The Hype Test

Six questions that show which of the three states a project is in. Answer them for one concrete project, pilot or technology you are deciding on right now.

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01 Who has paid full price for it?

- **A** ☐ Nobody. We are piloting.
- **B** ☐ One customer, discounted or subsidised.
- **C** ☐ Several customers, at list price, with repeat purchase.

02 How long has this technology been “about to break through”?

Find the oldest headline about it.

- **A** ☐ Over ten years.
- **B** ☐ Three to ten years.
- **C** ☐ Under three years, and question 1 is C.

03 Who gets paid if it continues?

- **A** ☐ Everyone involved is paid for activity: advisers, programme, vendor.
- **B** ☐ Mixed.
- **C** ☐ Someone in the room loses money if it fails, and still backs it.

04 What happens if the budget is cut tomorrow?

- **A** ☐ The project dies.
- **B** ☐ It continues, smaller.
- **C** ☐ The customer keeps paying.

05 Which number ends the project?

- **A** ☐ There is none.
- **B** ☐ There is one, but nobody has signed it.
- **C** ☐ There is one, it is signed, and it has not been breached yet.

06 Would you have said this sentence in 2016?

Take the central sentence of your deck. Swap the buzzword for “Industry 4.0”.

- **A** ☐ The sentence still works unchanged.
- **B** ☐ Partly.
- **C** ☐ The sentence is meaningless without the actual customer data.

Scoring

Hyped: an A on question 1 or question 5, or two A's in total. Nobody pays list price, or there is no number that ends it, or both. Don't decide whether it is good. Decide when you stop it. Set the number from question 5 today.

Plausible: no A, at least five C, and C on questions 1 and 5. No A, five or six C, and questions 1 and 5 are clean. This is the project that should get the other projects' resources. Ship.

Possible: everything in between. The technology is real, the demand is unproven. That is not startup pace, that is a ten-year plan. Fund the years or park it. A single A on question 1 or 5 tips it to hyped.

Why these six questions: Industry 4.0 was announced on 1 April 2011. In 2016 six in ten companies reported no or limited progress; in 2018, 84% had been stuck in pilot mode for over a year. Cloud took eleven years to reach a majority of German firms (12% in 2014, 54% in 2025). In 2026, 69% of larger Austrian firms use AI, 8% of those company-wide. The questions don't change. Only the buzzword.