

ORVX.AI

THE BUILDER'S GUIDE TO AI

You didn't start a building company to spend Sunday night writing up variations.

Where a builder's week actually goes, what AI fixes, what it doesn't, and how to get found by the clients who can afford you.

Written by ORVX AI, the AI specialists for Australian tradies. September 2026.

WHERE YOUR WEEK GOES

You're a builder for maybe 20 hours a week. The rest is paperwork.

Add up the hours below honestly. Most builders we talk to stop counting at some point because they don't want to know.

THE JOB THAT ISN'T THE JOB	WHAT IT ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE	HOURS A WEEK
Chasing subbies	Insurances, invoices, availability, 'are you coming tomorrow'	4 hrs
Variations	Client asks for one more thing, you say yes, nobody writes it down until the invoice argument	3 hrs
Client updates	'Where are we at', 'when's the plumber coming', 'can I pop in Saturday'	3 hrs
Progress claims and invoicing	Building the claim, chasing the payment, re-sending the invoice	2.5 hrs
Quoting and estimating	Take-offs, supplier pricing, writing the thing up, sending it, forgetting to chase it	5 hrs
Site diary and photos	Photos stuck in your camera roll, diary written from memory on Friday	2 hrs
Missed calls	Ringin back the six people who called while you were on a roof	1.5 hrs
Total	Time you are not billing	21 hrs

21 hrs

a week off the tools, before you've fixed a single thing on site

1008 hrs

a year. That's 25 full working weeks of admin

\$47,880

a year at \$95/hr, if only half of those hours became billable time

These are estimates for a typical 5 to 20 person builder business, not a measurement of yours. Put your own numbers in. Most owners who do this find they were guessing low.

If you're a licensed builder charging \$95 an hour and doing 21 hours of admin a week, you are paying yourself \$2,000 a week to be a bad office manager.

PLAIN ENGLISH

What AI actually is, and what it isn't

For a builder, AI is a fast, patient office worker who never sleeps, never gets sick of the same question, and can read, write and talk in plain English. That's the whole definition.

What it does well

- Answers the phone and texts when you can't, and takes the job details properly
- Writes the follow-up you keep meaning to send
- Turns a voice note into a quote, a job note or a site diary entry
- Sorts enquiries so the tyre kickers don't cost you a site visit
- Sends the customer updates you'd send if you had the time
- Drafts your Google posts, reviews replies and job photos captions

What it can't do

- Fix cashflow. It can chase invoices, it can't make a builder pay retention
- Find you a good apprentice
- Do the work. Nobody's software is picking up a shovel
- Replace your judgement on a price, a variation or a dodgy client
- Work without a system. If your jobs live in your head, start there
- Sign off on a certificate of compliance, a contract or a safety plan. That stays with you and your licence

Three myths that cost builders money

- 01** "It's too expensive for a business my size." The tools you already pay for (job management, Xero, your phone plan) mostly have AI features switched off. Most of the wins in this guide cost nothing or under \$100 a month.
- 02** "My customers want to talk to a person." They want an answer. A text back in 30 seconds beats a callback at 6pm every time. You still ring them. You just ring them before your competitor does.
- 03** "I'm not technical." If you can send a voice note and read a text, you can run every system in this guide. The setup is the only hard bit, and it's a one-off.

AI doesn't replace the tradie. It replaces the two hours of admin the tradie does after dinner.

FIX THESE FIRST

Five leaks to plug before you buy anything else

In order. Number one is worth more than the other four combined for most builders.

01 Variations, captured the moment they happen

The client mentions a change on site. You voice-note it into your phone. AI writes it up as a variation with description, cost and a yes/no link, sent to the client within the hour. Signed before the work starts.

Do this: Set up a voice-note-to-variation flow in your job system or via a simple automation. The rule: no variation work starts without a signed digital approval.

02 Subbie chasing on autopilot

Every sub gets an automated message before their insurance or licence expires, a reminder two days before they're due on site, and a nudge when their invoice is missing the job number.

Do this: Put every subbie's expiry dates in one sheet or your job software. Automate the reminders. You stop being the one who remembers.

03 Client updates that go out without you

A weekly progress message with three photos and next week's schedule. Clients who get it stop ringing. Clients who don't get it ring on Saturday.

Do this: AI drafts the update from your site photos and diary every Friday. You approve it in 30 seconds.

04 Quote follow-up that actually happens

You've done the site visit and the take-off. The quote is worth \$80,000. It gets one email and then silence. Three follow-ups over two weeks wins more of these than anything else you'll do.

Do this: Write the three messages once. Automate them. Track quotes sent versus won for a month and you'll see it.

05 The site diary that writes itself

Photos, weather, who was on site, what got done. Voice note at the end of the day, AI files it as a dated diary entry with photos attached. Gold when a dispute turns up.

Do this: One voice note per site per day. That's the habit. Everything else is automated.

THE BUILDER'S PROBLEM

Progress claims, disputes and the paper trail you wish you had

Every builder has a story about the job that went bad and the paperwork that wasn't there. This is where AI earns its keep in construction, and it's the part almost nobody talks about.

Progress claims

Under the security of payment laws in every state, a claim that's late, incomplete or in the wrong form can cost you the right to be paid on time. AI can't make the claim for you, but it can build the draft from your job records on the right date, flag the deadline, and keep the supporting photos and diary entries attached so the claim stands up.

You still check the numbers. It just means the claim goes out on the 25th, not the 3rd of next month.

The dispute file you never had time to keep

When a client disputes a variation or a defect, the builder with dated photos, a signed variation and a site diary wins. The builder with "I told him on site" loses. Every one of those records can be generated from a voice note in under a minute, with AI doing the writing and filing.

What a builder's AI setup looks like, end to end		
MOMENT	OLD WAY	NEW WAY
Enquiry comes in	Voicemail, callback tomorrow	Text back in 30 seconds asking scope, suburb, budget range, timing. Only the real ones get a site visit
Site visit done	Quote in 4 to 7 days	Voice note in the ute. AI drafts the scope and inclusions. You price it. Sent that night
Quote sent	Wait	Follow-up day 2, 5, 10. Reminder to you to ring on day 7
Job starts	Group chat chaos	Subbies get schedule and reminders. Client gets the weekly update. Diary writes itself
Change on site	"Yeah no worries"	Voice note becomes a signed variation before the work starts
Claim due	Late, from memory	Drafted on the date, with the evidence attached
Job done	Nothing	Review request, handover pack, 6-month check-in message

The builder who documents everything isn't the one who's paranoid. He's the one who gets paid.

QUOTING AND BUDGETING

Quotes priced off today's material prices, not last year's list

Most builders quote from memory, a stale price list and a gut feel. Then materials cost more than the quote said and the margin disappears.

How automated quoting works

1. You describe the job by voice note on site, with photos. "Deck, 6 by 4, merbau, on a concrete pad, stairs down one side, two coats of oil."
2. AI builds the scope and material list from your own templates, with your standard inclusions and exclusions.
3. Prices come from live sources: your trade supplier price files (Bunnings Trade, Bowens, Dahlsens, Boral, your local timber yard's price file) and current retail pricing for the odds and ends. Priced on the day.
4. Labour comes from your rate sheet. AI applies it, you adjust it.
5. You check it and send it, with a price validity date, so if copper or timber moves next month you're covered.

Budgeting and job costing

Once the quote is built from real line items, the budget exists automatically. As invoices and timesheets come in, AI matches them to the quote and tells you mid-job whether you're on margin or bleeding. For a builder this is the difference between knowing on day 30 of a 90-day build that the framing came in over, and finding out at the final claim.

What the materials line looks like

ITEM	PRICED FROM	EXAMPLE
Merbau decking 90x19, 62 lm	Timber yard trade price file	\$1,240
Treated pine joists and bearers	Bunnings Trade	\$680
Stainless screws, joist hangers, brackets	Bunnings Trade	\$310
Decking oil, 2 coats, 24 m2	Retail, current	\$190
Concrete stirrups and post mix	Hardware, current	\$145
Labour: 2 carpenters, 2 days	Your rate sheet	\$3,040
Contingency 8%	Your rule	\$448

Example items and figures, not a price list.

Where it breaks

It prices materials accurately. It doesn't price what's behind the wall, so keep your contingency. Retail and trade prices differ, so use your trade accounts. Prices move, so the validity date isn't optional. And your labour estimate is still yours: AI applies your rates, it doesn't know how slow that client's driveway is.

The builder who prices timber from last year's list isn't cheaper. He's just paying for the difference himself.

MORE LEADS

Where your next 20 jobs are already sitting

You don't need more traffic. You need to stop losing the enquiries you already get. Then you need Google to trust you. In that order.

1. The leads you're already losing

Missed calls, web forms answered the next day, quotes never chased. Pages 4 and 5 cover them. The short version: reply in under five minutes, follow up three times, and you're usually the only one who did.

The one most builders forget: old customers. Every client from the last five years is a referral and a future job. A twice-a-year check-in message, written for you, brings back extensions, decks and the neighbour's reno.

2. The leads you're not getting yet

- **Google Business Profile.** Most builder searches end in the map, not the website. Your profile needs 50+ reviews, weekly photos and a post a week. AI drafts the posts and the review replies.
- **Review requests on autopilot.** A text two hours after job completion, with the direct review link. No asking, no forgetting.
- **Referral partners.** Architects, draftspeople, real estate agents, mortgage brokers and the sparkies and plumbers on your jobs all send work if they remember you. A monthly check-in message to each of them, drafted for you, keeps you top of mind.
- **Directories with a purpose.** hipages and Airtasker are pay-to-play and everyone's on them. Use them to fill gaps, not as the plan.

What "lead qualification" means for you

Before you drive to a site visit, you want to know four things: what the job is, where it is, a rough budget, and when they want to start. An AI assistant on your phone or web form asks those four questions the moment someone enquires and puts the answers in your job system. You only ring back the ones worth ringing.

A builder doesn't have a lead problem. He has a follow-up problem wearing a lead problem's clothes.

RANKING ON GOOGLE

How a builder actually gets to the top of Google

Nobody is searching "best builder in Australia". They search "builders near me" at 7:40am, ring the first one that answers, and never look at page two. Local SEO for a builder is a map problem first and a website problem second.

The map pack (do this first)

- ☐ Claim and fully complete your Google Business Profile: every service listed, every suburb you cover, hours, licence number
- ☐ Get to 50 reviews, then 100. Ask every single customer, by text, same day
- ☐ Reply to every review within 48 hours. AI drafts it, you approve it
- ☐ Upload 3 to 5 real job photos a week. Phone photos, not stock
- ☐ Post once a week: a job, a tip, a before and after
- ☐ Same business name, phone and address everywhere online. Any mismatch costs you

The website (do this second)

- ☐ One page per service you want to be found for, not one page listing everything
- ☐ One page per main suburb or area you work in, with real jobs from that area on it
- ☐ Phone number tappable at the top of every page on mobile
- ☐ Loads in under 3 seconds on a phone. Test it on your own
- ☐ Answers the questions customers ask you on the phone. AI can turn your voice notes into those pages

What people actually type

SEARCH	WHAT THEY WANT
builders near me	Someone with a project, ready to talk this week
home renovation builder [suburb]	Reno client comparing three of you
extension builder [city]	High-value job, wants to see past work
deck builder [suburb]	Smaller job, price-driven, quick decision
licensed builder [suburb]	Insurance or council-driven, wants proof
how much does an extension cost [city]	Early research. The page that answers this gets the enquiry later

Build a page or a Google post around each of these. Use the words your customers use, not the words your supplier uses.

Where AI fits in SEO

It won't rank you. It removes the reason you never did the work: it drafts the suburb pages from your job notes, writes the weekly post from your photos, answers reviews, and keeps the whole thing running when you're flat out. The photos and the reviews still have to be real.

Google ranks the builder who looks busiest and most trusted in that suburb. Weekly photos and 100 reviews look busier than any website ever will.

MARKETING

Marketing that takes 20 minutes a week, not your Friday

You already make the best content in your industry every day. It's called your work. The only reason it never gets posted is that posting takes time you don't have. That's the exact job AI is for.

The 20-minute system

- 01 Monday to Thursday, on site: take one photo or a 10-second video per job. Before and after if you can. Send it to a WhatsApp group or folder with a one-line voice note.
- 02 Friday, 20 minutes: AI turns the week's photos and voice notes into a Google post, a Facebook post, an Instagram post and a review reply or two. You read them, fix anything that doesn't sound like you, hit approve.
- 03 Once a month: one longer piece. A common problem you fixed, explained the way you'd explain it to the customer. That becomes a website page and gets you found.

Posts that work for builders

- Week-by-week reno progress from one job, same angle every time
- The variation nobody expects: what a client asked for mid-build and what it cost
- 'What's behind the wall' reveals. Rot, old wiring, dodgy previous work
- A subbie shout-out with their business name. They share it, you both get found
- Cost breakdown of a finished job, in ranges. Honest numbers get shared
- The handover walk-through, client on camera if they'll do it

Rules that stop you sounding like every other tradie page

- Show the mess before the finish. Customers trust the before photo more than the after
- Name the suburb. "Bathroom reno in Belconnen" gets found. "Another great job" doesn't
- Explain one thing. What went wrong, why, what you did. That's the whole post
- Never post a stock photo. One real photo of your ute beats ten of someone else's
- Read every AI draft out loud once. If it doesn't sound like you at the counter, change three words

Your job photos are the marketing. AI is just the bloke who finally posts them.

START THIS WEEK

Your first 30 days

Most of this uses tools you already have. Don't buy anything new until week three.

Week 1: stop the bleeding

- ☐ Switch on missed-call text-back. Your job management software or a \$30/month tool does this
- ☐ Write your three quote follow-up messages once. Set them to send automatically at day 2, 5 and 10
- ☐ Set a review request text to send after every completed job

Week 2: get found

- ☐ Complete every field on your Google Business Profile
- ☐ Upload 10 real job photos. Reply to every existing review
- ☐ List every suburb you work in as a service area

Week 3: give your evenings back

- ☐ Start sending voice notes instead of typing job notes. Use AI to turn them into text in your job system
- ☐ Use AI to draft your quotes from a voice description of the job. Connect your supplier price lists so the materials line is priced on the day
- ☐ Get every subbie's insurance and licence expiry into one list with automatic reminders

Week 4: make it run without you

- ☐ Set up the 20-minute Friday content routine
- ☐ Put an AI assistant on your web form or WhatsApp to ask the four qualifying questions
- ☐ Measure: missed calls, quotes sent, quotes won, reviews. Four numbers, once a week

Tools worth knowing (we don't sell any of these)

JOB	OPTIONS BUILDERS USE	COST
Job management, quotes, invoices	Buildertrend, Buildxact, Tradify, ServiceM8, or a good spreadsheet and Xero	\$30 to \$150/mo
Missed call text-back, review requests, follow-ups	Your job software if it has it, otherwise a CRM like GoHighLevel or Podium	\$0 to \$100/mo
Voice notes to quotes, posts, replies	Claude, ChatGPT, or the AI inside your job software	\$0 to \$30/mo
Phone answering when you can't	AI receptionist (many options), or a human answering service	\$50 to \$300/mo
Connecting it all so it runs itself	Your job software's built-in automations first. Then Zapier, Make or n8n if you need more	\$0 to \$50/mo

Switching everything on yourself works if you've got a spare weekend and patience. Most owners get to week two and stall. That's normal. Pick the one fix worth the most to you, finish it, and only then start the next.

STEAL THESE

The messages. Copy them, change the name, send them.

Every system in this guide runs on a handful of texts. Here they are, written for a builder. Put them in your job software as templates and they send themselves.

Missed-call text-back (sends 20 seconds after a missed call)

Hi, it's [your name] from [business]. Sorry I missed you, I'm on a job. If it's urgent reply URGENT and I'll ring you within 15 minutes. Otherwise reply with your suburb and what you need and I'll call you back before 5.

Review request (2 hours after job done)

Thanks for having us today [first name]. If you were happy with the extension, a quick Google review helps us more than you'd think. Takes 30 seconds: [review link]. And if anything's not right, reply here first and I'll sort it.

Quote follow-up 1 (day 2)

Hi [first name], [your name] here. Just checking the quote for the extension came through OK. Any questions on it, ring me or reply here.

On the way

Hi [first name], [your name] from [business] here, I'm about 20 minutes away. See you soon.

Quote follow-up 2 (day 5)

Hi [first name], happy to run through the quote if anything's unclear, or I can pop past and walk through the staging and what's included. No pressure, just want to make sure you've got what you need to decide.

Weather or delay reshuffle

Hi [first name], the weather's knocked us around this week and the slab can't go in. I've moved you to [new date], [time]. If that doesn't work reply here and we'll find another slot. Sorry for the stuff-around.

Quote follow-up 3 (day 10)

Hi [first name], last one from me. We've got a spot open [week] if you'd like to lock it in, after that it's about three weeks out. If you've gone another way, no worries at all, thanks for the chance to quote.

Past customer re-engagement

Hi [first name], [your name] from [business]. We did the reno for you a while back. If you're thinking about the deck, the pergola or that extension you mentioned, our spring schedule is filling now. Reply if you'd like me to book it in.

Web form auto-reply (instant)

Thanks [first name], got your enquiry. So I can give you a straight answer fast: what the job is, where it is, a rough budget, and when they want to start? Reply here and I'll call you today.

BEFORE YOU GO

The short version, if you read nothing else

- 01** You're losing more jobs to a missed call than to a competitor. Switch on missed-call text-back today. It's the cheapest thing in this guide and the biggest.
- 02** The quote you never chased was the job you already paid for. Three follow-ups, written once, sent automatically. Page 11 has them.
- 03** Price the materials off today's prices, put a validity date on the quote, and stop paying for the difference yourself.
- 04** Your job photos are your marketing. One a day, posted on Friday in 20 minutes. Suburb in the caption.
- 05** Your past customers are your quiet months. A message on the right date, in your name, sent for you.
- 06** AI does the admin. It doesn't do the trade, the judgement or the cashflow. Anyone telling you otherwise is selling something.

Written by ORVX AI, the AI specialists for tradies.

If you'd rather not set it up yourself

Thirty minutes on the phone. You tell us where your week goes, we tell you which two things would move the needle for your business, roughly what they'd cost to wire up, and whether you should just do it yourself. If the answer is do it yourself, we'll say that.

Book a 30-minute call at orvxai.com

Or ring +61 2 5300 4038, or email hello@orvxai.com. We answer it.

The best builders we've met aren't the best at building. They're the ones whose paperwork is done by Thursday.