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OpenAI Just Nuked 100k Startups Overnight. Here's How Programmers Are Still Printing Money

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Ankit

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Remember when everyone said, “learn to code and you’ll never worry about money”? Yeah, well, OpenAI basically showed up to that party and flipped the table. One API release, and suddenly half the SaaS products I’d bookmarked were basically obsolete. Rough.

But here’s the thing — while everyone’s crying about AI taking jobs, some programmers are quietly banking more than ever. They just pivoted. Hard.

I spent the last few months digging into what’s actually working in 2025 (because I was also laid off by a startup), and honestly? The opportunities are wild. Just... different. No one’s getting rich building another to-do app anymore (RIP to my 2019 side project).

So if you’re a developer watching the AI wave and wondering “what now?” — this one’s for you. Let’s talk about 10 actual ways to make money that don’t involve the usual freelancing grind or applying to 500 jobs.

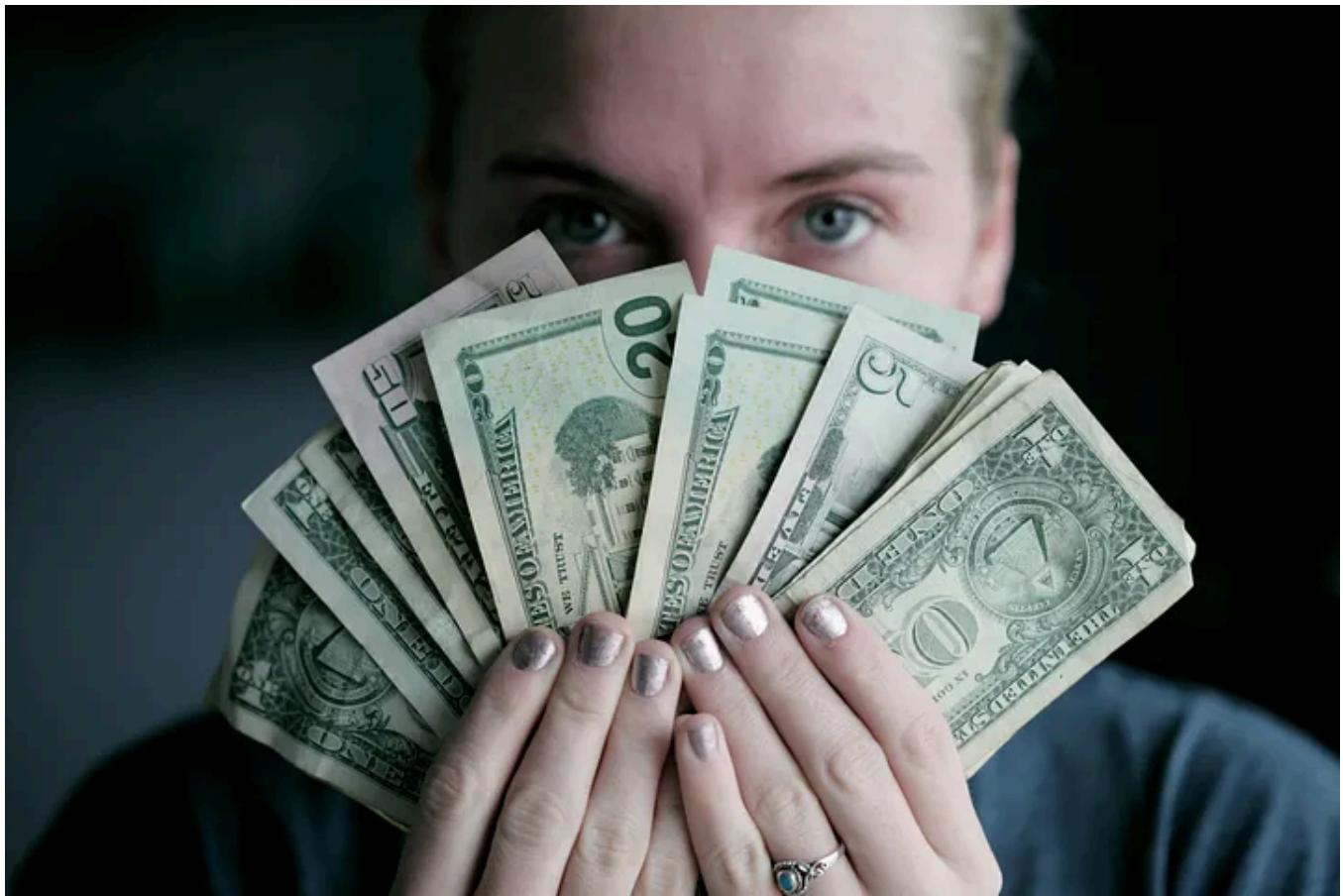


Photo by [Alexander Grey](#) on [Unsplash](#)

1. AI Wrapper Arbitrage (But Make It Smart)

Okay, hear me out. I know “AI wrappers” became a meme, but there’s still gold here if you niche down *hard*. The trick? Don’t build a generic ChatGPT interface. Build something so specific that OpenAI would never bother.

Think: AI tools for commercial beekeepers, or automated compliance checkers for Australian food truck regulations. The narrower, the better.

```
import openai
from flask import Flask, request, jsonify

app = Flask(__name__)

@app.route('/analyze-hive', methods=['POST'])
def analyze_hive():
    data = request.json

    prompt = f"""You're a beekeeping expert. Analyze this hive inspection data:
Temperature: {data['temp']}°F
Bee activity: {data['activity']}
Brood pattern: {data['brood']}"""

    Provide specific recommendations for next 7 days."""

    response = openai.Completion.create(
        engine="text-davinci-003",
        prompt=prompt,
        max_tokens=150
    ).choices[0].text
```

```
response = openai.ChatCompletion.create(
    model="gpt-4",
    messages=[{"role": "user", "content": prompt}]
)

return jsonify({"recommendations": response.choices[0].message.content})
```

Charge \$49/month. Beekeepers won't blink. There are 125,000 beekeepers in the US alone. You only need 50 customers to hit \$2,500/month. Math works.

2. Browser Extension Empire

Extensions are criminally underrated. People install them once and forget about them — which means recurring value without recurring sales effort.

I know a dev who built a LinkedIn auto-endorsement tool. Stupid simple. Makes \$8k/month from the Chrome Web Store. The secret? Solve one annoying thing really well.

```
// Simple example: Auto-format copied code from ChatGPT
chrome.runtime.onInstalled.addListener(() => {
  chrome.contextMenus.create({
    id: "formatCode",
    title: "Format as proper code block",
    contexts: ["selection"]
  });
});

chrome.contextMenus.onClicked.addListener((info, tab) => {
  if (info.menuItemId === "formatCode") {
    chrome.scripting.executeScript({
      target: { tabId: tab.id },
      func: formatSelectedCode
    });
  }
});

function formatSelectedCode() {
  const selection = window.getSelection().toString();
  const formatted = `\\`\\`\\`\\n${selection.trim()}\\n\\`\\`\\`\\`;
  navigator.clipboard.writeText(formatted);
}
```

Monetize with a freemium model. Basic features are free, advanced stuff behind a \$5/month paywall.

3. Micro-SaaS for Specific Platforms

Shopify has 4.6 million stores. WordPress powers 43% of the web. Notion has millions of power users. Each platform is an ecosystem begging for tools.

Build a Shopify app that auto-generates product descriptions using AI but trains on the store's existing copy voice. Or a Notion widget that syncs with your GitHub commits. Platform-specific tools have built-in distribution.

```
// Notion API integration example
const { Client } = require("@notionhq/client");

const notion = new Client({ auth: process.env.NOTION_KEY });

async function syncGithubCommits(databaseId, commits) {
  for (const commit of commits) {
    await notion.pages.create({
      parent: { database_id: databaseId },
      properties: {
        Name: { title: [{ text: { content: commit.message } }] },
        Date: { date: { start: commit.date } },
        Repo: { rich_text: [{ text: { content: commit.repo } }] }
      }
    });
  }
}
```

List it on their marketplace. They handle discovery. You handle building.

4. API-as-a-Service for Annoying Problems

There are *so many* things that should be simple API calls, but aren't. Web scraping that handles anti-bot protection. PDF parsing that actually works with tables. Image background removal at scale.

I built an API that converts messy Excel files to clean JSON. Sounds boring? It makes \$3k/month because data engineers hate dealing with Excel chaos.

```

from fastapi import FastAPI, UploadFile
import pandas as pd

app = FastAPI()

@app.post("/excel-to-json")
async def convert_excel(file: UploadFile):
    df = pd.read_excel(file.file)

    # Auto-clean common issues
    df.columns = df.columns.str.strip()
    df = df.dropna(how='all')
    df = df.fillna('')

    return {
        "data": df.to_dict(orient='records'),
        "columns": df.columns.tolist(),
        "row_count": len(df)
    }

```

Start with 100 free calls/month, then \$0.01 per call after. Businesses don't care about pennies.

5. AI Prompt Libraries & Templates

Everyone's using AI now. Nobody's good at prompting. Sell pre-built, battle-tested prompts for specific use cases.

I know someone selling a \$97 prompt pack for real estate agents. It includes 50 prompts for property descriptions, email sequences, social media posts. They made \$40k in the first month.

Create a simple site with Stripe integration:

```

const stripe = require('stripe')(process.env.STRIPE_SECRET);

app.post('/purchase-prompts', async (req, res) => {
    const session = await stripe.checkout.sessions.create({
        payment_method_types: ['card'],
        line_items: [
            {
                price_data: {
                    currency: 'usd',
                    product_data: { name: 'Real Estate AI Prompts' },
                    unit_amount: 9700,
                },
            },
        ],
    });
    res.json(session);
}

```

```

        quantity: 1,
    }],
    mode: 'payment',
    success_url: 'https://yoursite.com/download',
    cancel_url: 'https://yoursite.com/cancel',
});

res.json({ id: session.id });
});

```

The beauty? Zero maintenance after sale.

6. No-Code Automation Consulting (With Code Behind It)

Companies are obsessed with Zapier, Make.com, and n8n. But they hit walls fast. That's where you come in.

Offer to build custom nodes, fix broken automations, or create hybrid solutions (no-code front, actual code backend for complex stuff).

Charge \$150/hour for consultations, \$5k-\$15k for custom implementations.

```

# Custom n8n node example - webhook processor
from n8n import Node

class CustomWebhookProcessor(Node):
    def execute(self, items):
        processed = []
        for item in items:
            # Complex logic that no-code can't handle
            data = item['json']

            # Example: Advanced data transformation
            result = {
                'original': data,
                'processed': self.complex_transform(data),
                'timestamp': time.time()
            }
            processed.append(result)

    return processed

```

Most businesses would rather pay you \$10k once than hire a full-time dev.

7. AI Content Detector Defeater Tools

Controversial? Maybe. Profitable? Absolutely. Academic and marketing teams need humanized AI content. Build tools that rewrite AI text to pass detection.

Not promoting dishonesty — but the market exists. \$29/month subscriptions add up.

```
import anthropic

def humanize_text(ai_text):
    client = anthropic.Anthropic(api_key="your-key")

    prompt = f"""Rewrite this text to sound more natural and human:
{ai_text}

Make it conversational, add personality, vary sentence structure."""

    message = client.messages.create(
        model="claude-sonnet-4-5-20250929",
        max_tokens=1024,
        messages=[{"role": "user", "content": prompt}]
    )

    return message.content[0].text
```

Pair with a simple UI and market to content teams.

8. Specialized AI Training Data Services

Companies training custom AI models need quality data. Badly. If you can scrape, clean, and structure niche datasets, you can charge serious money.

Example: A dev friend scraped and cleaned 500k medical research abstracts. Sold the dataset to a healthcare AI startup for \$85k.

```
import scrapy
from scrapy.crawler import CrawlerProcess

class MedicalPaperSpider(scrapy.Spider):
    name = 'medical_papers'

    def parse(self, response):
        for paper in response.css('div.paper-item'):
            yield {
                'title': paper.css('h3::text').get(),
```

```
'abstract': paper.css('p.abstract::text').get(),
'keywords': paper.css('span.keyword::text').getall(),
'date': paper.css('time::attr(datetime)').get()
}
```

Legal, ethical scraping of public data. Package it well. Sell it once or license it.

9. Subscription-Based Code Review Service

Developers are paranoid about security and code quality. Offer automated + human code reviews as a subscription.

\$199/month for weekly automated scans + monthly human review. Target startups with 2–10 developers.

```
from github import Github
import ast

def analyze_python_repo(repo_url):
    g = Github(access_token)
    repo = g.get_repo(repo_url)

    issues = []
    for content_file in repo.get_contents(""):

        if content_file.name.endswith('.py'):
            code = content_file.decoded_content.decode()

            # Basic security checks
            tree = ast.parse(code)
            for node in ast.walk(tree):
                if isinstance(node, ast.Call):
                    if hasattr(node.func, 'id') and node.func.id == 'eval':
                        issues.append(f"Unsafe eval() in {content_file.name}")

    return issues
```

Scale it with AI to handle more repos, keep a human touch for detailed reports.

10. Vertical-Specific AI Chatbots

Generic chatbots suck. Industry-specific ones that actually know domain context? Pure gold.

Build chatbots for: dental offices, law firms, HVAC companies, yoga studios. Train them on industry knowledge, integrate with their existing tools.

```
const OpenAI = require('openai');
const openai = new OpenAI({ apiKey: process.env.OPENAI_API_KEY });

async function dentalChatbot(userMessage, patientHistory) {
  const completion = await openai.chat.completions.create({
    model: "gpt-4",
    messages: [
      {
        role: "system",
        content: `You're a dental office assistant. Be professional, empathetic
Patient history: ${JSON.stringify(patientHistory)}`
      },
      { role: "user", content: userMessage }
    ]
  });
  return completion.choices[0].message.content;
}
```

Charge \$299-\$999/month per business. Get 10 clients, that's \$3k-\$10k monthly.

• • •

Look, OpenAI did kill a lot of businesses. But they also created space for new ones. The developers making money right now aren't building what worked in 2022. They're building what solves 2025 problems.

The pattern I'm seeing? **Specificity wins.** Generic tools die. Hyper-focused solutions that save someone 5 hours a week? They'll pay forever.

Also, distribution matters more than code quality now. A decent tool with great marketing beats a perfect tool nobody knows about. Every. Single. Time.

My advice? Pick one idea from this list. Build an MVP in a weekend. Get it in front of 100 potential users within a week. If 10 show interest, you might have something.

And if you're stuck on the technical side or want to dive deeper into building sustainable income streams as a dev, I've written about productizing your skills and automating client acquisition before — it's all about creating systems that work while you sleep.

The AI era isn't killing programmer income. It's just rewarding different skills. Adapt fast, stay specific, and ship relentlessly.

Now go build something.

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Responses (12)





Bgerby

What are your thoughts?



Anshuman Sinha he

1 day ago

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Disruption creates winners and losers overnight. The programmers still thriving show that adapting fast, leveraging new tools, and finding niches matters more than ever. Innovation never waits.



6



1 reply

[Reply](#)



TechHarry

3 days ago

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Great article — thanks for sharing this perspective. I especially liked how you unpacked AI wrappers as more than a meme — when niche enough, they actually hold value. Curious: which one of your “10 ways” do you think has the highest upside (with the lowest risk) right now?



6



1 reply

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Simple Stack

19 hours ago

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Just a friendly reminder that OpenAI is still not yet profitable to this day (Oct 11 2025)

The earliest forecast indicates up until 2029.

In 2024, OpenAI reportedly lost \$5 billion on its \$3.7 billion in revenue.

The company expects to continue this trend, with a projected cash burn of \$8 billion in 2025.



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