

SMALL BUSINESS AI TOOLKIT

Everything below has a free tier. This is not a list of things to go and buy. It is a short, ordered list of what actually moves the needle for a small business, starting with the one most owners have never done.

Pick one thing and use it this week. Adopting six tools at once is how you end up with six logins, six bills, and nothing connected. One tool, one week, one real task.

Tier 1 **START THIS WEEK**

highest return, lowest effort

Choose one assistant and stay with it

ChatGPT · Claude · Google Gemini

All three have capable free tiers and all three are good. The gain does not come from picking the perfect one, it comes from using one of them every day until it becomes a reflex. Switching constantly is what keeps people at Level 1.

TRY Give it a role, some context, and the format you want back. Compare that answer to the one you get from a one-line question.

Connect it to your email and calendar

Gmail and Google Calendar · Outlook and Microsoft 365

This is the single most underused move available to a small business owner, and it is free. Once your assistant can read your inbox and calendar directly, you stop copying and pasting. You start asking questions like "what did I miss this week and what needs a reply today."

TRY In your assistant's settings, look for connectors, apps, or integrations. Connect your mail, then ask it to summarize the last three days and draft replies to anything urgent.

Find out what AI already says about your business

Perplexity · or just ask ChatGPT

Customers are starting to ask an assistant instead of searching. Whatever it says about you is what your next customer is being told, and most owners have never checked. This is your baseline for answer engine optimization.

TRY Ask three of them what your company does and who it serves. Note anything wrong, missing, or out of date.

Tier 2 WHEN YOU HAVE THE BASICS

real hours back

Build decks and documents in minutes

Gamma

Describe the deck you need and it builds it, on brand, ready to edit. Work that used to take an afternoon takes about ten minutes. For anyone who pitches, proposes, or reports, this is usually the fastest visible win on the whole list.

Turn your own documents into a research assistant

Google NotebookLM

Upload your contracts, policies, manuals, or past proposals and ask questions across all of them at once. It answers from your documents and shows you where it got each answer, which makes it far harder for it to invent something.

Capture every meeting properly

Granola · Otter · Fathom

Transcripts, summaries, and follow-up actions without anyone taking notes. The follow-ups are the real value, because the deal you lose is usually the one nobody followed up on.

Make your existing apps talk to each other

Zapier · Make

The entry point to automation. Start with one repetitive handoff you do by hand every week, such as a form submission that should create a task and send a confirmation.

Design and content without a designer

Canva

Graphics, social posts, and simple video with AI features built into the free tier. Good enough for most small business marketing, and far faster than briefing it out.

Tier 3 TWO ASSISTANTS WORTH TRYING

*built by Kane Minkus at Industry Rockstar,
shared with permission*

A strategy partner that asks you questions

Biz Strategy Agent

A custom GPT that works through a part of your business with you rather than handing you a generic answer. Useful when you are stuck on positioning, pricing, or what to do next and you want something to think against.

OPEN [Biz Strategy Agent](#). Built by Kane Minkus at Industry Rockstar.

A video copilot for people who do not make videos

Video Creation Assistant Agent

Walks you from an idea to a finished marketing or sales video, covering the script, the storyboard, and the edit. Built for solo operators with no production experience and no crew.

OPEN [Video Creation Assistant Agent](#). Built by Kane Minkus at Industry Rockstar.

WHAT PEOPLE MEAN BY A CONNECTOR

You will hear the term MCP, which stands for Model Context Protocol. Strip away the jargon and it is a standard plug. It lets your AI assistant reach directly into a tool you already use, such as your files, your calendar, your CRM, or your accounting system, instead of you copying information out of one and pasting it into the other.

It matters for one reason. An assistant that can see your actual business is useful. An assistant you have to hand-feed is a toy. Connecting your mail and calendar, in Tier 1 above, is the version of this you can do today for free.

BEFORE YOU CONNECT ANYTHING, SET THREE RULES

Most AI problems in small businesses are not hacking. They are ordinary people using ungoverned tools with no rules. Write these down once and tell your team.

1. **Know what is in use.** List every AI tool anyone in the business has signed up for, including the free ones.
2. **Pick a short approved list.** One assistant, one automation tool, one notetaker. Not six of each.
3. **Say what data may go where.** Two or three plain sentences covering customer records, financials, and anything covered by a contract or a privacy obligation. Everyone gets their own login, always.

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If you want to talk through where your business actually sits and what your next step should be, get in touch. No charge for the conversation and nothing to sign. The deeper written version of this thinking, including the readiness diagnostic, is at rhconsulting.ai/starter-kit.