AI Deployment Companies: The Executive Briefing

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- What DeployCos are
- Who the players are
- What it costs and what can go wrong
- The decision in front of us

What a DeployCo is

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- A company that embeds engineers inside your business to put AI into production workflows
- Modeled on Palantir's forward deployed engineers
- Paid to ship working systems, not slide decks

Why they exist now

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- Model capability is ahead of enterprise adoption
- Few organizations have scaled AI (McKinsey)
- Labs, clouds and investors are funding the gap

The players

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- Lab-backed: OpenAI Deployment Company ($4,000,000,000+), Ode with Anthropic ($1,500,000,000 reported)
- Hyperscalers: Microsoft $2,500,000,000, AWS $1,000,000,000, Google Cloud $750,000,000 partner fund
- Independents: Palantir, Distyl; integrators: Accenture, Deloitte

How an engagement works

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- Diagnostic: 2-4 weeks, ranked workflows
- First workflow: 6-12 weeks to production
- Evaluation set, approval gates, handover
- Scale to the next workflows

What it costs

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- Published AI consulting rates: $150 to $500 per engineer hour (vendor-published)
- Most DeployCos do not publish prices
- Production cost per task is the number to negotiate
- Model the payback with the free ROI calculator

The risks

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- Model lock-in with lab-backed partners
- Capability leaves with the partner
- Pilot purgatory: value never measured
- Data and IP terms left to defaults

How to choose

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- Five criteria: accuracy, integration, operating cost, governance, ROI
- Compare at least two provider types
- Insist on a head-to-head model evaluation
- Get the exit plan in writing

Our readiness

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- Data access in week one
- A bounded first workflow with a baseline
- Named sponsor, business owner and technical owner
- Security and legal terms drafted

The decision

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- Approve a paid diagnostic with two competing providers
- One workflow, one metric, one go-live bar
- Day-90 review: scale, fix or stop
- Sources and tools: deploycos.com