

How to run a technology scan that ends in a decision

Most scans fail in one of two ways. They surface the five vendors your team already knew about, or they produce 200 options with no basis for choosing between them. Here's our framework.

THE SHORT VERSION • SIX STAGES

01

Write the search architecture before you search

02

Search five pools, not one

03

Score every candidate on the same card

04

Split your expert conversations in two

05

Cut to ten, in two tiers

06

Finish with names, not conclusions

What to aim for



Two things go wrong here, and both happen before any analysis starts. Search one pool and the output will only contain names your team already knew. Search all five but score nothing consistently and you get fifty candidates with no defensible way to cut.

Breadth without a metric card is just a longer list.

The six stages

Each stage feeds the next. The question at the bottom of each is the one to answer before you move on.

01

Write the search architecture before you search

Fix your keywords, your technical categories, and the tags every candidate will be scored against. Agree them with your stakeholders on day one, not after the first results land.

IN PRACTICE

One water treatment scan split its space into four functions, treat, generate, monitor and manage, crossed with four water types. Every candidate found afterwards had a slot to sit in.

GOES WRONG WHEN

You start searching from a one-line brief. Six weeks later nothing can be compared to anything else.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

Could a colleague run your framework and get a comparable result set?

02

Search five pools, not one

Commercial players. Patents. Academic literature. Regulatory and clinical filings, tech transfer offices, research grants. Trade and technical press. Commercial-only searching returns the incumbents, and you already know the incumbents.

IN PRACTICE

A contact lens scan returned 17 commercial technologies against 94 patents and 56 clinical trials. Almost all of the early-stage signal sat in that second group.

GOES WRONG WHEN

Your team recognizes every name in the output. That is the symptom of a single-pool search, not proof that the market is small.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

Which pool produced your most interesting find?

03

Score every candidate on the same card

Three metric families. Company: size, geography, funding, patent position. Application: readiness level, technology class, where it fits your architecture. Performance: the two or three numbers you will actually decide on, plus certifications and maintenance burden.

IN PRACTICE

Uniform scoring is what turns a list into a comparison. It is also the cheapest step here. Three columns agreed in an hour beats another week of searching.

GOES WRONG WHEN

Candidates are described in paragraphs. Nothing can be sorted, so nothing can be defended in the room.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

Can you sort your candidates by the thing that matters most?

04

Split your expert conversations in two

Experts in the field tell you where it is heading, what the real constraint is, and what looks good on paper but fails in practice. Suppliers tell you actual cost, capability and integration requirements. Different questions, different people.

IN PRACTICE

A wearables scan ran nine interviews. Five on the sensing technology, four with clinicians on whether the diagnostic workflow would change at all. Viability and adoption are not the same question.

GOES WRONG WHEN

Two experts get quoted for color and the ranking looks identical to what it was before the calls.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

Did any interview change your ranking?

05

Cut to ten, in two tiers

Assess the shortlist on readiness, cost, operational benefit and return. Then split it in two: what is buyable now, and what belongs on a watch list. The two-tier cut lets you decide today without discarding the three-year options.

IN PRACTICE

One scan shortlisted five high-readiness products alongside five mid-readiness technologies. The team got a purchase decision and a monitoring list out of the same work.

GOES WRONG WHEN

You asked which one and received all of them, sorted alphabetically. That is sorting, not cutting.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

Can a decision-maker choose from your output without reopening the raw landscape?

06

Finish with names, not conclusions

Get the actual person at the company worth talking to, in both the technical and the commercial function. A recommendation nobody can act on this quarter is not a recommendation.

IN PRACTICE

This step costs the least of any on the list and it is the one most often left undone. It is also what turns a scan into a partnership conversation.

GOES WRONG WHEN

The deliverable names a technology and stops there. Someone has to start the search over to act on it.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

Is there a route from every shortlisted option to a first conversation?

Eight questions, one score

Tick what is true of a scan you are running or have commissioned. Print this page and bring it to the kickoff.

- ☐ A written search framework exists, agreed before searching started
- ☐ At least four of the five evidence pools were searched
- ☐ Every candidate is scored against the same metrics
- ☐ Readiness level is recorded for each candidate
- ☐ Experts and suppliers were interviewed separately, for different questions
- ☐ At least one interview changed the ranking
- ☐ The shortlist is ten or fewer, split into near-term and watch list
- ☐ Every shortlisted option has a named contact attached

0 to 3 This scan will produce a reading list, and the gaps are in the early stages. **4 to 6** Serviceable, and the unticked boxes are where the recommendation gets challenged. **7 to 8** This one ends in a decision.

IF YOU TAKE ONE THING

Build the metric card first

Stages 2 through 6 all depend on it, and it costs an hour. Three columns agreed with your stakeholders will do more for the quality of the output than another week of searching.

If you have room for two: force the two-tier cut at the end. Near-term and watch list. That is the difference between a scan that informs and a scan that decides.

Need a tech scan with recommendations you can defend in the boardroom? Speak to our experts.

[Schedule a discovery call →](#)