



How to jump start small business growth **using AI**

INTRODUCTION

A practical guide for smart marketing and sustainable success

Small business growth has always required smart decisions, consistent execution, and a deep understanding of your customers. Today, artificial intelligence (AI) adds a powerful new advantage to that equation.

AI is no longer reserved for enterprise brands with massive budgets or data science teams. Modern AI-powered tools are designed specifically for small businesses — helping you save time, uncover insights, personalize marketing, and grow more efficiently with ease.

This ebook is designed to help you understand how AI fits into your day-to-day operations and how to use it to accelerate growth. Whether you're just getting started with AI or already experimenting with automation and analytics, you'll find practical guidance you can apply right away.

In this guide, you'll learn:

- ✓ What AI really means for small businesses (without the jargon)
- ✓ How AI improves marketing, customer engagement, and decision-making
- ✓ Which tools and tactics deliver the biggest impact
- ✓ How to get started confidently and scale over time

THE OPPORTUNITY

What AI can do for small businesses

At its core, AI helps businesses work smarter by analyzing data, automating repetitive tasks, and delivering insights faster than manual processes ever could. For small business owners juggling multiple responsibilities, this means less guesswork and more clarity.



Marketing Automation

Triggering the right messages at the right time



Customer Engagement

Responding faster and more personally across channels



Analytics and Insights

Turning data into clear, actionable takeaways



Operational Efficiency

Reducing manual work so teams can focus on high-value tasks

Rather than replacing human expertise, AI enhances it. **It gives you better tools to make confident decisions.**



IN PRACTICE

Common ways small businesses use AI

Small businesses are already using AI in practical, everyday ways, including:

- ✓ Automating follow-ups, reminders, and appointment confirmations
- ✓ Creating and personalizing marketing content
- ✓ Predicting demand and identifying revenue opportunities
- ✓ Analyzing customer behavior and engagement trends
- ✓ Using AI-powered CRM features to surface next-best actions

These tasks don't require advanced technical knowledge, just the right tools and a clear strategy.

AI IN ACTION

From guesswork to confident decisions

A fitness studio owner regularly sends emails and posts but lacks insight into what drives bookings and renewals. AI analyzes engagement, identifies inactive members, and highlights top-performing messages, enabling targeted follow-ups and data-driven decisions that increase conversions without manual tracking or time-consuming spreadsheet analysis.



THE FULL JOURNEY

AI across the marketing funnel

AI has the greatest impact when it supports the entire customer journey:



Awareness

AI helps identify where your audience is most active and which messages resonate



Consideration

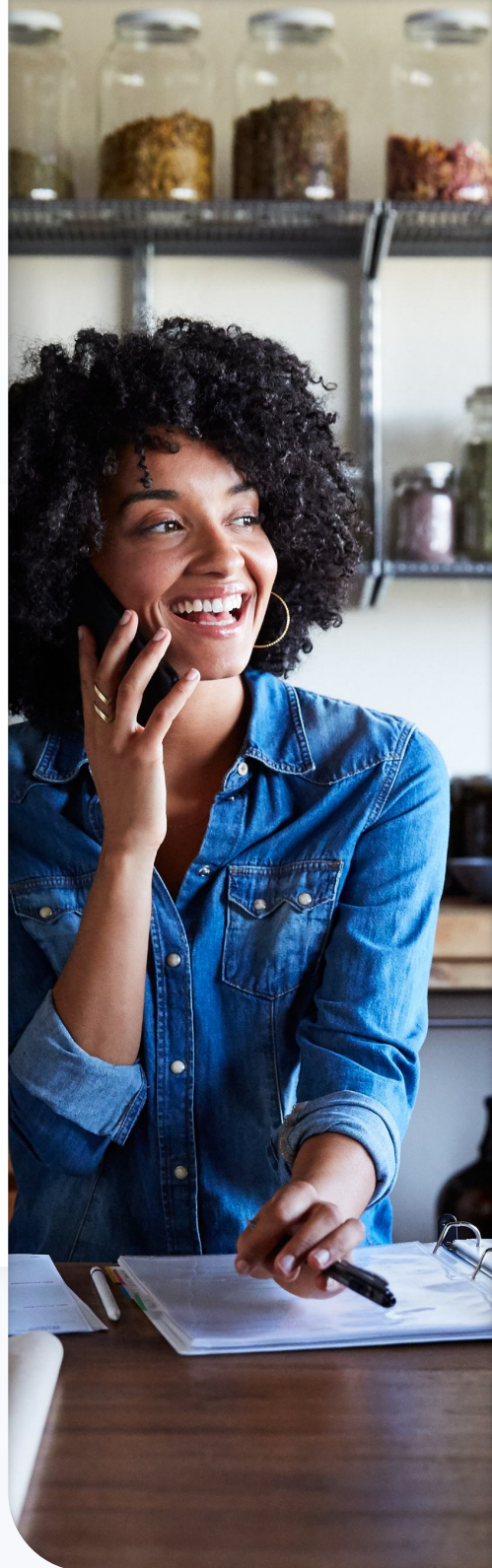
Personalized content and automated nurturing keep prospects engaged



Conversion

Smart timing, optimized offers, and follow-ups increase close rates

Instead of static campaigns, AI enables “living” campaigns that learn and adapt based on real customer behavior.



BUILD THE PLAN

Creating an AI marketing blueprint

Before adopting new tools, it's important to align AI with your business goals. Your AI marketing blueprint should include:

- ✓ Clear objectives (lead growth, retention, efficiency, revenue)
- ✓ Defined KPIs to measure success
- ✓ Priority channels based on where your customers engage
- ✓ A plan for testing, learning, and improving over time

When AI is tied directly to outcomes, it becomes a growth driver — not just a shiny new feature.

AI IN ACTION

One campaign, many personalized paths

A home services business struggles to tailor seasonal promotions to different customers. AI segments audiences by behavior and engagement, delivering personalized messages through the right channels and continuously optimizing campaigns for better results without manual updates.

IN PRACTICE

Audit: What to keep, replace, and add

Many small businesses already use tools that include AI features, but those features often go underutilized.

Start with a simple audit:



1

Which tools save you time today?



2

Where are manual processes slowing you down?



3

Are your systems connected, or operating in silos?

This evaluation helps you identify gaps in automation, analytics, and content creation, helping to avoid unnecessary overlap.

YOUR TECH STACK

Essential AI tools for small businesses

A strong AI-ready tech stack often includes:

- ✓ A CRM with built-in AI automation and insights
- ✓ AI-assisted content creation tools
- ✓ Marketing dashboards that surface trends and opportunities
- ✓ Chatbots or automated messaging for lead capture and customer support

The goal isn't more tools, it's smarter tools that work together.

AI IN ACTION

Simplifying tools without losing capability

A salon owner juggles disconnected tools for scheduling, reviews, and marketing, creating inefficiencies. An AI-powered, integrated system centralizes operations, automates follow-ups and review requests, and surfaces insights, reducing manual work while providing a clearer view of the business.

RELEVANCE, NOT WORKLOAD

Personalize at scale

Customers expect relevant, timely communication. AI makes personalization possible without adding workload.

By using CRM data and behavioral insights, AI can:

- ✓ Segment audiences automatically
- ✓ Trigger personalized messages based on actions
- ✓ Adjust messaging to feel human and relevant
- ✓ The result is marketing that feels thoughtful, not automated.

AI IN ACTION

Streamlining consistent content creation

A small business owner struggles to consistently create enough content to stay visible across channels. AI streamlines ideation, drafting, and repurposing by turning one core idea into blogs, social posts, emails, and promotional copy, ensuring consistent, on-brand content without the time and effort of creating everything from scratch.



LESS BUSYWORK

Automate customer interactions

Automation ensures customers receive fast, reliable responses, while your team focuses on higher-value conversations.

AI-powered tools can help you:

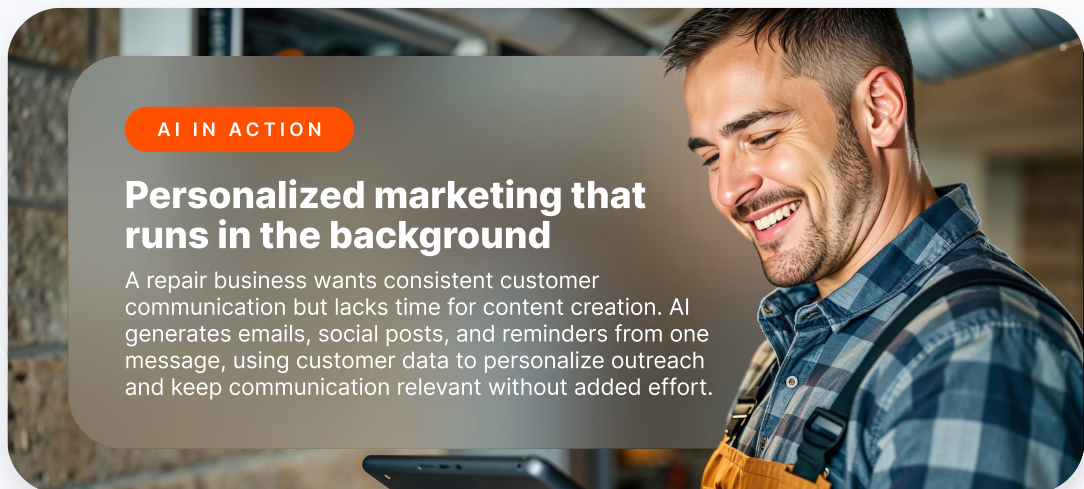
- ✓ Request and respond to reviews
- ✓ Answer common questions
- ✓ Qualify leads before they reach your team

Deliver smarter campaigns with testing

Instead of relying on assumptions, AI highlights what performs best so you can optimize continuously.

AI simplifies testing by automatically evaluating:

- ✓ Subject lines
- ✓ Messaging variations
- ✓ Creative formats and offers



AI IN ACTION

Personalized marketing that runs in the background

A repair business wants consistent customer communication but lacks time for content creation. AI generates emails, social posts, and reminders from one message, using customer data to personalize outreach and keep communication relevant without added effort.

KNOW WHAT'S NEXT

Using customer insights to drive growth

AI doesn't just collect data — it helps you understand what that data actually means for your business and what to do next.

Instead of relying on assumptions, AI analyzes patterns across your customer interactions to surface clear, actionable insights. You can quickly see which customers engage most often, which services or products lead to repeat business, and where potential revenue is being left on the table.

Growth becomes intentional — not accidental.



PLAN AHEAD

Forecasting demand with AI

AI-powered forecasting analyzes historical data and real-time signals to anticipate demand changes.

This allows you to:

- ✓ Plan promotions strategically
- ✓ Allocate resources more efficiently
- ✓ Avoid reactive decision-making

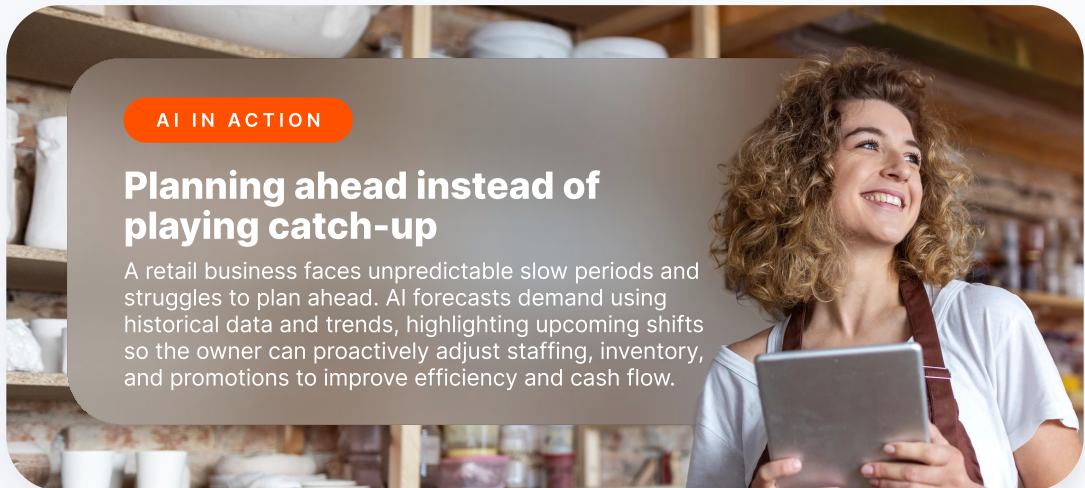
Proactive planning leads to steadier growth and fewer surprises.

Building an insightful dashboard

AI-driven dashboards track the metrics that matter most, **including:**

- ✓ Lead volume and sources
- ✓ Conversion rates
- ✓ Revenue by service
- ✓ Customer retention and churn

With real-time visibility, you can spot trends early and act quickly.



AI IN ACTION

Planning ahead instead of playing catch-up

A retail business faces unpredictable slow periods and struggles to plan ahead. AI forecasts demand using historical data and trends, highlighting upcoming shifts so the owner can proactively adjust staffing, inventory, and promotions to improve efficiency and cash flow.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Your AI growth roadmap

AI gives small businesses the ability to compete, adapt, and grow with confidence. By starting with clear goals, choosing the right tools, and balancing automation with authenticity, you can turn AI into a sustainable growth engine.

The future of small business growth isn't about working harder — it's about working smarter.

Expanding AI adoption

If AI feels overwhelming, start with quick wins:

- ✓ Automate one repetitive task
- ✓ Test AI-assisted content creation (blog, email, social media caption etc.)
- ✓ Use analytics to uncover one new insight

Ready to jump in?

Book a Thryv demo now!