Scale with AI Guide.

Looking to go from AI-curious to AI-confident?

Knowing where to start can be one of the biggest challenges advisory firms face when developing their AI strategy.

Use this guide to help you intentionally:

1. Understand, is your firm AI ready?
2. Make key decisions and take action to build your AI strategy

PART 1

Is your firm AI ready?

Success starts with understanding your readiness — not choosing a tool. AI maturity varies significantly across advisory firms. Start by evaluating and establishing:

- Your “why” – what are the key business outcomes that matter?
- Team awareness and comfort with AI
- Governance and compliance readiness
- Data quality and workflow maturity
- Current use cases
- Technology ecosystem and approved solutions

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Define your “why”

The decision to invest time and resources into AI is personal to every firm, but most advisors are motivated by one or more shared outcomes:

Ranking	Desired outcome	What it looks like
	Advisor productivity	Free up time from admin, notes, and drafting for client-facing work.
	Client experience	Faster turnaround, more personalized service, better meeting prep.
	Team capacity	Serve more clients and households without adding headcount.
	Process consistency	Turn your best process into a repeatable, AI-assisted workflow.
	Growth and scalability	Use AI for prospecting, lead scoring, and personalized outreach at scale.

Knowing your ‘why’ keeps you grounded when you decide which use cases, tools, and guardrails are right for your firm. **Prioritize your desired outcomes by ranking the outcomes above.**

How AI ready are you?

It's important to understand your current state before choosing a tool. You don't need to be an AI expert — you just need an honest assessment of where you are today.

Complete the **AI Readiness Scorecard**

Understand your readiness results

Total your Readiness Scorecard ratings to find your firm's AI maturity level, and the Practice Management focus that fits where you are.

Score	Level	Characteristics	Practice Management focus
8–14	**Curious**	Experimenting; unclear governance; limited use-case clarity	Education; basic guardrails; AI awareness workshops
15–21	**Emerging**	Initial use cases identified; leadership interest; some team adoption	Develop AI strategy; define ownership; launch pilots
22–27	**Accelerating**	AI providing measurable value; multiple use cases active; governance established	Workflow redesign; operational integration; ROI measurement
28–32	**AI-Enabled**	AI embedded across operations; strategic business alignment; continuous optimization	Scale adoption; advanced automation; enterprise operating model

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PART 2

Build your AI strategy.

As in any area of your business, an intentional approach or strategy will help you maximize the impact of AI. As SEI's Sneha Shah shared, "The rate of change is the fastest it's ever been, and the slowest it'll ever be." This is not the moment to be reactive and tactical. Take a thoughtful approach to how AI fits into your business, your talent strategy, compliance and regulatory approach, and operational infrastructure.

7 steps to build your AI strategy:

1. Define your business outcomes and top use cases.
2. Set your AI governance and guardrails.
3. Select your AI tools and partners.
4. Launch one pilot workflow.
5. Build team skills and confidence.
6. Measure impact and document the workflow.
7. Scale and advance.

Step 1: Define your business outcomes and top use cases.

AI should support business priorities — not become another technology project. Start with outcomes, not tools; identify the business problem before selecting technology.

Questions to consider and answer:

- What consumes the most time today?
- Where is operational friction slowing growth?
- Which workflows are repetitive and manual?
- What should AI never touch (e.g., unapproved client data, advice generation, investment decisions, compliance-sensitive activities)?
- Who owns AI — advisor, operations lead, compliance, AI champion, or executive sponsor?

Use the **AI Use Case Evaluator** tool to identify your top three use cases.

Step 2: Set your AI governance and guardrails.

The scaling playbook is nearly identical across channels — the oversight model is what differs. Scale only as fast as your governance can keep up.

Dimension	RIA (fiduciary / Advisers Act)	Broker-dealer (FINRA)
Governing lens	Fiduciary duty; Advisers Act, Marketing Rule, Reg S-P	Reg BI / suitability; FINRA supervision (tech-neutral)
Core control	Policies & procedures reasonably designed to prevent violations	Written Supervisory Procedures (WSPs) that explicitly cover AI
Watch closely	"AI-washing" in marketing & ADV; safeguarding client data	Supervision of AI outputs; recordkeeping across all channels

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All advisors should coordinate with their compliance partner to understand and adhere to the regulatory requirements, as well as policies and procedures that apply to them.

AI regulatory best practices include:

- Having a written and operationalized AI acceptable use policy
- Human-in-the-loop review
- An approved and documented tool list,
- No client PII in unapproved AI tools

Use the **AI Activation Checklist** to develop or understand your AI governance requirements.

Step 3: Select your AI tools and partners.

The right AI tool should fit your workflows, data environment, compliance requirements, and technology ecosystem. Assess tools as part of your broader advisor technology stack — not as point solutions adopted in isolation.

AI tool selection best practices:

- Start with what your CRM, planning, portfolio, and client communication systems already integrate with.
- Evaluate AI tools and partners against compliance, security, integrations, economics, risk, user experience, and scalability.
- Confirm whether the vendor has completed your internal review, SEI strategic partner review, or other approved-vendor due diligence.
- Avoid tool sprawl by identifying which tools should be approved, restricted, monitored, or retired.

Use the **AI Vendor Evaluation Scorecard** to compare tools consistently and document your decision-making process.

Step 4: Launch one pilot workflow.

You do not need an enterprise-wide AI rollout to begin. Start with one meaningful, low-risk workflow that can create a visible win, build confidence, and demonstrate value before expanding.

Common use cases to pilot:

Category	Examples
Client service	Meeting preparation, follow-up emails, CRM updates, client onboarding support
Operations	SOP documentation, workflow design, internal process creation
Marketing	Content creation, event promotion, social media support, lead generation
Leadership	Business planning, idea generation, strategic research

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Questions to consider and answer:

- Which workflow is high-value, repetitive, and low-risk enough for a first pilot?
- Who owns the pilot and who needs to approve the workflow before launch?
- What data, prompts, templates, or process steps are required?
- What outcome will prove the pilot worked? Time saved, quality improved, fewer manual steps, etc.?

Use the **30-Day AI Pilot Plan** to define the workflow, owner, success metric, review process, and expansion decision.

Step 5: Build team skills and confidence.

AI adoption is a change-management effort, not just a technology rollout. Teams need to understand the firm's vision and strategy, and how they *and* AI fit in, shared language, practical skills and confidence, as well as goals and guardrails when using AI responsibly in the context of their role.

AI Myth vs. Reality

Myth	Reality
AI replaces advisors	AI amplifies advisor productivity
AI provides advice	Advisors apply judgement to AI output
More tools = better results	Better workflows create results
AI strategy starts with technology	AI strategy starts with business outcomes

Four AI skills every team needs:

- Prompting — ask better questions, review everything
- Workflow thinking — identify repetitive work worth automating
- AI judgment — know when human expertise matters (human in the loop)
- Change readiness — build habits, not just one-off wins

Questions to consider and answer:

- What myths, concerns, or misconceptions may be limiting adoption?
- Which roles need basic AI education, workflow training, prompting support, or deeper tool-specific enablement?
- Where should human review be required before AI-assisted work is used or shared?
- Who can serve as an AI champion to reinforce habits, share examples, and gather feedback?

Use the **AI Jumpstart Guide** to build shared understanding, reinforce responsible use, and give the team practical examples they can apply immediately.

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Step 6: Measure impact and document the workflow.

Measurement turns experimentation into a business decision. Before expanding, prove the pilot created value and document the workflow so it can be repeated, reviewed, and improved.

Weeks	Focus
1–2	Assess: audit current & shadow AI use; align leadership on 2–3 target outcomes
3–4	Publish acceptable-use policy + approved-tool list; brief the team
5–8	Pilot one high-value, low-risk use case (e.g., AI note-taker) with a clear owner
9–12	Measure time saved & quality; document the workflow; decide what to scale next

Questions to consider and answer:

- What baseline did you establish before the pilot began?
- How much time was saved, quality improved, or turnaround accelerated?
- What controls, review steps, or documentation are required before repeating the workflow?
- What did the pilot teach you about data quality, training, integrations, or governance gaps?

Use the **Documented AI Workflow Template** to capture the process, owner, inputs, outputs, controls, success metric, and decision on whether to scale.

Step 7: Scale and advance.

Scaling is not about adding more tools. It is about expanding capacity, efficiency, and consistency of your team through documented and proven processes that become automations, strengthened governance, improved data quality, and an intentional approach to running the business and delivering your service model using AI.

Start where impact is high and risk is low — internal, non-client-facing tasks first. Prove time saved, then expand to client-facing and growth use cases. Strategy before tools; measure before you scale.

Move	What to do
1. Free advisor time	Automate notes, meeting prep, data entry, and drafting so advisors spend time on relationships, not admin.
2. Standardize the work	Turn your best process into a repeatable, AI-assisted workflow across the team.
3. Integrate the stack	Connect CRM, planning, and portfolio data so AI works across systems, not silos.
4. Grow the pipeline	Use AI for prospecting, lead scoring, and personalized outreach at scale.

Use the **AI Readiness Scorecard** to reassess your progress.

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You don’t have to figure out AI alone.

SEI's Practice Management team has helped advisory firms move from AI-curious to AI-confident by providing:

- A Scale with AI toolkit
- Workshops and enablement to build leadership vision and team confidence
- A community of 1,000+ advisors for AI-focused peer learning and shared best practices
- AI consulting for select SEI clients
- Advice on AI tools including discounted Our strategic partners | SEI U.S.

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