

## The most significant benefits AI offers new founders and small-business owners with limited budgets

**E**rik van Eekelen sees two major benefits of AI that stand out for smaller businesses. "Firstly, AI has dramatically reduced the time and cost required to turn an idea into something real and usable," he says. "What used to require a specialist team, significant upfront investment, or external agencies can now often be done in weeks by a small-business owner using modern AI tools. Whether it is designing marketing materials, building a basic internal system, drafting client communications, or testing a new product concept, the barrier between idea and execution has dropped sharply.

"For founders and small-business owners working with limited capital, this can be the difference between testing an idea and never getting started. The ability to prototype, refine, and launch quickly without major upfront spend is genuinely transformative."

Secondly, Erik says that AI enables small teams to scale further and have greater impact than ever before by automating recurring work. "Tasks that previously required hiring additional staff can now be partially or fully handled by AI systems," he explains. "This applies across many functions: customer support, marketing, internal reporting, software development, and even elements of sales.

"For some industries, this means a small business can now operate with the efficiency and reach of a much larger organisation," he points out. "A team of five can achieve what previously required a team of 20. That does not mean replacing people, but rather allowing existing teams to ▶



## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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– LOUISE SIWICKY

focus on higher-value work while AI handles routine tasks. For founders with limited budgets, this combination of faster time to market and greater operational leverage is incredibly powerful.”

Louise Siwicky believes that AI represents leverage for SMEs. “In small business, the founder is often strategist, marketer, operator and sales lead all at once,” she says. “AI can draft communications, structure marketing plans, assist with research, summarise meetings, generate first-pass policies and streamline administrative workflows.”

“For businesses without the budget to hire full teams, that is a meaningful advantage,” Louise adds. “AI lowers the cost of experimentation. It allows founders to test messaging, refine positioning and build operational frameworks without immediately outsourcing. It compresses time and increases access to capability that was previously capital-intensive.”

However, Louise believes the the greatest benefit of AI is cognitive. “When repetitive load reduces, mental bandwidth increases – when bandwidth increases, decision quality improves,” she says. “That is where AI becomes transformational not as a content machine, but as a capacity restorer.”

For SMEs operating under financial and time constraints, clarity is a competitive advantage,” Louise adds. “Used strategically, AI can help small businesses operate with the sharpness of a larger organisation without carrying the overheads of one.”

Matt Travers’ view is in line with Louise’s. “The single biggest benefit is leverage,” he says. “I categorise effective AI usage into four areas: language, vision, prediction and agents or automation – I call it LVPA. When a small business understands which of those four levers applies to their specific pain points and implements properly, a founder or small team can handle a volume of work that would have previously required significantly more headcount, without burning out,” Matt explains.

“Whether that means reducing headcount or keeping the same team and enabling them to do far more meaningful work at a higher volume, that is a business decision, not a moral one. The human role shifts from doing the heavy lifting to approving and iterating, and the people freed up can focus on the decisions and creative thinking that actually move the needle.”

“This is not theoretical,” Matt argues. “For one client, we deployed a vision model that gave their team back an entire working day per week by automating tasks that previously required manual review. For another, a combination of 11 AI-powered automations returned 49 hours a week to their operations. That is more than a full-time employee’s worth of capacity, created without a single new hire.”

“For small businesses in particular, the maths is compelling,” Matt says. “You do not need a massive budget. You need one painful process and the willingness to rethink how it gets done. The real cost is not in the AI itself – it is in the setup, the integration and the change management,” he warns. “People skip that part and then wonder why their AI investment did not land.”

Lucy Lines believes that AI creates space for the work that only a human can do – supporting clients, teaching, interpreting nuance and holding complex conversations. “For founders with limited budgets, this kind of scaffolding can be transformative,” Lucy says. “You don’t need a full marketing team to test ideas. You don’t need a large agency to help you draft educational content or map out a project. AI lowers the barrier between intention and action.”

Another benefit Lucy see repeatedly is momentum. “Many business owners have strong expertise but struggle to turn ideas into tangible outputs,” she explains. “AI can help move people past the blank page – not by replacing their voice, but by helping them start. That confidence often leads to more consistent visibility, which is critical for small businesses trying to grow sustainably.”

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