Find ROI in AI

How Small Businesses Can Leverage AI in Design & Development

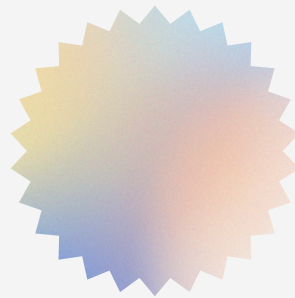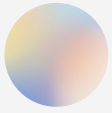# Table of contents

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Introduction

Should I pay attention to this AI thing?

If you're serious about running a successful business, you've probably wondered by now, "Should I pay more attention to this AI thing?" We're here to say two things: 1. Absolutely. 2. It's not as complicated as it seems.

We get it. Navigating the whirlwind of new tech trends as a business owner can feel like investing in the stock market: ultimately unpredictable, intimidating, and high risk. So, is AI just another fleeting fad that'll drain your resources, or is it the amazing tool everyone says it is?

Let's take a look at statistics

40%
more productivity with the use of AI tools

Source: Accenture

61.4%
of small business marketers have used AI

Source: Influencer Marketing Hub

$15.7 trillion
AI will add $15.7 trillion to the world's economy

Source: PWC

90%
Over 90% of small business owners credit AI for boosting their success

Source: Constant Contact

60%
of small businesses that currently use AI or automation in their marketing say they have saved time and are working more efficiently.

Source: Constant Contact

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Let's cut to the chase: AI is changing the game across industries, and any entrepreneur who's not benefitting from it is losing out and risking falling far behind the competition.

We're here to give you the lowdown on how you can most effectively integrate AI into your day to day processes, boost productivity, and unlock stuck resources.

We'll be covering:

- What AI means for small businesses in simple terms;
- How you can leverage AI in design & development to grow your business;
- Some quick tips & tricks to get you started the right way;
- Success stories that will inspire you to start your own AI transformation.

Let's go!

How did AI get to this point?

Don't worry, we won't take you back to the birth of AI back in the '50s. We'll start when it became most relevant to you as a business owner: the release of ChatGPT in late 2022.

When ChatGPT, unarguably THE most widely used AI chatbot, caught on like wildfire, a million other AI tools cropped up. Almost overnight, Artificial Intelligence made its mark as a transformative force across various industries, departments, and roles. **Design and development were no different.**

Beyond the drama that AI's here to snatch your clients, here's the truth: AI needs specialized skills to be employed fruitfully. Your business is only threatened by AI if you don't use it.

In the dynamic space of design and development, AI has emerged as a truly transformative tool. **It's not just about crafting designs or generating code faster, but about deepening our understanding of the user experience with data-driven insights.** AI acts as a powerful assistant, offering design options, optimizing user interfaces, predicting user behavior — and this is just the beginning.

For the visionary entrepreneur, AI is the catalyst that can elevate design and development from great to groundbreaking. As small businesses step up to claim a bigger slice of the pie, integrating AI into our daily activities offers unparalleled potential for growth, innovation, and strategic advantage.
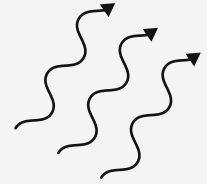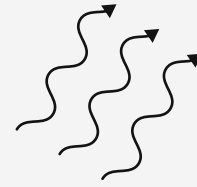
Convinced?

Great. Now let's dive into how you can
apply it to your business.
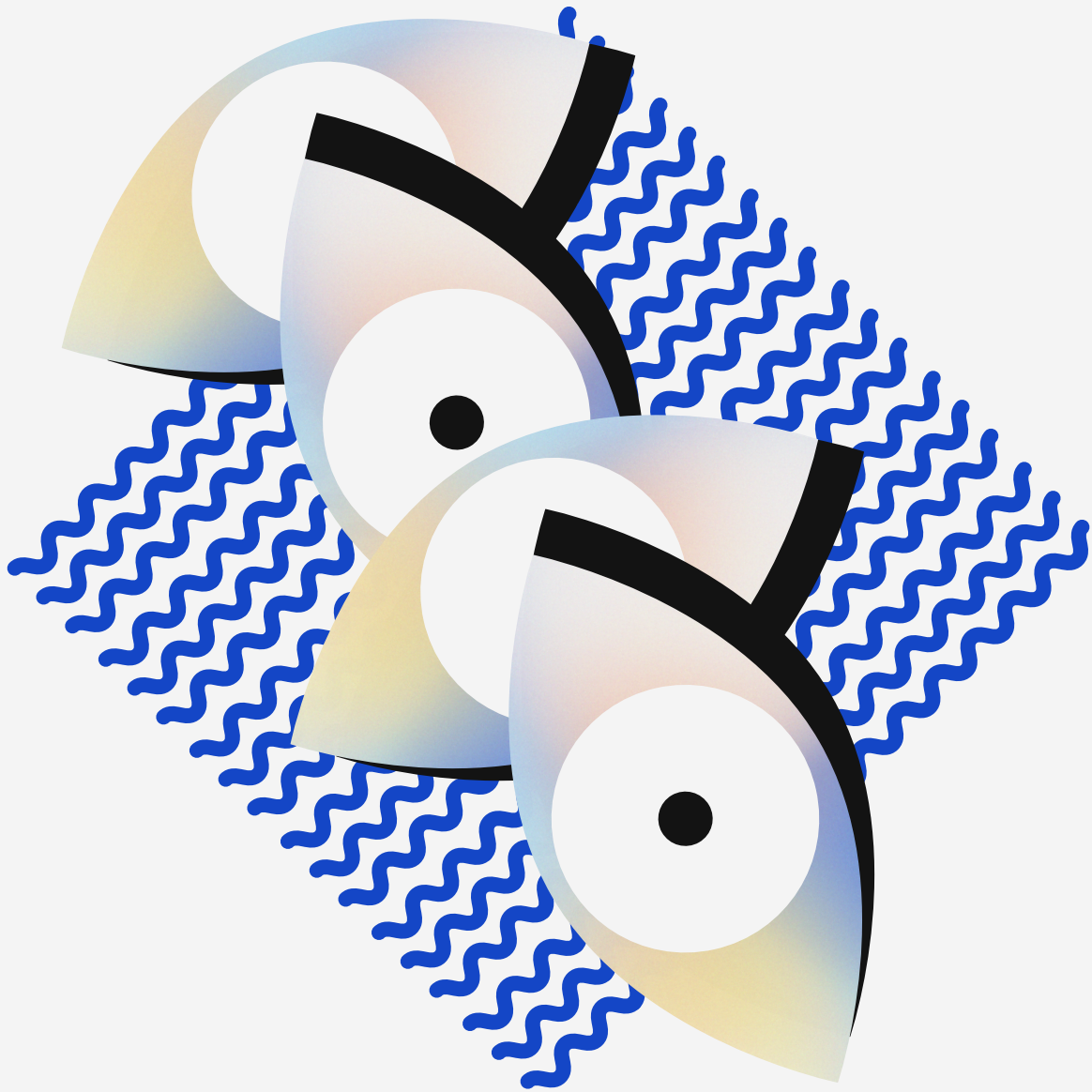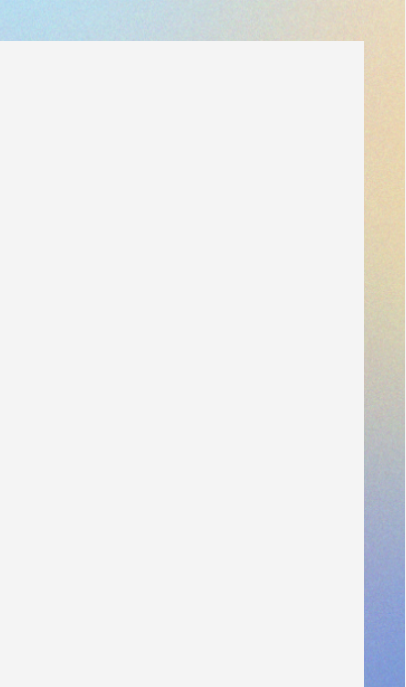
Let's dive deeper!

What are the highest impact ways small businesses use AI today?

You might be wondering what are the highest ROI areas for you to implement AI. Adopting new tech takes time, effort, and resources — so you wouldn't want to waste any of it on something that won't do much in return. In this section, we'll explore pragmatic ways small businesses are putting AI to work today to get all departments running like a well-oiled machine.

Certain AI tools can generate a more nuanced understanding of your audience's behaviors and preferences, enabling you to craft tailored content strategies and get more clients, more easily. By predicting customer journeys and understanding persona complexities, you'll be able to engage potential clients more effectively, without the headache.

Oak Theory's top choice

MARKETMUSE ↗

Our no.1 recommended AI tool for this purpose is MarketMuse — it evaluates your entire website to provide tailored, clear insights, enabling you to plan your marketing activities more effectively and efficiently.

Pinpointing market trends and identifying budding consumer preferences isn't just an educated guess anymore. AI can arm you with this valuable insight at the blink of an eye, enabling you to craft product offerings that deeply resonate with your audience. It's never been easier to ensure that the unique offering you bring to the market is both relevant and in-demand. And when you add this to an AI-powered competitor analysis... Now you're **really** in business.
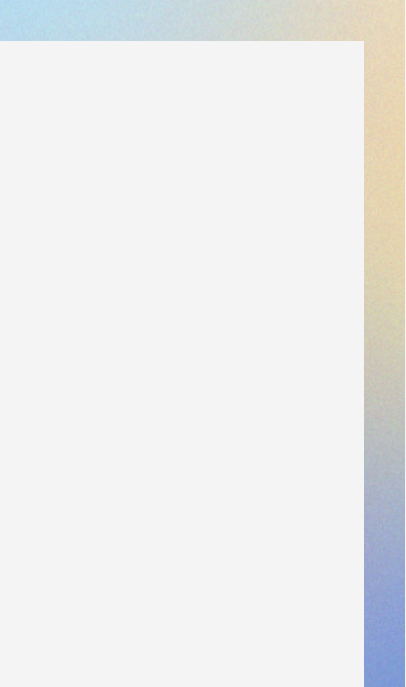
Oak Theory's top choice

SEMRUSH ↗

The best tool to achieve this is Semrush; as a complete marketing suite, SEMrush has long since become more than just SEO. Their AI marketing tool offers a Content Marketing Toolkit that provides excellent insight into what's trending — and yes, they also feature 7 tools that will give you that helpful competitor analysis.

Operational efficiency is the backbone of a successful company. As small businesses don't have that many hands on deck, we can use all the help we can get! AI can automate repetitive or tedious tasks, freeing up valuable resources to generate more revenue. Integrating AI into project management tools can lead to streamlined workflows and optimized productivity, ensuring you avoid any relationship-damaging oversights.

Oak Theory's top choice

THINKTASK ↗   **TASKHEAT** ↗

We actually have two top choices here. ThinkTask claims to boost work productivity by 10x while spending 50% less time on task management tools — in our experience, we've found that claim to be pretty much accurate. Task Heat, our second choice, is a visual to-do list tool that offers an AI-assisted task flow generation feature. We highly recommend it.
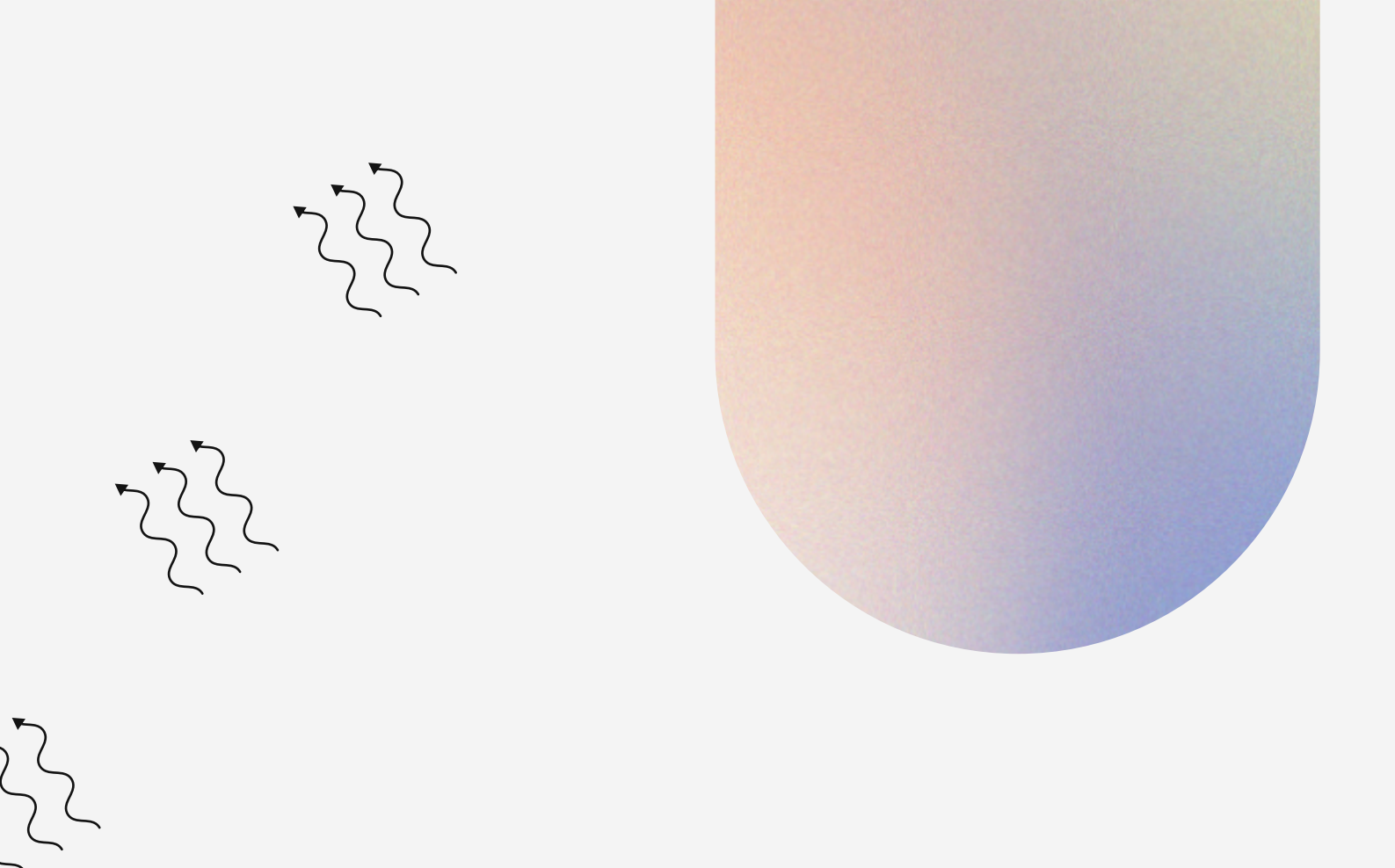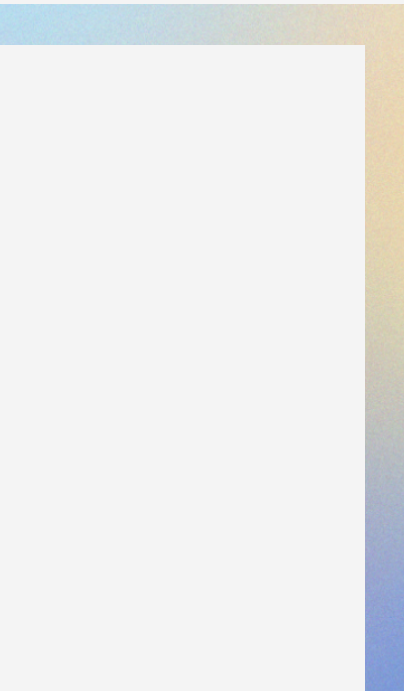
What's the most efficient way to harness AI in Design & Development?

You and your team have invested so much time in developing your skills and settling into your processes — starting to integrate AI into that perfectly layered cake can feel wrong and overwhelming. What if you break something, or make things more difficult for little gain?

Let us guide you on how to harness AI power efficiently in design and development, without getting lost in the technical labyrinth or feeling like you're disrupting your well-honed processes.

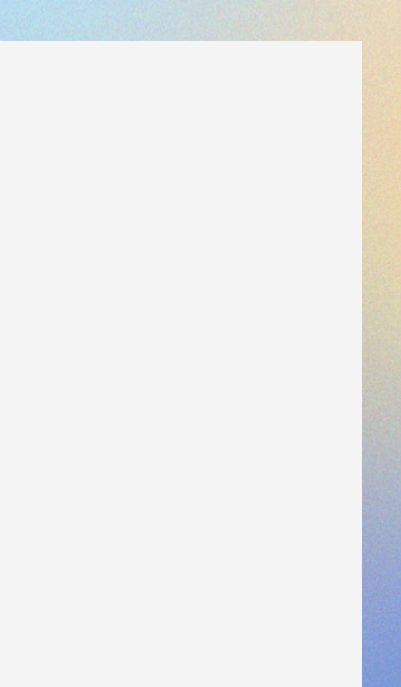Using AI, we can delve into user data, getting a clear picture of what users want and how they behave. This isn't just numbers; it's about understanding their preferences and obstacles. From this knowledge, we craft designs that truly speak to the user. Moreover, with predictive models, we're not just reacting but anticipating, ensuring our designs resonate in the present and will align with our business objectives in the future.

Oak Theory's top choice

UIZARD ↗

We ultra-recommend Uizard, a game-changing AI tool for UX/UI designers. The feature we love the most is its generation of predictively-designed layouts based on recent design trends. It can also take your design ideas and use machine learning to turn them into polished, professional-looking interfaces. Need we say more?

2. INCREASE YOUR SPEED OF OUTPUT
WITH AUTOMATED DESIGN TOOLS
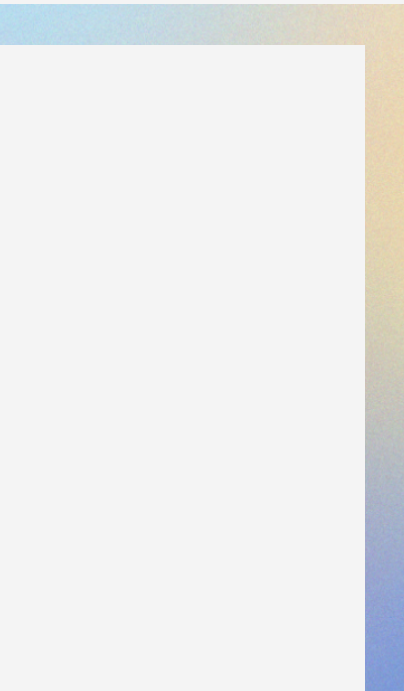
From creating innovative logos to generating instant mockups, AI accelerates the design process, making it more efficient and dynamic. You can use it most effectively in that first brainstorming stage, when the client needs to see a few different options that you wouldn't want to invest a massive amount of time into.

Oak Theory's top choice

DESIGNS.AI ↗

Our top recommendation for automating designs is Designs.ai. It's an all-encompassing AI-powered design toolkit, swiftly automating and generating personalized designs based on user preferences.

People want to feel understood, and personalization is a key part of creating that impression through design — but it can get complex, costly, and unfeasible. With AI, we can easily pick up on their digital cues and offer content that hits the mark every single time, for every single user.
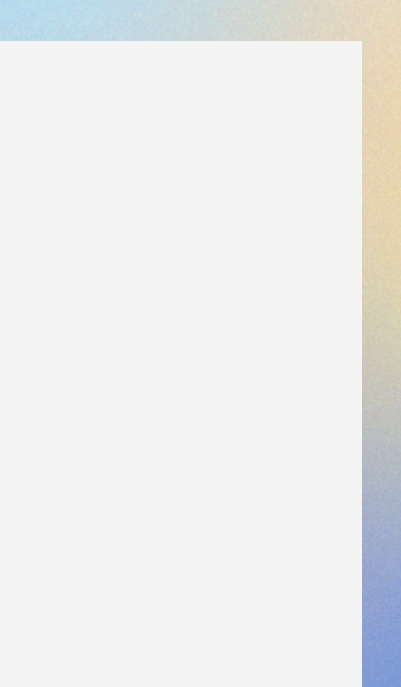
Oak Theory's top choice

SENSEI ↗

Sensei by Adobe is a great choice to enhance personalization, helping choose the best-performing experience to achieve design goals. Big-name companies successfully use it to create a direct link from customer intelligence to personalized experiences that are valuable and relevant.

Staying relevant means more than just creating content; it's about curating the right content and making sure people can easily find it. AI tools come to the rescue by refining our content strategies and supercharging our SEO efforts. This way, businesses don't just keep up; they stand out, remaining both competitive and relevant.

Oak Theory's top choice

GROWTHBAR ↗

GrowthBar is the #1 top rated all-in-one content writing and SEO AI tool — and we see why. An AI-powered content generator that does the job 10x faster compared to conventional processes, GrowthBar has everything brands need to dominate their niche.
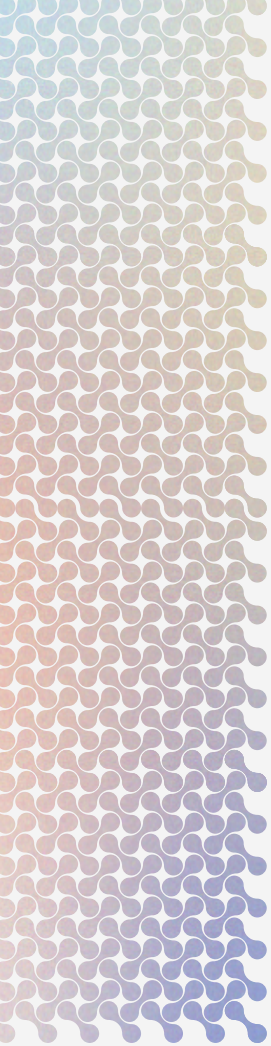
What does your AI-powered future look like?

All that being said, let's take a step back. You now have an overview of the opportunities AI offers small businesses like yours, and the areas which could be enhanced by it. In this section, we'll help you keep your head level and figure out where AI fits best for your business, so that you step into your AI-powered future in a way that is sustainable and impactful.

Before delving into AI, you and your team must identify areas that would benefit the most from its integration. This self-awareness ensures that AI investments align with business objectives and goals and you avoid sinking time and resources into something that doesn't quite fit your company.

Here is a quick checklist for you, as a starting point.

☑ **ASSESS YOUR CURRENT CHALLENGES**

Where does your business struggle most? What does your team need help with?

☑ **GATHER CLIENT FEEDBACK**

What improvements have your clients suggested in the past? Is it possible to do a survey now and discover the highest priorities?

☑ **TEAM WORKLOAD CHECK**

Is your team feeling overwhelmed with any tasks? Is it possible to use AI to simplify them?

☑ **GET REAL ABOUT POTENTIAL AI PITFALLS**

Are there areas where AI might do more harm than good if not thoughtfully implemented? Are there any areas you would prefer to keep fully human-operated?

Step 1

☑ **ALIGN WITH BUSINESS GOALS**

Does the AI solution match your company's objectives? Is it sustainable in the long run, and is your entire team invested in the process?

☑ **CHECK RESOURCE ALLOCATION**

Ensure you've got the resources you need to implement the AI — it can be a time-consuming process in the beginning, so make sure you don't overwhelm your team with an extra task they don't have time to take on properly.

☑ **SECURE BUDGET ALLOCATION**

Although a lot of tools range around $15 per month, some of them can get expensive. Plan ahead of time and make sure you have enough budget to cover your priority tools.

2. CHOOSE THE RIGHT TOOLS

Venturing into the world of AI can be confusing, especially when there are so many tools to choose from; but don't just jump in and get the tool that seems right or that has a lot of buzz around them. It's crucial to do your research and select the ones that fit your objectives.

We highly recommend starting with the AI tools we suggested throughout this whitepaper, and if you have any questions, please feel free to email us at **hello@oaktheory.co**.

For any area of the business you want to enhance with AI, there usually are at least a dozen tools you can choose from. Often, tools have functionality that overlaps with other tools, so make sure you don't double up on the same capabilities and waste the money.

Step 2

3. NEVER STOP BEING A STUDENT

AI is a field that never stops growing, so it's essential to keep learning and adapting. By connecting with experts, like the team at **Oak Theory**, you can navigate the complexities and ensure you're always at the forefront of an industry that evolves at breakneck speed. Embrace the change, and you'll find your business grows in step with the latest advancements!

Step 3

How AI worked for other small businesses

AND WHY YOU SHOULD GET EXCITED.

Small businesses all over the globe have seamlessly incorporated AI into their design and development strategies, leading to tangible results. A recent survey by Constant Contact has revealed staggering statistics which anecdotal information only strengthens. These success stories can serve as beacons of inspiration, showcasing the transformative power of AI when utilized strategically.
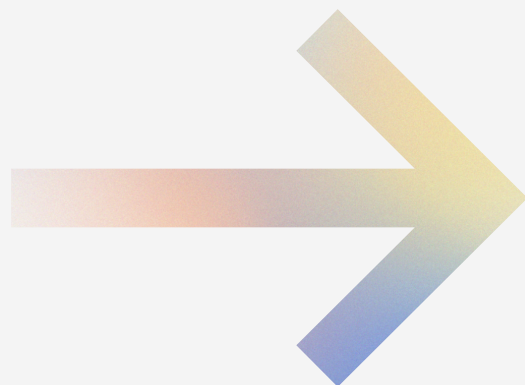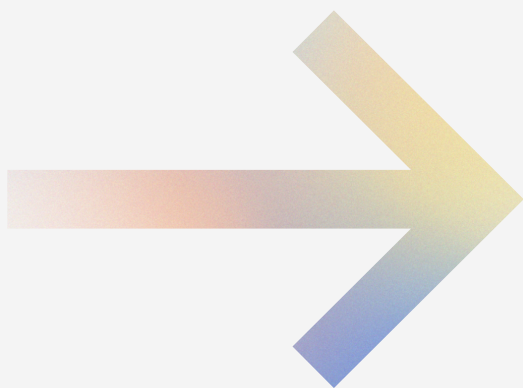
How Mira took on more clients and increased her revenue

Mira, an independent graphic designer, noticed a spike in potential clients reaching out, but was burdened with ongoing projects which prevented her from responding to new business enquiries. She turned to **ChatGPT** to reply to incoming leads and, once they were further down her sales funnel, to create detailed proposal decks. Once she secured them as new clients, she even used **Designs.ai** to automate her initial designs. This allowed Mira to focus on fine-tuning the designs in the final stages, thus increasing her project turnover by 60% and enhancing client satisfaction.

01

Case Study

How Rewarded Web Studios differentiated themselves on the market

As an emerging web development agency in a dog-eat-dog market, Rewarded Web Studios constantly sought ways to differentiate themselves, but few of them resonated with their authentic voice. When they discovered the power of AI-driven user experience optimization, they decided to utilize **ChatGPT** for real-time site assistance. Through this tool, they provided instant support, guiding visitors through complex processes and ensuring smooth navigation. Going further, they used **HubSpot's** AI features to better understand audience preferences and to fine-tune the studio's marketing strategy. This pivot to AI-enabled services attracted a new clientele, positioning their studio as a frontrunner in AI-integrated web development.

02

Case Study

How Nexus UX Studio used AI to deal with a demanding client efficiently

Nexus UX Studio, a boutique design studio, faced a challenge familiar to many small businesses. They were over the moon to win a fast-growing e-commerce client, but their decision-making board proved to be difficult early on, rejecting mock-ups without much feedback and demanding more options within a short time frame. To address this, Nexus harnessed AI tools like **Uizard**, which could quickly turn basic sketches into interactive prototypes, and **Designs.ai** to offer a broad spectrum of graphic elements tailored to the client's brand. The combination enabled Nexus to present an array of high-quality design options in record time. The board was impressed by both the speed and the quality of their work, ultimately selecting a design unanimously.
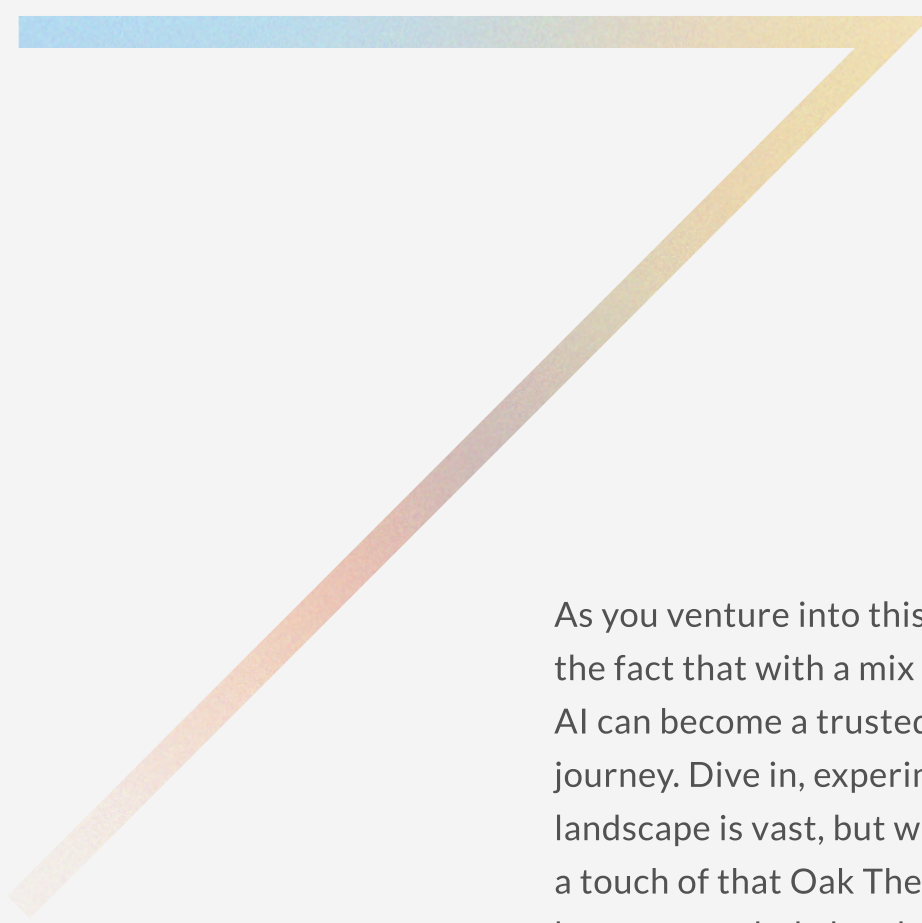
03

Case Study

Wrapping up

AI is amazing, right?

Navigating the maze of AI in design and development might have felt a tad overwhelming at first glance. We hope it now seems lighter, clearer, and more exciting. Because it should!

Throughout this report, we've touched on the transformative power of AI – from turbocharging your marketing strategies to completely reimagining product design. We've seen firsthand stories of small businesses that have transformed their paths using AI.

The key? Knowing where you need the most help, picking the right tools for the job, and always being open to learning more.

As you venture into this brave new world, take solace in the fact that with a mix of innovation and persistence, AI can become a trusted partner in your business journey. Dive in, experiment, and remember: the AI landscape is vast, but with the right guide (and perhaps a touch of that Oak Theory magic), the path to success becomes a whole lot clearer.

So, as we wrap things up, remember: AI isn't just a tool; it's a catalyst. Ready to change the game? Let's explore this area together and redefine what's possible.

About Oak Theory

At Oak Theory, we're more than just a design studio — we're a testament to the power of AI in propelling small businesses forward. As a women of color owned and operated entity, we've navigated the same waters you're in now.

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In just 4 years, by strategically using AI, we've grown from a small collective of creatives to an established studio serving industry giants like Disney, HBO, and Sephora.

We understand your aspirations because we've been there. Partner with Oak Theory, not just as experts in AI and digital design, but as fellow small business advocates.

Reach out for a complimentary consultation, and let's carve out a future where your business can not only keep up, but thrive and lead the way in the emerging AI landscape.

References &
Further Reading

Constant Contact, 'Constant Contact Research Reveals Small Businesses Who Use AI Are More Likely To Save Money And Be Successful'

U.S. Chamber Of Commerce: 'How AI Is Leveling The Marketing Playing Field Between SMBs And Big Business'

Forbes, 'How Artificial Intelligence Is Helping Today's Small Businesses'

Harvard Business Review: '3 Ways Small Businesses Can Use AI To Drive Growth'

Forbes, 'Small Businesses And Their CEOs Are Starting To Find Success With AI'

Marketing AI Institute, 'Artificial Intelligence For Small Business: The Complete Guide'

Entrepreneur, 'How Small And Mid-Sized Businesses Can Leverage AI To Compete With Large Companies'

Influencer Marketing Hub: 'Top 12 AI Graphic Design Tools To Boost Your Efficiency'

UX Planet: '15 AI Tools Every UI/UX Designer Must Try'

Thank you!

Your team might've already found AI tools that pertain to their role. A smart thing to do is to ask them if they found anything valuable and if they would benefit from you getting them the pro subscription.

Switching tools can be frustrating for the team, so if they've already found one they're comfortable with that also fits your objectives, it's usually more sustainable to take their recommendation.

Bonus tip