

Choosing an AI Consultant: The 7 Decision Criteria for Swiss SMEs

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY & CORE TAKEAWAY

Choosing the right AI consultant determines whether your project succeeds or fails expensively. Seven criteria matter most: depth of expertise, sector experience, toolstack compatibility, revDSG competence, fair cost models, availability, and cultural fit. Price-only decisions often trigger 2-3x cost overruns — the cheapest bid is rarely the best one.

CONTEXT & EXECUTIVE RELEVANCE

According to IAPME Suisse (May 2026), 42 percent of Swiss SMEs are actively planning to integrate AI into their operations — yet a wide gap remains between marketing promises and operational reality. Choosing the wrong partner here costs not just money, but time and internal trust in AI initiatives more broadly. For a broader look at how Swiss SMEs can close this gap from the outset, see this analysis on [AI strategy for Swiss SMEs in the global race](<https://www.ki-podcast.ch/ki-standort-schweiz-kmu-strategie-und-globales-rennen>).

This exact mistake — tool before analysis — is, according to Accenture experts, the most common stumbling block for Swiss SMEs. A center of excellence doesn't need to be a large department; often a single, knowledgeable person is enough to run the organizational maturity assessment before any technology decision. This is precisely where the right AI consultant earns their value: they need to deliver that diagnosis before any tool conversation even starts.

CORE ACTION ITEMS

- 01 Specialized agencies: full project management and verifiable references, but higher governance overhead and typically higher entry costs.
- 02 Independent consultants: high flexibility and direct knowledge transfer, but an availability risk if the one key person is unavailable.
- 03 SaaS platforms: fast to implement and standardized, but limited customization for more complex requirements.

SWISS COMPLIANCE & ARCHITECTURE GUIDELINES

- ☑ Full compliance with revised Swiss Data Protection Act (revDSG).
- ☑ Zero vendor lock-in on closed proprietary models.
- ☑ Seamless integration into Abacus, Bexio and M365 ecosystems.

Non-Binding Process Analysis

Let us review in 20 minutes where AI agents create immediate measurable efficiency in your workflows.

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