processing power for construction documents.	10+ files simultaneously. A robust pre-processing engine can handle large, complex document sets in parallel.	
2.2	Does the vendor support multimodal reasoning?	The vendor’s agents should be able to reason across drawings, schedules, and text-based documents like submittals, specifications, and RFIs.	Yes — The AI reads and cross-references drawings, specs, schedules, and text documents together—not just one format at a time.	
2.3	Does the vendor have proprietary data for training custom models?	Without project data, models are no better at construction-specific workflows than off-the-shelf foundational models from OpenAI, Anthropic, and Google.	Yes — The vendor has been training on millions of real construction documents to build domain-specific intelligence.	
2.4	How many AI/ML engineers are on the vendor’s staff? (≥ 10 to pass)	Simply having a large teams does not mean the vendor has a deep and experienced AI/ML team — a prerequisite to delivering the products they promise you.	10+ dedicated AI/ML engineers. This signals the capacity to iterate, improve, and sustain the product long-term.	

3. Data Privacy & Security

These questions address how the vendor uses your data to improve its models—and whether your proprietary information is protected and stays yours.

	Question	Why it matters	What “good” looks like	Vendor response
3.1	Does the vendor train its AI models on your project data? If so, how?	Without enterprise agreements, some vendors autonomously train on everything you upload without asking. This can expose proprietary project details, competitive advantages, and confidential owner information to the vendor’s broader model. You need to know exactly what “training” means and whether it’s happening with or without your knowledge.	The vendor only trains on your data with explicit written permission. Any data used for training is de-identified and used only to improve the model’s understanding of document types and construction workflows—never to expose project-specific content to other customers. It’s your data, so you can opt-out.	
3.2	Is your project data logically isolated from every other customer’s data?	Without strict data isolation, there is a risk that your proprietary processes or pricing information could leak into another customer’s application instance. This is especially critical in construction where competitors may use the same vendor.	Each project operates as a sealed environment. No proprietary or confidential information, data, responses, or queries are transferred between any two projects or customers. The vendor can articulate specifically how this isolation is enforced.	

	Question	Why it matters	What “good” looks like	Vendor response
3.3	Does the vendor use third-party AI models (e.g., OpenAI, Anthropic, Google)? If so, does your data train those models?	Most construction AI vendors rely on foundational models under the hood. The critical question is whether your project data is being retained by those third parties and potentially used to train their general-purpose models—which would mean your data could influence outputs for anyone using that model.	The vendor is transparent that it uses third-party models. Enterprise agreements with all third-party providers include Zero Day Retention policies, meaning your data is processed momentarily and never stored or used for training by the model provider.	
3.4	What specific data does the AI use to generate answers and operate workflows?	If you don’t understand what data the model has access to, you can’t evaluate the quality of its outputs or the scope of your exposure. Some vendors ingest data broadly without clear boundaries; others let you control exactly what’s shared.	The vendor only accesses data you explicitly grant permission to use—via integration setup, manual upload, or direct input. You specify which documents and modules sync between your project management system and the AI platform. Nothing more, nothing less.	
3.5	Has the vendor ever experienced a data leak or security breach?	A clean security track record is a strong signal of operational maturity. A vendor that has experienced breaches should be able to explain what happened, what they changed, and what protections are now in place. Transparency matters more than perfection—but a pattern of issues is a red flag.	The vendor has a clean security history and can demonstrate continuous investment in security protocols, regular audits, and an active AI Governance Committee or equivalent oversight body.	

4. Compliance, Legal & Risk Management

These questions probe whether the vendor's security posture is backed by third-party verification and real operational rigor—not just marketing claims.

	Question	Why it matters	What “good” looks like	Vendor response
4.1	Does the vendor maintain SOC 2 Type II compliance (or equivalent)?	SOC 2 Type II is the gold standard for demonstrating that a vendor has robust, audited controls over security, availability, processing integrity, confidentiality, and privacy. Without it, you're relying on the vendor's word rather than verified, third-party audits.	The vendor holds current SOC 2 Type II certification and can provide audit reports or a trust center for review. Bonus: they also comply with CCPA/CPRA and continuously monitor for regulatory changes.	
4.2	Is data encrypted both at rest and in transit?	Unencrypted data is vulnerable to interception during transmission and unauthorized access in storage. Construction project data—drawings, specs, contracts—contains commercially sensitive information that must be protected at every stage.	The vendor encrypts all data at rest and in transit using industry-standard protocols (e.g., AES-256, TLS 1.2+). Access controls are role-based, and the vendor conducts regular vulnerability scanning and security audits.	
4.3	Does the vendor have a formal data governance program and AI governance committee?	AI systems evolve quickly. Without structured governance—including oversight of how models are trained, how data is handled, and how compliance is maintained—there's no mechanism to catch problems before they affect your projects.	The vendor has an established AI Governance Committee (or equivalent) responsible for overseeing AI systems, ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, and conducting regular audits for transparency, fairness, and accountability.	

Interpreting Your Results

Based on how a vendor performs across these questions, they'll fall into one of three categories:

Outcome	What it means	Recommended action
 Worth Using + Worth Paying For	Vendor has a unique and defensible offering, operational fit for your business needs, and is built to last and grow with you. This vendor has genuine technical defensibility, deep workflow integration, and the team to sustain it.	Invest in a real partnership. Negotiate fair terms and commit to a pilot with clear success metrics.
 Maybe Worth Using + Pay Less / Don't Pay	The technology isn't differentiated enough to justify premium pricing, or there are concerns about long-term viability. It might solve a real problem, but the solution is easily stood up with off-the-shelf AI tools.	Use free tiers if available. Negotiate aggressively on pricing. Consider building internally or waiting for the space to mature.
 Not Worth Using + Don't Pay	This solution either doesn't solve a real problem for you or lacks the depth to justify adoption. Redirect your time and budget elsewhere.	Walk away. Focus your evaluation time on vendors that pass the earlier gates.

The Opportunity: An AI Partner to Guide You Forward

The path forward isn't about buying the flashiest tool or checking a "we use AI" box. It's about finding a technology partner who knows construction and can help you lead.

The right AI partner gives your teams practical support that actually helps them—instead of adding yet another layer of data entry. When AI is done right, adoption goes up because people genuinely want to use it. ROI becomes evident because the impact is tangible: fewer errors, faster turnarounds, reduced rework and contingency spend, and more time spent walking the jobsite than walking to the trailer. Your reputation grows as a builder who delivers on time, on quality, and on budget.

That's how you stay ahead of the curve. That's how you turn tech-forward thinking into a competitive advantage that compounds project after project, year after year.



About Trunk Tools

Trunk Tools is an AI-powered platform founded in 2021 by Dr. Sarah Buchner that acts as the "brain" for the construction industry, aiming to automate tedious, manual tasks and reduce errors. It uses advanced generative AI to transform massive, unstructured data sets—such as blueprints, schedules, and specifications—into actionable insights for field workers.

Key aspects of Trunk Tools include:

- **AI Agents for Automation:** The platform deploys specialized AI agents that handle administrative workflows, such as reviewing submittals, tracking schedules, and managing documents.
- **Built for the Field:** Designed for contractors and managers, it aims to reduce time spent on paperwork and prevent costly rework.
- **Key Products:**
 - **TrunkText:** SMS-based reasoning AI tool for immediate, on-site answers to project-related questions.
 - **TrunkSubmittal:** Automates the submittal review process by checking submittals against project specifications and relevant RFIs.
 - **TrunkReview:** Detects changes between drawing revisions and produces a visual overlay and written narrative of all changes.
- **Functionality:** It acts as an active, intelligent teammate rather than a passive document repository, enabling real-time, on-site decision-making.

