

How to choose the right technology without overspending

The same method we use in every diagnostic, in a short guide you can apply yourself before asking anyone for a quote.

VE Solutions · Fractional technology & AI leadership

Most bad technology decisions don't come from picking the wrong tool between two options. They happen much earlier, when someone buys a solution before defining the problem. An expensive piece of software nobody uses, an automation that hid the symptom and left the cause untouched, a vendor charging you every month for something you no longer remember the point of.

This guide won't recommend brands or tell you AI is the answer. It gives you the order of questions that keeps you from spending on what you don't need. It's the same order we follow when we walk into a company: understand first, decide second, and only at the end — if it's worth it — build.

1. Start with the pain, not the tool

When someone tells us "I need a CRM" or "I want to implement AI," it's almost never the real problem. It's a solution they already picked in their head. Our first question is always the same: what happens today that shouldn't, and how much does it cost you each time it happens?

Write the pain in one sentence, in money or time. "We lose two days a month reconciling spreadsheets that don't match" is a good starting point. "We need digital transformation" is not: you can't measure it, so you can't know if you ever fixed it.

2. The five questions before buying anything

Before asking for a quote, answer these five questions in writing. If you can't answer one of them, that's your next task — and it isn't buying yet.

- What does this problem cost me per month, in money or hours? If you don't know, no vendor can honestly promise you a return.
- Is this a process, data, or people problem? A lot of what looks like "missing software" is really a process nobody ever wrote down.
- Who will use the solution every day, and did that person ask for it? Tools the boss buys and the team uses tend to end up abandoned.
- What happens if I do nothing for another six months? Sometimes the honest answer is "not much," and that saves you a purchase.
- Do I have a way to measure whether it worked? Define the number that should change before you start, not after.

3. AI, simple automation, or just fixing your data?

This is the decision where the most money gets wasted, because AI is sold as the answer to everything. Most of the time it isn't. Use this tree before you let anyone convince you:

- If the task is repetitive and has clear rules (moving data between systems, sending the same email, generating the same report): that's simple automation. It's the cheapest and the fastest to pay for itself. Start here.
- If the problem is that your data is siloed, duplicated, or untrustworthy: you don't need AI yet, you need to fix the foundation. No AI improves bad data; it just repeats it faster.
- If the task needs judgment over text, images, or cases that never repeat the same way (classifying complaints, reading documents, answering questions that span departments): that's where AI genuinely helps. Even then, start with a small, measurable pilot.

4. The real cost isn't the license price

The number on the quote is almost never what you'll actually pay. Always add three costs: the license or build (the visible part), the implementation (configuring, migrating data, training the team), and the maintenance (what it costs every month to keep it alive, plus someone able to touch it).

A cheap tool nobody on your team can maintain is expensive. An expensive one that solves a pain costing you three times as much every month is cheap. Price is judged against the cost of the problem, not against other tools.

5. How not to get locked into a vendor

Lock-in is designed at the start, while you still have negotiating power. Three simple rules save you years of being trapped:

- Your data is yours and must be able to leave. Get it in writing how you export everything in a standard format the day you decide to walk away.
- Make sure someone on your team understands how it works, even if they don't build it. Knowledge that lives only in the vendor's head is a leash.
- Favor parts you can replace one at a time. A monolithic system you have to throw out whole just to change one thing leaves you with no options.

Three real cases

DISTRIBUTION

They wanted AI; they needed one less spreadsheet

A distributor asked for an AI system to "predict demand." The real pain was that three departments kept three different spreadsheets that never matched. Connecting those three sources into one trustworthy place solved 80% of the problem for a fraction of the cost. Prediction waited until the data was actually reliable.

SERVICES

The software wasn't the problem

A services company was about to buy its third ticketing system in four years. The pattern was clear: no software was failing — what failed was that nobody had defined who answers what, and how fast. We wrote the process first. They ended up keeping the tool they already had.

AQUACULTURE

Here it was worth it

A producer had hundreds of variables per pen every day and a team that couldn't look at all of them. That genuinely was a case for connected data plus models: the problem required cross-referencing a lot of information to get ahead of mortality. We started with a pilot at one site, with a clear number to improve, before scaling.

Your one-page checklist

Print this or copy it. If you can honestly check all six boxes, you're ready to ask for a quote. If not, you already know what's missing.

- I wrote the pain in one sentence, with a number in money or time.
- I know whether it's a process, data, or people problem.
- I identified who will use the solution every day.
- I decided whether I need automation, cleaner data, or real AI.
- I added all three costs: license, implementation, and maintenance.
- I defined the number that should change so I'll know it worked.

When you want a second opinion

If you got this far and still aren't sure what you need, that's exactly the conversation we have in a diagnostic. We don't start by selling you anything: we lay out what's costing you money today, what your options are, and which ones aren't worth it. You leave with a decision, not a sales pitch.

Let's talk through your case at vsol.cl · contacto@vsol.cl