



Digitise your small business

Twelve places small businesses lose hours, the fix for each, and where AI actually helps. For businesses that already work but spend their evenings on paperwork. From No Drama Studios, Melbourne. Free to share.

The rule before the list

Only fix what repeats. Take any job you do by hand, count how many minutes it takes and how many times a week you do it, and multiply. Ten minutes, five times a week, is forty hours a year. That is worth a day of setting up. Something you do twice a year is not, however annoying it is.

The second rule: fix one thing, run it for a month, then fix the next. Businesses that try to digitise everything in a fortnight end up with six half-working tools and a bigger mess than they started with.

Where AI fits, and where it does not

AI is good at three things in a small business: writing the first draft of anything (a quote description, a follow-up message, a job ad), answering the questions you get asked every day in your own words, and reading messy input (a voicemail, a photo of a receipt, a scribbled job sheet) and turning it into tidy data. It is bad at knowing your prices, your availability, and what you promised a customer last Tuesday, unless you give it that information and check what it does with it.

So the pattern that works is: AI drafts, you approve. AI answers the routine, you handle the unusual. AI reads the mess, your system keeps the record. Several of the fixes below use it that way. None of them let it loose on your customers unchecked.

1. Typing the quote twice

The leak. You scribble the job on site, then type it into a quote at home, then type it again into the invoice.

The fix. One tool that turns the job into the quote and the quote into the invoice without retyping. Done from the phone, on site, before you drive off. The invoice should be one tap on the accepted quote. The newer tools let you say the job out loud and have AI write the line items for you to check, which is faster than typing with cold hands.

2. Chasing unpaid invoices

The leak. You notice the unpaid ones when money is tight, then spend an evening writing awkward messages.

The fix. A reminder that sends itself: a polite note the day before it is due, a firmer one a week after, and a text at two weeks. You write the three messages once. Payment links on the invoice, so paying takes thirty seconds.

3. Missed calls while you are working

The leak. You cannot answer on a roof. The caller rings the next business on the list.

The fix. An automatic text back to any missed call: "On a job, will call you back by five. If it is urgent, text me the address." Most people wait when they know they have been heard. The text can also ask the two questions you always ask, so you call back already knowing the job.

4. Enquiries arriving in four places

The leak. Website form, Facebook messages, text, email, and the Google listing. You check all five and still miss one.

The fix. Everything lands in one inbox, with the customer's name and what they asked, and the ones not replied to in a day get flagged. One place to look, once a day.

5. The same questions every day

The leak. Do you service my area, what do you charge for a call-out, are you available Saturdays, do you do insurance work. Ten times a day, by text and by phone.

The fix. A page on the site that answers them, and an assistant on the website or in the inbox that answers them in your words, books the job if it fits, and hands anything unusual to you. It is trained on your business and you check what it says. It should never make up an answer.

6. Appointment reminders

The leak. No-shows. A customer forgets, you turn up to an empty house, the afternoon is gone.

The fix. A text the afternoon before, with the time and a one-tap "still good" reply. No-shows drop to almost nothing. This is a thirty-minute setup with the calendar you already use.

7. Double entry into the bookkeeping

The leak. The invoice is in one system, the payment is in the bank, and someone types both into the accounting software at the end of the month.

The fix. Connect them. Invoices flow into the bookkeeping when they are sent, payments match themselves when they land. The end of the month becomes a check, not a data-entry session.

8. The Google listing with the wrong hours

The leak. The listing says you are open Sunday. You are not. The customer drives past, and leaves a one-star review about it.

The fix. Ten minutes: correct the hours, the service area, the phone, and add five real photos. Then a reminder every quarter to check it. The listing is the front door, and most businesses never look at it after setting it up.

9. The website nobody updates

The leak. It still shows the old number, the old prices, or a service you stopped doing in 2023.

The fix. Fewer pages and a monthly ten-minute check. A one-page site that is right beats a ten-page site that is wrong. If updating it needs a developer, that is the problem to fix.

10. Receipts in the glovebox

The leak. The deductions you cannot find in July.

The fix. Photograph every receipt on the day into one folder on the phone. AI reads the photo, pulls out the supplier, date, amount and GST, and files it, so the folder becomes a ledger without typing. The habit is the fix; the tool just removes the excuse.

11. The follow-up after a quote

The leak. You send the quote, hear nothing, and never ask. A third of those were a yes waiting for a nudge.

The fix. An automatic follow-up three days after a quote goes out: "Any questions on the quote? Happy to adjust." One message, written once, sent every time. It wins jobs you would otherwise have lost quietly.

12. Knowing how the month went

The leak. You know whether you were busy. You do not know whether you made money, which jobs paid best, or where the customers came from.

The fix. Five numbers, once a week, in an email you can read in a minute: jobs done, quotes sent, quotes won, invoiced, paid, with a few plain sentences from an AI about what moved and why, written from your real numbers and nothing else. Over three months the pattern shows you what to do more of. This is not a dashboard project. It is one email.

Where to start

Pick the one that made you win. Count the minutes. If it is worth a day, fix it this month and nothing else. In six months you will have fixed six, and the evenings will be yours again.

No Drama Studios Pty Ltd, Melbourne's inner west. We work through this list with businesses, done with you, and the first few are free in return for an honest review. nodramastudios.com/small-business, 0489 229 663, andrew@nodramastudios.com. This guide is general information, not legal, tax or financial advice.