

HOW TO EVALUATE STARTUPS

The CIO's Technology Scouting Checklist

A Quick Guide to Repeatable, AI-Powered Innovation

If you're a Chief Information Officer — or are otherwise responsible for business technology transformation — then you know how challenging it is to deliver wins year after year.

It's a good challenge to have: *the burden of success*. As your company grows into a complex enterprise, the big bets that drove your initial growth become harder to recreate internally.

Outside-In Innovation

Partnering with nimble startups can deliver phenomenal value — combining the resources and scale of your enterprise with the agility of new players. With cloud and SaaS lowering barriers to entry, the number of small companies bringing smart, scalable ideas to market has never been greater.

Their ability to take risks and adapt quickly is part of their appeal. At the same time, you take on real risk when you stake part of your business on whether they can deliver.

Win and Win Again

For many enterprises, evaluating emerging technologies is an ad-hoc affair, driven by the most enthusiastic stakeholders of the moment. This can work — but it's inefficient and nearly impossible to repeat.

Repeatability is the trick. Finding one great technology partner is a win. Finding them over and over again is a strategy. Today, AI changes everything about how fast and how accurately you can execute that strategy. **Why does process still matter?**

- ✓ Building a shared vision early drives internal adoption and ROI.
- ✓ Capturing and sharing the right information at the right time drives better decisions.
- ✓ Establishing KPIs at the outset gives you a clear measure of success.
- ✓ AI-powered research compresses weeks of manual scouting into hours.

Gartner-Recognized

Back-to-back recognition in the 2026 AI-Enabled Innovation Platforms report

SOC 2 Type II Certified

Enterprise-grade security built in from day one

TRUSTED BY

GSK · PepsiCo · Ford · Fidelity · Koch · Bechtel · USPS · Suntory

How We Do It

At Traction Technology, we help Fortune 500 organizations evaluate emerging technologies and startups using AI-powered software built for the task. Our platform — recognized by Gartner back-to-back — embeds AI at every stage of the evaluation process, so your team moves faster, decides smarter, and scales what works.

We've identified **seven steps** common to every successful startup evaluation process — and we've built AI directly into each one.

STEP 1

Define the Problem

There are always shiny new technologies in the marketplace, and it's tempting to buy first and find a use case later. We encourage clients to do the opposite: invest time defining the problem with stakeholders from both business and IT before ever looking at the market. The problem should always be defined in business terms first.

Traction AI helps you: Structure and document the problem definition, assign stakeholders, and build the internal case before the first vendor conversation.

STEP 2

Identify the Gaps

Once you've defined the challenge, measure the distance between where you are and where you need to be. Sometimes that means building on what's already working. Sometimes it means approaching the problem from an entirely different angle.

Traction AI helps you: Map capability gaps to potential technology categories, drawing on a curated database of verified, enterprise-ready companies.

STEP 3

Establish a Shared Framework for Success

Because you started with a solid business case and brought stakeholders to the table, it's relatively straightforward to identify the KPIs the new technology must hit. Don't settle for incremental when you can get incredible.

Traction AI helps you: Build and distribute evaluation scorecards so every stakeholder is aligned on what success looks like before the search begins.

STEP 4

Survey the Market

Now you're ready to start looking. Include both established leaders and emerging players in your initial screen. Keep your basket broad and don't overthink it — AI does the heavy lifting here.

Traction AI helps you: Generate AI Trend Reports and AI Company Snapshots in minutes, surfacing relevant vendors from a curated database of verified, enterprise-ready companies — with no hallucinated vendor names.

STEP 5

Analyze Your Options

Building on your gap analysis, lay out the pluses and minuses of each choice — features, pricing models, technology stack, company vision. Keep in mind that any new IT innovation has implications for customers, employees, and technical staff alike.

Traction AI helps you: Generate structured AI Company Snapshots that compare vendors side by side, eliminating the manual research burden and keeping the process efficient and contained.

STEP 6

Build the Risk/Reward Profile

Think like an investor: what are you willing to risk, and what are you likely to get in return? Have they served enterprises at your scale? Are they financially viable? Can they demonstrate that they meet security and compliance requirements? These are non-negotiable criteria.

Traction AI helps you: Surface financial signals, enterprise readiness indicators, and security posture data — so your risk assessment is grounded in verified information, not guesswork.

STEP 7

Select, Pilot, and Learn

With the information you've gathered, it should be clear which solutions make the grade. The ability to measure agreed-upon KPIs during any Proof-of-Concept is fundamental — and offers a clear path to production. Too many technology scouting initiatives end with a poorly conceived pilot and a pat on the back. Real innovation requires something more.

Traction AI helps you: Manage pilots end to end — track KPIs, document milestones, report outcomes to leadership, and build the institutional knowledge that makes the next evaluation even faster.

Enterprise Innovation at Scale

AI-Powered · Repeatable · Measurable

A Growth Mindset: The Most Important Key of All

Our most successful clients see technology scouting as a process of learning rather than a binary decision. They look for the opportunity in failure and adjust their goals accordingly. Sometimes a technology you sought for one purpose turns out to deliver value in an unexpected way. If you keep your eyes open — and the right platform behind you — you'll get more ROI than you thought possible.

Why Enterprises Choose Traction Technology



AI-Powered Scouting

Trend Reports, Company Snapshots, and deduplication — powered by Claude (Anthropic) on AWS Bedrock with RAG architecture. No hallucinated vendor names. Ever.



Enterprise-Grade Security

SOC 2 Type II certified. SSO, end-to-end encryption, GDPR and CCPA compliant. Built to pass your security review.



Highly Configurable

Purpose-built workflows you can tailor to your process — not a generic tool you have to work around. No setup charge. No data migration fees.



Gartner-Recognized

Back-to-back recognition in Gartner's AI-Enabled Innovation Platforms report. Trusted by GSK, PepsiCo, Ford, Fidelity, Koch, Bechtel, USPS, and Suntory.

Get Technology Scouting Moving with Traction Technology

The process we've described requires deep collaboration and generates a lot of data. Traction Technology embeds AI throughout the entire lifecycle — from initial scouting to pilot management to executive reporting — so your team can move fast and your leadership can see results.

[Schedule a Demo →](#)

tractiontechnology.com/demo-traction-ai