

zBriefings – Edition 5

AI Procurement – Buying Smart in a Crowded Market

Foreword

AI adoption is accelerating, and procurement has become one of the most strategic levers for success. With budgets under scrutiny and markets saturated with vendors, leaders face a dual challenge: choosing wisely while avoiding compliance and lock-in risks. This edition explores how to buy smart in a crowded AI market.

Edition Focus: Smarter AI Buying in 2025

AI procurement today is not just about cost. It's about resilience, flexibility, and ensuring long-term value. Executives must cut through the noise and focus on strategic fit.

1. Common Procurement Pitfalls

- Overcommitting to large, multi-year contracts with unproven vendors.
- Falling for hype-driven pitches without tangible ROI.
- Ignoring compliance and regulatory fit, leading to project delays.

2. Distinguishing Hype from Value

Ask vendors to demonstrate real-world case studies, provide measurable KPIs, and show clear evidence of compliance alignment. If they can't, they may be overselling.

3. The 3 Questions Every Executive Must Ask

- How does this solution integrate with our existing systems?
- What are the long-term costs beyond the pilot?
- How does this vendor handle compliance and risk?

Leadership Takeaway

Procurement decisions define the trajectory of AI transformation. Smart buying means resisting hype, prioritizing compliance, and choosing vendors who align with strategy, not just budget.

Case Study: Smarter AI Buying in Financial Services

A financial services firm faced pressure to sign a multi-year contract with a top AI vendor. Instead, leadership structured a modular procurement deal, avoiding lock-in and saving 20% in costs. This flexible approach allowed them to adapt to regulatory changes and expand only when results were proven.

Action Checklist

- Challenge vendors to prove value beyond the demo
- Align procurement with compliance frameworks
- Avoid lock-in with modular or phased contracts
- Track ROI with measurable KPIs
- Balance innovation with long-term resilience

Next zBriefing: AI Ethics in Action – Moving from Policy to Practice

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