

FREE GUIDE 2026 EDITION

The AI Automation *Guide for Business*

Identify your first opportunity, calculate the ROI in five minutes, plan a 90-day rollout, and choose a partner who stays accountable. Built from 1,500 real client engagements across 22 industries.

1,500+

Clients Served

4,000+

Engineers

22+

Industries

CMMI 5

Certified

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sthenotechnologies.com

1 How to Identify Your Best First Automation Opportunity

Most AI projects fail because teams start with the wrong process. The right first project is not the most ambitious one. It is the process that is high-volume, rule-based, data-rich, and has a measurable cost when errors occur. Score every candidate process against these four criteria on a scale of one to five. The highest total score is your starting point.

1 Volume and Frequency

Runs at least weekly with significant transaction volume. Higher volume means more hours recovered per unit of implementation cost.

2 Repeatability and Rule Clarity

Follows predictable, documentable rules. Two experienced employees working independently would reach the same outcome 90 percent of the time.

3 Data Availability

At least 1,000 historical examples exist in digital, accessible form. No clean data means no accurate AI.

4 Error Cost

Mistakes have a measurable financial consequence: rework, escalations, compliance penalties, or delayed revenue.

2 Calculate Your ROI in Five Minutes

You need a number before you can get budget approved. The formula below uses data your organisation already has. The worked example shows a realistic small business scenario: eight people, twenty hours per week, at an all-in cost of \$25 per hour, with a ten percent error rate and \$100 average rework cost per error.

Step	Variable	Fill In Yours	Example
1	Employees on this task	_____	8
2	Manual hours per employee per week	_____	20 hrs
3	Fully loaded hourly cost	_____	\$25
4	Annual labour cost (1 x 2 x 52 x 3)	_____	\$208,000
5	Automation rate	_____	55%
6	Annual labour savings (4 x 5)	_____	\$114,400
7	Error rate	_____	10%
8	Average cost per error	_____	\$100
9	Annual error cost	_____	\$43,000
10	Error savings (9 x 5 x 80%)	_____	\$18,920
=	TOTAL ANNUAL SAVINGS	_____	\$133,320

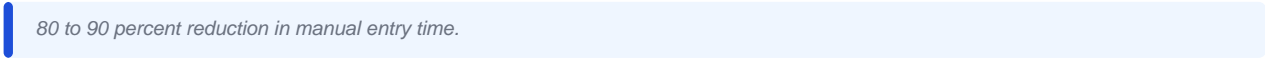
Automation rate guidance: Use 35 to 40 percent for complex, variable processes with incomplete data (conservative). Use 50 to 65 percent for standard back-office workflows with reasonable data quality (moderate). Use 65 to 80 percent only for high-volume, fully structured processes where data quality has been verified (aggressive). Always present the conservative figure to leadership.

3 The Five Processes That Deliver the Fastest ROI

These five categories score highest across all four criteria and produce the most reliable results as first automation projects, based on 1,500 client engagements.

0 Document Processing and Data Extraction

1 Invoices, contracts, forms, and emails read and filed automatically.



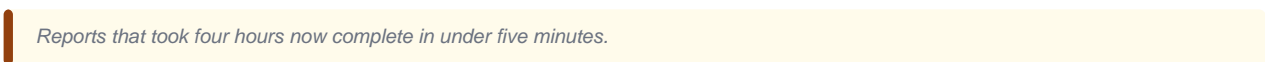
0 Customer Support Tier-1

2 FAQs, order status, basic troubleshooting, and ticket routing handled by AI.



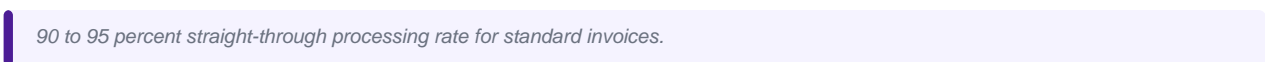
0 Reporting and Business Intelligence

3 Data pulled from multiple systems, cleaned, and formatted automatically.



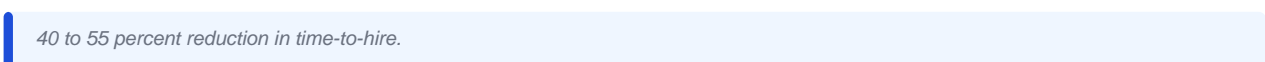
0 Invoice and Finance Reconciliation

4 PO matching, discrepancy flagging, and approval routing without manual intervention.



0 HR Screening and Onboarding

5 CV screening, interview scheduling, offer tracking, and onboarding checklists automated.



4 Your 90-Day Implementation Roadmap

This is what a well-scoped first implementation looks like from kickoff to measured results. Timelines assume a focused, single-process scope.

<p>DAYS 1 TO 14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map the process end-to-end. Document every input, step, exception, and output. Audit data quality and volume. Identify gaps before the build phase begins. Define success metrics in specific, measurable terms agreed by all stakeholders. Appoint a named internal owner with decision-making authority. 	<p>D DAYS 15 TO 45</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean and label training data with input from subject-matter experts. Build the AI pipeline and integrate it with relevant downstream systems. Run parallel testing: AI output versus human output on the same inputs. Target a minimum 85 percent accuracy before moving to pilot. 	<p>Build and</p>
<p>DAYS 46 TO 75</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch on 20 to 30 percent of live volume. Real work, real consequences. Monitor accuracy, speed, and exception rate daily. Fix edge cases immediately. Measure early ROI: hours saved per week and error rate versus baseline. Get executive sign-off on pilot results before committing to full rollout. 	<p>C DAYS 76 TO 90</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scale to 100 percent of live volume with confidence anchored in pilot data. Activate monitoring dashboards. Set triggers for retraining. Produce a formal results report: baseline versus actuals, financial impact quantified. Identify the next process. Capability built here accelerates every future project. 	<p>Full Rollo</p>

5 Real Results from Sthenos Client Projects

Every figure below is a measured before-and-after result.

GLOBAL INSURANCE Workflow Automation

<p>Challenge: Claims, support, and compliance all manual across markets. Rising costs and inconsistent service quality at scale.</p>	<p>Approach: AI chatbots, voice services, and RPA across all three workflows. Integrated into existing systems without platform replacement.</p>
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65%	3x	All channels
Manual effort reduction	Faster service delivery	Web, mobile, and voice

MULTI-GEO RETAIL Data and Analytics Platform

<p>Challenge: POS data fragmented across markets. No unified view of customers, inventory, or profitability. Loyalty decisions based on week-old data.</p>	<p>Approach: Real-time data platform ingesting all POS data. Personalised loyalty engine, demand forecasting, and live executive dashboards.</p>
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+55%	Real-time	All markets
Customer satisfaction	Data latency	Data unified

LUXURY REAL ESTATE Property Intelligence Platform

<p>Challenge: No centralised system for listing performance. Reporting produced manually on an ad-hoc basis, already outdated when it reached decision-makers.</p>	<p>Approach: Real-time property data platform. Automated all standard reporting. Live dashboards for leadership covering sales, pipeline, and commercial metrics.</p>
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Live	Eliminated	Faster
All listing data	Manual reporting	Decision-making

6 Five Mistakes That Kill AI Projects

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| <p>x Wrong first process
Teams pick the most visible challenge. Start with the highest-scoring process from the framework in Section 1, not the most impressive one.</p> | <p>x Skipping data preparation
Unaudited data produces inaccurate models. Budget explicitly for cleaning and labelling before the build phase begins.</p> |
| <p>x No named internal owner
Projects without a single accountable owner drift. Appoint someone with operational knowledge and decision-making authority before kickoff.</p> | <p>x Treating go-live as the finish line
AI models degrade over time. Budget for quarterly model reviews and a defined retraining trigger from day one.</p> |
| <p>x Choosing on price not accountability
The cheapest vendor transfers all performance risk to you. Insist on pre-agreed outcome metrics and a remediation clause in the contract.</p> | |

7 Ten Questions to Ask Any AI Vendor Before You Sign

These questions separate delivery partners from salespeople with a good deck. A capable vendor has clear, specific answers to all ten.

1 Can you show three case studies from my industry with specific, quantified before-and-after results?

No relevant case studies means no proven track record in your context.

2 Walk me through your delivery process milestone by milestone.

Vague methodology at proposal stage reliably predicts vague delivery on the project.

3 Who specifically will work on my project and what are their qualifications?

You are entitled to meet the actual team before you sign, not only after.

4 What performance metrics do you commit to before the contract is signed?

No pre-agreed metrics means no accountability when results fall short.

5 How do you monitor and handle model drift after go-live?

AI degrades over time without maintenance. This is non-negotiable.

6 What is your formal process when results fall short of agreed targets?

A capable partner has a documented remediation plan. A vendor closes the deal and moves on.

7 Describe your data security architecture and the compliance frameworks you operate under.

Critical for Healthcare, Financial Services, Legal, and any regulated sector.

8 What third-party certifications does your organisation hold?

Look for CMMI Level 5, ISO 27001, SOC 2, and industry-specific accreditations.

9 Can you integrate with our existing systems, or must we replace existing infrastructure?

A strong partner integrates. A weak one requires you to buy their platform.

10 What does the post-launch support model look like, and what are the SLA commitments?

Obtain this in writing before signing. Verbal support commitments evaporate.

8 Your Next Steps

01 Run the scoring exercise

Apply the four criteria from Section 1 to your manual processes this week. You need a spreadsheet and thirty minutes with your operations team.

02 Calculate your ROI

Use the formula in Section 2, or the free interactive AI ROI Calculator at sthenostechnologies.com. Take the conservative number to your executive sponsor.

03 Book a free AI Automation Audit

A 30-minute call with the Sthenos team. We will validate your candidate process, review your ROI estimate, and give you a realistic timeline and cost range.

04 Explore the full case study library

Detailed project outcomes across all 22 industries are at sthenostechnologies.com/case-studies. Finding a project in your industry is the fastest way to set credible internal expectations.

Sthenos Technologies

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CMMI Level 5 ISO 9001:2008 4,000+ Engineers 1,500+ Clients
22+ Industries