How to Choose an AI Assistant Without Paying for Three Tools That Do the Same Job

AI EDUCATION & BUSINESS APPLICATIONS • Issue 7 learning theme: Ask, Reason and Verify

Illustrative figures are not actual client results.

The business problem

A business owner subscribes to three AI assistants because each promises to save time. The business still spends hours checking inconsistent answers.

What business owners need to understand

Define the task before selecting a product. Research, drafting, data interpretation and automation require different evidence and controls. Compare the same real task in two tools, not two marketing pages.

How to apply it

1. Select a low-risk recurring task, such as drafting a customer FAQ from approved policies.
2. Write the same prompt and acceptance criteria for each tool.
3. Score factual accuracy, required corrections, ease of use, data protections and total monthly cost.
4. Have a human verify claims and decide whether to continue after 30 days.

Work through the numbers

Tool A costs $30/month and requires 3 hours of corrections. Tool B costs $45/month and requires 1 hour. At $25/hour, monthly total evaluated cost is $105 for A and $70 for B. The cheaper subscription is not the cheaper process. These are illustrative numbers.

Total evaluated cost = subscription + paid review hours × loaded hourly rate + other implementation and integration expenses.

What the financial statements reveal

Income statement: check recognized sales, direct costs, operating expenses and EBITDA. Balance sheet: check cash, receivables, payables and obligations created by the decision. Cash flow: verify when money actually arrives or leaves. A positive EBITDA change does not guarantee positive cash flow.

The CEO decision

Does the tool improve an actual business outcome? Is it approved for the information being entered? Can an employee explain and correct its mistakes?

Apply it to your business

Use three criteria—accuracy, privacy and total cost—to compare a task you already perform. Never upload confidential customer records into an unapproved service.

Your quick review

☐ What is the baseline measure?

☐ What will change and who owns it?

☐ What is the monthly cost?

☐ What is the expected EBITDA effect?

☐ What happens to cash, customer experience and risk?

Continue learning

Explore The Scaling Edge and the Across the Table Business Learning Center for more practical lessons on strategy, financial decisions, AI and business systems.

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