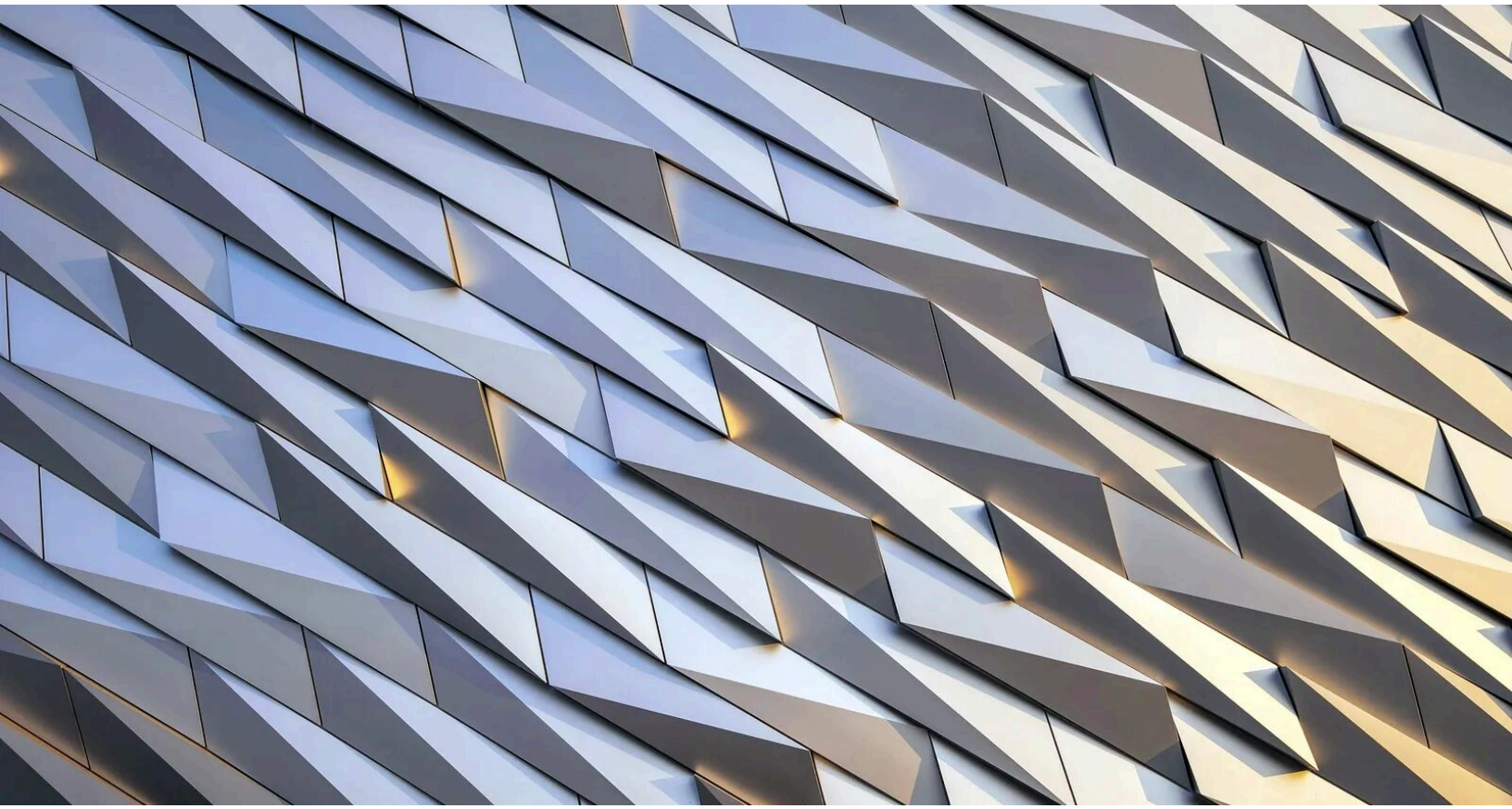
AI readiness assessments compared: Microsoft, Cisco, AWS, Google, Wharton and Armstrat

Microsoft, Cisco, AWS, Google Cloud, Wharton and Armstrat AI readiness assessments compared: format, length, cost, what you get back and who sells what.

Abdullah Qureshi, Co-founder and partner

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In brief

The main AI readiness assessments differ more than their names suggest. Microsoft's wizard is a free ten-question check, Cisco's tool scores you against a global index, AWS offers a checklist, Google Cloud sells a workshop program and Wharton publishes a rubric. We compared them, including our own, on format, length, cost, output and who sells what, as of November 2026.

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The main AI readiness assessments differ more than their names suggest. Microsoft's AI Readiness Wizard is a free ten-question check that points you to a next step. Cisco's tool scores you out of 100 against its global AI Readiness Index. AWS offers a checklist article, Google Cloud sells a workshop program, and Wharton publishes a pen-and-paper rubric. Most are built by companies that also sell the platform or the services that follow. The right choice depends on who you are and what you want to decide.

We checked each one on 25 November 2026. Armstrat makes one of the assessments compared here, the AI Readiness Assessment, so we have described every option, including our own, from its public pages and stated plainly where a detail is not published.

01

The comparison at a glance

Assessment	Format	Length	Cost and access	What you get back	Built by a company that sells
Microsoft AI Readiness Wizard	Self-serve questionnaire	10 questions	No fee, no sign-in seen	The next area to focus on, plus Microsoft resources	Microsoft cloud and AI products
Cisco AI Readiness Assessment	Self-serve tool, pick from six pillars	Not stated	No fee	A score out of 100 and one of four tiers, against Cisco's index	Cisco infrastructure and security
AWS AI readiness checklist	Article with a checklist	Five steps, four stages	Free to read	No score; suggests a six to eight week readiness sprint	AWS cloud services
Google Cloud AI Readiness Program	Paid program with survey and workshops	Two to three weeks	Price on request	Benchmark, executive readout and roadmap	Google Cloud and partner services
Wharton AI readiness quotient	Rubric inside an article	16 elements rated 1 to 5	Free	A self-calculated score out of 80	Nothing (academic)
Advisory firm diagnostics, such as PwC	Consulting engagement	Not published	Price on request	A scored diagnostic and roadmap	Advisory services
Armstrat AI Readiness Assessment	Self-serve tool	24 questions plus 4 about the business, about ten minutes	No fee; work email for the full report	Score out of 100 per area, five moves, roadmap, PDF	Embedded transformation work, with no sales call

02

Microsoft AI Readiness Wizard

The AI Readiness Wizard asks ten questions, two for each of five "drivers of AI value", and returns the next area to focus on with links to Microsoft adoption resources. A Microsoft blog post describes five stages, from exploring to realizing. We did not see a numeric score on the page.

It is quick and free, and a sensible start if your business already runs on Microsoft 365. Be aware that Microsoft publishes more than one readiness assessment, including a newer AI Readiness Advisor framework described in a May 2026 post, which can be confusing.

03

Cisco AI Readiness Assessment and Index

Cisco's assessment tool lets you choose which of six pillars to assess: strategy, infrastructure, data, governance, talent and culture. It scores each out of 100 and places you in one of four tiers, from Laggards to Pacesetters, using the thresholds in Cisco's published methodology.

Its strength is the benchmark. The 2025 AI Readiness Index surveyed more than 8,000 senior leaders at organisations with 500 or more employees across 30 markets. That makes it most useful for larger companies; the infrastructure pillar in particular reflects Cisco's world. Cisco does not state the number of questions or the time it takes.

04

AWS AI readiness checklist for small businesses

The AWS checklist, published in September 2025, is an article rather than a tool. It sets out five assessment steps and four stages of readiness, and suggests a six to eight week readiness sprint. There is no score. Each step points to AWS services and partners, so it reads best as a guide for businesses already planning to build on AWS.

05

Google Cloud AI Readiness Program

We did not find a free self-serve readiness tool from Google Cloud. Its AI Readiness Program is a paid engagement of two to three weeks, run through a survey, meetings and workshops, ending in a benchmark, an executive readout and a roadmap that combines Google tools and partner services. The price is quoted on request.

06

Wharton AI readiness quotient

Wharton's AI readiness quotient, published in January 2024, is a rubric inside an article: sixteen elements in four categories, each rated from 1 to 5, for a maximum of 80. A total of 64 or more suggests a company is well positioned; below 32 signals significant risk. It is free and vendor-neutral, but you score it yourself on paper and get no report.

07

Advisory firm diagnostics

Large advisory firms, PwC among them, sell AI readiness assessments as consulting engagements. Their scope and timing depend on the engagement, and they are priced on request. They suit a large organisation preparing a major program, and the work that follows is usually sold by the same firm.

08

Armstrat AI Readiness Assessment

Our assessment asks four questions about the business and 24 scored questions across six areas: strategy, risk, data, tools, people, and real use and value. It takes about ten minutes. You see your overall score and the score for each area before you are asked for anything; a work email unlocks the full report, with three strengths, three gaps, three risks, five moves in order, a twelve-month roadmap and a board-ready PDF. There is no fee and no sales call.

Two limits, stated plainly. The benchmark it compares you with is modelled today, built from expected scores by sector and company size, and it is replaced by real anonymised results as they come in. And like every self-assessment here, it measures what you report, not what an auditor would find. The full rules are on the methodology page.

09

How to choose

- **You run on Microsoft 365 and want a quick pointer:** start with the Microsoft AI Readiness Wizard.
- **You are a large company and want a global benchmark:** the Cisco assessment, read alongside its index.
- **You are about to build on AWS:** the AWS checklist sets out the steps in AWS terms.
- **You want a vendor-neutral rubric to discuss with your team:** the Wharton quotient.
- **You have budget for a multi-week program:** an advisory diagnostic or Google's program.
- **You are a founder, owner or CEO who wants a score, a plan and an honest not yet when it applies:** our assessment was built for that.

10

Where we say no

We say no to paying for a multi-week diagnostic before a ten-minute check has shown where the gaps are. The free tools will tell most businesses which area is weakest. Spend on depth once you know where to look.

We say no to treating any self-assessment, ours included, as an audit. Each one reflects the answers you give. If the result matters for a large decision, have someone look at the work itself.

And we say no to reading a readiness score as a reason to buy. Several of these assessments end with a product or a program from the company that wrote them. That is not wrong, but notice it, and decide what to fix before you decide what to buy.

11

Frequently asked questions

What is the best AI readiness assessment tool?

It depends on who is asking. For a quick pointer, Microsoft's free AI Readiness Wizard takes ten questions. For a large company wanting a global benchmark, Cisco's tool scores against an index of more than 8,000 leaders. For founders, owners and CEOs who want a scored plan in about ten minutes, the Armstrat AI Readiness Assessment covers six areas and says not yet when the foundations are weak.

Is the Microsoft AI readiness assessment free?

Yes. The Microsoft AI Readiness Wizard is free and we saw no sign-in or sales step on its page. It asks ten questions across five drivers of AI value and points you to the next area to focus on, with Microsoft adoption resources. We did not see a numeric score.

What is the Cisco AI Readiness Index?

It is Cisco's annual survey of AI readiness. The 2025 edition, its third, surveyed more than 8,000 senior leaders at organisations with 500 or more employees across 30 markets, and sorts companies into four tiers from Laggards to Pacesetters. Cisco's free assessment tool scores your company against it.

How much does an AI readiness assessment cost?

Self-serve tools from Microsoft, Cisco and Armstrat cost nothing. Programs and advisory diagnostics, such as Google Cloud's AI Readiness Program or a large firm's assessment, run for weeks and are priced on request. A ten-minute self-assessment

first will show most businesses where deeper work is worth paying for.

How long does an AI readiness assessment take?

Self-serve tools take minutes: Microsoft's has ten questions and Armstrat's takes about ten minutes. Cisco does not state a time. Paid programs take weeks: Google Cloud's runs two to three weeks, and AWS suggests a six to eight week readiness sprint.

Which AI readiness assessment is best for a small business?

One that is free, quick and does not assume a large IT team. Microsoft's wizard suits businesses already on Microsoft 365. The AWS checklist suits businesses planning to build on AWS. The Armstrat AI Readiness Assessment was written for founders, owners and CEOs in any industry and returns a plan, not only a score.

Written by

Abdullah Qureshi

Co-founder and partner, Armstrat

Abdullah leads delivery at Armstrat. He works inside client teams, owns the build, and stays until what Armstrat shipped runs without it in the room. His work spans the operating systems, decision flows and AI integration that turn a plan into something a team can actually run.

About Armstrat

Armstrat is a Business Transformation Office (BTO™). A partner leads every engagement, and forward-deployed engineers (FDEs) work inside your business across five capabilities: business transformation; operations and supply chain; people and organization; growth, marketing and sales; and AI and intelligent automation.

Engagements are a base fee plus a contingency paid on results, not on documents. We use AI only where it earns its place, and we say not yet when a business is not ready for it.

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Not sure where AI fits yet? The free AI Readiness Assessment takes about ten minutes:
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