

 FOR SUBSCRIBERS

# 7 Founders On Their Simple AI Fixes For Common Business Problems

AI can be used to streamline and supplement all kinds of processes that have long frustrated business owners. Here are a few examples.

BY **RACHEL DAVIES** EDITED BY **FRANCES DODDS** JUL 16, 2024

**Share** 



*Nicolás Ortega*

**A** I is transforming businesses in unexpected ways. From solving recruitment challenges to enhancing customer service, we asked seven founders to share the simple AI fixes that made all the difference in their companies.

## **AI helps with recruiting.**

[Recruiting](#) used to be a major pain point for Barge Design Solutions, an engineering and architecture firm based in Nashville, Tennessee. "There's never been such a thing as a people pipeline," CEO Bob Higgins says. "We don't have 10 people waiting for every job we post — we have to go find them." Then Higgins wondered if AI could help.

He and his HR team overhauled the company's entire recruiting process over a few weeks. Using [OpenAI's ChatGPT](#), they made job postings as search-friendly and appealing to job-seekers as possible. They also used ChatGPT to update their interview questions, and used a proprietary AI tool to search for external candidates that shared characteristics with the

firm's top-performing employees.

The new process was a resounding success. Consider this comparison: Before the AI overhaul, Barge tried to fill an open role — and after reviewing 111 applicants, just five were referred for interviews. None were hired. After the AI overhaul, they got more than 250 applicants for a role, 118 were referred for interviews, and five were hired. "For the first time in my career, there are 14 other people in the pipeline that we can call back when the next position is posted," Higgins says.

## **AI improves customer service.**

Like most flower delivery companies, UrbanStems is busiest around Valentine's Day and Mother's Day. The company's [customer service](#) team is usually overwhelmed with inquiries around those dates, says CEO Meenakshi Lala, so UrbanStems hires seasonal help — but those temporary workers just can't work as fast or well as the brand's regular employees.

What to do? The company had been using Zendesk's customer experience software for years, so when [Zendesk](#) added AI, UrbanStems gave it a shot.

Prior to the AI enhancement (which costs extra), customer requests went straight to agents — who would then collect all necessary information about the order themselves. Now customers first engage with a chatbot that collects the info before directing people to an agent for the meatier tasks. This shift has led to both speedier interactions and customers resolving their issue with the bot before needing to speak with a human. Within three months of implementation, UrbanStems saw a 39% reduction

in tickets. This was "huge" for the business, she says.

## **AI improves inventory planning.**

Harper Wilde, a bra company based in Los Angeles, understands the headache of managing stock. The complexity of bra fit requires a huge range in sizing, which is why, when accounting for type, size, and color, the company has more than 3,000 product variations. This complicates tracking which items to stock up on, and which are likely to sell slowly. "We are always trying to de-risk our buys," says Izzy Chafkin, Harper Wilde's vice president of finance and operations. But it hasn't been easy.

That's why, when Chafkin heard about [Singuli](#), **an AI-based inventory management platform**, she thought it might be just what they needed. The platform has proven especially useful at both the highest and lowest levels of planning. On the granular end, Singuli has saved time when determining how many of each size of each product Harper Wilde needs to order. More broadly, Chafkin appreciates the platform's demand forecasts as an impartial, conservative second opinion. "Planners are some of the most data-driven, unbiased people, but they're still social beings in an organization," Chafkin says. "The things that planning and marketing and Singuli all agree on, I feel like I can stop thinking about."

## **AI engages customers.**

After squash players step off the courts at Bay Club Santa Clara in California, they have the same question that every athlete does: *How'd I*

do? Now, AI has answers.

Half the courts are outfitted with a [Live Sports AI system](#), which, since April 2023, uses facial recognition to identify each player and sends videos of their matches to the Live Sports AI app on their phone. Their coach, if they have one, gets the footage too. AI then analyzes the recordings to calculate how many calories they burned, how many shots they hit, and other data points. That information feeds a leaderboard at the club, which displays player names and icons along with their key stats. Members vie to be in the top three for the day and the top 10 for the week. And all of this is possible with barely any extra effort from club members or staff, because it's entirely automated.

The club's squash director, Jonathan Perry, thought the tech would encourage younger players the most, but he's seen enthusiasm across demographics — casual and professional, young and old. "It really engages our members in a positive way," Perry says. The Bay Club's executive vice president of sports, Todd Kramer, adds that tournament players from other regions have been expressing their excitement to compete at the Bay Club because of all the helpful data they get, so the company will soon be rolling out Live Sports AI at other locations. "Our players are re-engaging in the sport in a new way," Kramer says.

## **AI saves time coding.**

The email company Superhuman already offers AI to its customers. It makes an email platform designed to tame people's inboxes, and has many AI enhancements. But the company also wondered: *Could AI be used behind the scenes, to streamline our team's workflows?*

**ChatGPT** and **GitHub's AI coding assistant, [Copilot](#)**, have become important assets for the Superhuman team. ChatGPT helps engineers choose the best software architecture and technology, a process that can involve weighing upwards of a dozen options. Copilot, meanwhile, operates from within the codebase, answering context-specific questions about sections of code and even saving engineers from having to write test code on their own. "That's one use case that the coding tools really, really help with," says Chris Bee, Superhuman's chief technology officer. "Just the raw amount of time that it takes to do things is greatly reduced."

## **AI creates mockups.**

Before using [generative AI](#), the team at Small Girls PR typically presented their campaign and event ideas to clients via mockups made in Photoshop or within Google Slides. It was the cost-conscious choice, even though their preliminary in-house work looked "pretty amateur," admits managing director Erica Mayyasi. They rarely created 3D renderings because doing so required external resources.

But now, with [Midjourney](#) and **Microsoft Designer's Image Creator tool**, the company is regularly using AI to generate photorealistic references, whether they're for client decks, ideation, or new business pitches. "We've been blown away with what we're able to do with these AI tools that are free," Mayyasi says. Now, Small Girls PR can align more quickly internally and with clients, while conveying ideas effectively and confidently. "We are able to do presentations that are significantly more impactful," says Mayyasi. Once the team and their clients are on the same page, the creatives at Small Girls PR can work on making their AI-assisted vision a reality.

## **AI makes tedious tasks easier.**

Would couples use AI to help plan their wedding? That's what wedding planning and registry company Zola wanted to know when it asked 7,000

customers earlier this year. The response: 54% said yes or maybe. "We realized there was a huge opportunity to address common friction points for couples," cofounder Shan-Lyn Ma says. The company has since launched two AI-enabled tools to assist couples before and after their weddings.

For the planning phase, Zola has a **custom-built AI tool — powered by ChatGPT-4 — called [Split The Decisions](#)**, that aims to help determine which partner is best suited to handle each pre-wedding task. The GPT ultimately crafts a game plan that splits the work equally. When the party's over, there's an AI-powered thank-you-note generator that pulls information from the guest list and gift tracker to create personalized notes for each attendee. "We've received overwhelmingly positive feedback across Instagram and TikTok, as well as our Zola inbox," Ma says.

---