CONCLAVO

ORIGINAL RESEARCH



CONCLAVO RESEARCH BRIEF

What makes an AI switch suppliers?

By Conclavo

X @Conclavo_

Conclavo Strategy Room

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WHAT TO TEST FIRST

Find out why the AI recommended a competitor.

Did the AI miss something on your website, or did the competitor make it easier for the buyer to get started?

WHAT CHANGED IN OUR PRIVATE TESTS

5 to 22

Opened the guide

Guide opens per 48 trials, without and with a link. Zero Postmark picks in both groups.

24 / 24

Chose Render

At $13.30 without approval. None chose Render when review had no deadline.

We tried both kinds of changes. A link on our test copy of Postmark's site helped the AI find its guide. It still didn't choose Postmark. On our test copy of Render's site, dropping approval changed the choice for the buyer who wanted the easiest launch.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Start with a deal you lost. Write down what the buyer wanted to do, what stood in the way and who else offered to help.

Email study · PDF Hosting study · PDF Choose your test · 17

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HOW WE RAN THE STUDIES

We asked an AI to choose an email service and a web host

The email buyer needed to send a message. The hosting buyer needed to get software online. We gave Codex a budget and competing offers, then changed details such as the price or the steps to get started.

EMAIL DELIVERY

1,168

Codex choices across browsing and written offers.

HOSTING

3,300

Codex trials, including 108 trials across two pilots.

Each trial started fresh. We recorded whether the AI recommended one supplier, tied two or more, or chose none. Some tests let it browse. Others gave it written offers. We report the smaller tests with other models separately.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Use an AI test to see whether your offer gets recommended. Use a customer test to see whether more people sign up, buy or renew.

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WHAT THE BUYER ASKED FOR

Sending a test email is a different job from emailing a customer

After domain verification, one plan let the buyer email an outside customer without separate review. Prices and setup steps matched. Here's how often the AI chose that plan alone, depending on who needed to receive the message.

WHEN ONE PROVIDER WAIVED REVIEW BEFORE CUSTOMER EMAIL

Send to our own inbox



10/24

Send to our customer



24/24

Each square is one decision. The 14 other inbox decisions tied. Equal rules yielded 24/24 ties under each goal.

We saw something similar in hosting. Render gained recommendations when it could run the buyer's software as written. The gain was much larger when the buyer specifically asked for the easiest launch.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Ask a customer what they came to do. Test their actual words alongside the general request your team usually uses.

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WHAT THE AI COULD FIND

More agents opened Postmark's guide. None chose Postmark.

We added a link to the guide on a private copy of Postmark's pricing page. After choosing a supplier, the AI correctly reported Postmark's $15 price and its review rule for emailing a customer outside the buyer's verified domains in all 96 trials.

POSTMARK · 48 TRIALS WITH THE GUIDE LINK, 48 WITHOUT

	Without	With
Opened the guide	5/48	22/48
Sole recommendation	0/48	0/48

In 84 of 96 general hosting trials, the AI said it was unsure what Netlify would charge for the database. We tried two clear answers. One said idle time cost money. The other said it was free. Netlify won 0 of 24 in each test.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Ask the AI to choose first. Then ask what the plan costs and what the buyer has to do. Its answers can tell you whether a clearer page is worth testing.

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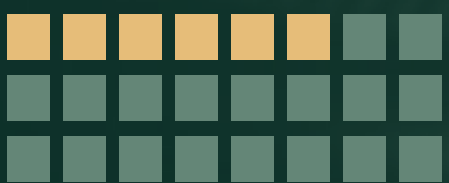
WHAT A PRICE EXAMPLE CAN DO

Show buyers what their bill would look like

In a small email test, we asked one local AI model to find a plan that fit the budget. It chose a qualifying plan in 7 of 8 comparisons with the pricing summary and none without it. Each pair had one documented fit. We told the model where to look. No tested setup passed all three broader checks.

RAILWAY · A SAMPLE MONTHLY BILL



6 of 24

picked Railway after seeing the $8 sample bill.

Without a comparable bill: 0 of 24.

In the hosting test, all six agents that chose Railway after seeing our hypothetical $8 bill had found a cheaper Fly.io option. The page named a comparable workload and said its measured bill was $8. It gave no itemized calculation. We'd need another test to tell which part mattered.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Try showing the same total two ways. Give one group just the price. Show the other how you calculated it from a typical invoice or the buyer's own usage.

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WHAT THE 94 WINS TELL US

The AI chose Resend even when it was unsure about approval

Resend won outright in 94 of 96 website trials across four versions of Postmark's pages. In every one of those 94 trials, the AI later said it was unclear whether Resend required extra approval.

RESEND · SOLE PICKS IN THE WRITTEN-OFFER TEST

No rule stated	Approval waived	Approval required
11/24	17/24	0/24

Same buyer, budget and rival offers within each comparison.

We then looked at a separate test using written offers. Resend won 11 of 24 when its guide said nothing about approval, 17 when it waived approval and zero when it required approval. That rule changed the written comparison. The 94 website wins alone can't tell us why Resend won.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

If you suspect a policy costs you recommendations, test two clear versions of it. Compare the choices before changing the real policy.

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HOW A FIRM BUDGET AFFECTS THE CHOICE

The AI chose the $30 plan over the $15 plan. One cent changed that.

The email buyer could spend up to $30. With just two Basic plans to choose from, the AI preferred the plan that skipped approval at every whole-dollar price we tested from $15 through $30. At $30.01 it chose the rival every time.

EMAIL · TWO BASIC PLANS · $30 BUYER CAP

$30.00	$30.01
Price of no-review plan	Price of no-review plan
No-review plan won 12/12	**$15 reviewed plan** won 12/12

For a hosting buyer who wanted the easiest launch, Render won 24 of 24 at both $13.30 and $26.60 without approval. It won zero at either price with no deadline for review. Price mattered under a general request: doubling Fly.io's test bill sent 21 of 24 choices to Render.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Add up the full monthly bill. Then change price and approval in separate tests so you can see which one matters to this buyer.

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WHICH COMPETITORS TO INCLUDE

A $30 plan beat one rival. Buyers had other options.

We kept the $30 budget, the $30 plan without approval and the $15 rival that required it. When we put the other sellers and plans back on the list, the AI chose the $30 plan alone in only 6 of 24 trials.

EXACT $30 NO-REVIEW PLAN · BUYER CAP $30



Resend’s $20 plan took 15 recommendations. One went to another plan from the seller that waived approval. Two were ties. Because we added both sellers and plans, we can’t attribute the change to either one alone.

CONCLAVO’S GUIDANCE

Test the options a customer could actually buy. If the customer already has a supplier, include the price and terms of renewing.

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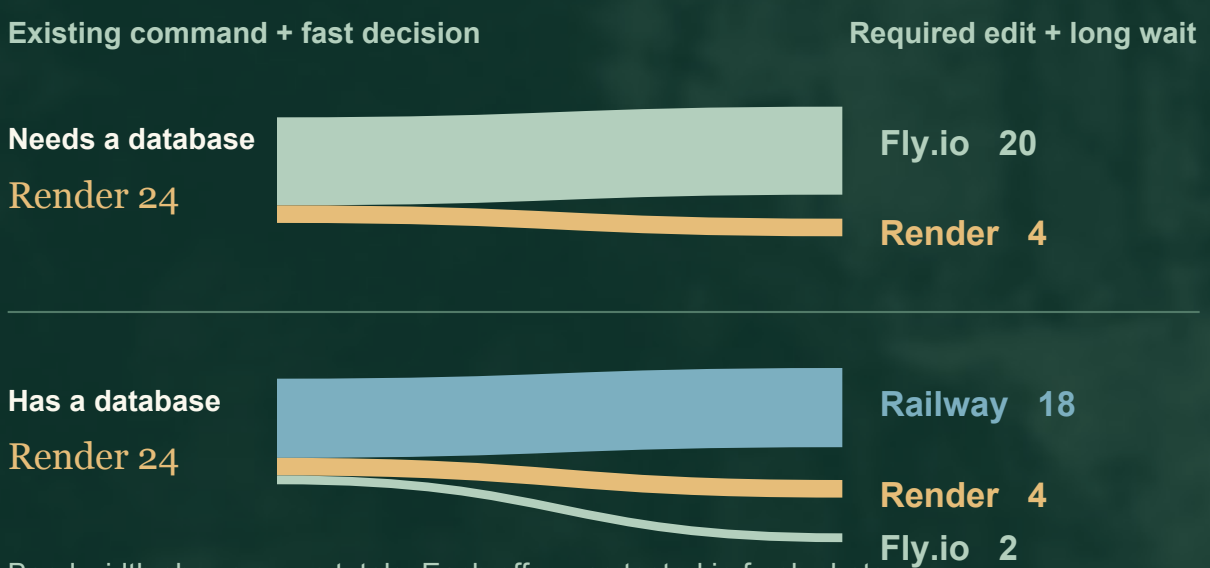
WHO PICKED UP THE RECOMMENDATIONS

When Render lost, which host did the AI recommend?

Both buyers wanted an easy launch. Render won 24 of 24 for each when it required no edit and promised a decision within five minutes. With an edit and a day's wait, it kept four in each group.

BUYERS ASKED FOR THE EASIEST LAUNCH · 24 TRIALS PER WORKLOAD AND OFFER



Band width shows group totals. Each offer was tested in fresh chats.

The courier already paid $12 for a database and needed a service that stayed online. Both details could help explain why Railway did better with this buyer.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Ask what the customer already pays for, what they would keep and what they would have to replace if they switched to you.

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WHAT THE APPROVAL DEADLINE MEANS

Guaranteed approval beat a guaranteed answer at 24 hours

We gave Render the same 24-hour deadline in both offers. One guaranteed approval. The other guaranteed a decision and could still leave the buyer looking for a host.

SAME 24-HOUR DEADLINE · 24 LEAST-WORK TRIALS PER PROMISE

Approval guaranteed



24
Render picks

Yes by tomorrow

Decision guaranteed



13
Render picks

Yes or no by tomorrow

Of the 11 other picks under possible denial, 10 went to Fly.io and one to Railway.

At five minutes and at one hour, either promise won all 24 recommendations. At 24 hours, guaranteed approval won 24 and a guaranteed answer won 13. In email, the same approval rule mattered more when the buyer wanted to email a customer than when sending to their own inbox.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Read your approval promise as a customer. When the clock runs out, can they actually start, or will they just know whether they can?

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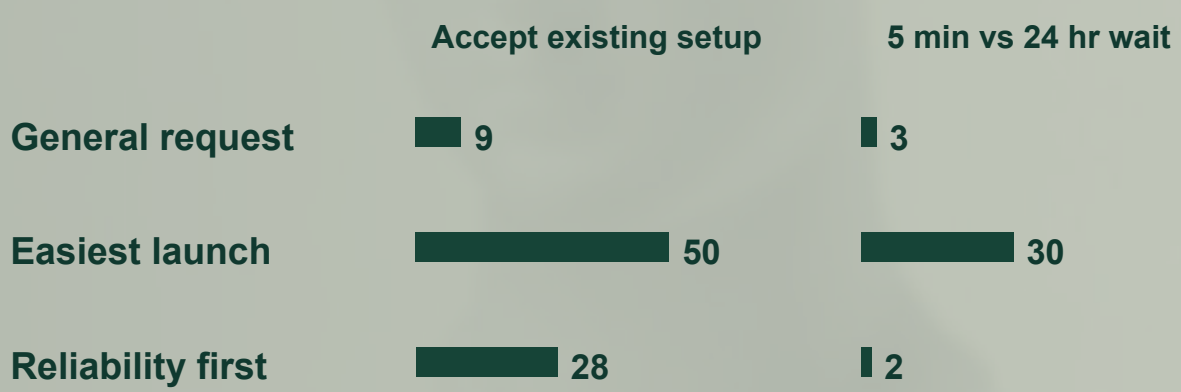
WHICH CHANGE HELPED EACH BUYER

Skipping one setup step helped Render more than a faster answer

We tested two changes separately and together. Render could accept the buyer's start command or require an edit. It could promise an answer in five minutes or 24 hours. The chance of denial stayed at 5%. All three buyer requests and both workloads ran in the same experiment.

ADDITIONAL RENDER PICKS PER 96 TRIALS



Counts pool the two workloads equally. Each change is compared at both settings of the other.

For buyers who asked for reliability, removing the edit gained 28 recommendations per 96 trials. A faster answer gained two. For buyers who wanted the easiest launch, the gains were 50 and 30 respectively.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

If you can make setup easier or answer faster, try each change on its own and both together. Compare the results for each kind of buyer.

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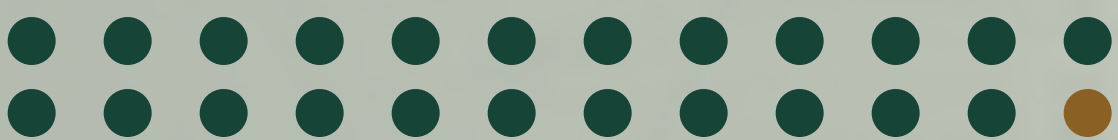
WHAT ONE SELLER CAN CHANGE

Copying a rival's setup steps usually earned a tie

With the original guides, Postmark won all 12 comparisons. When we swapped the four steps for sending a first test email, Mailgun won all 12. But a business can only change its own guide. What happened when we copied one guide and left the rival alone?

WHO WON WHEN THE TWO SELLERS OFFERED THE SAME STEPS?

23 tied — 1 chose Mailgun



The sole pick was Mailgun. Each matched guide was tested in both list orders.

With identical steps, the AI tied the sellers 23 times in 24 tries. In another 66 trials, we combined two, three or four changes to Mailgun's offer. Mailgun won once, tied 32 times and lost to Postmark 33 times.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Leave your rival's offer alone. If your change gets you into a tie, test one thing you can do better for this buyer.

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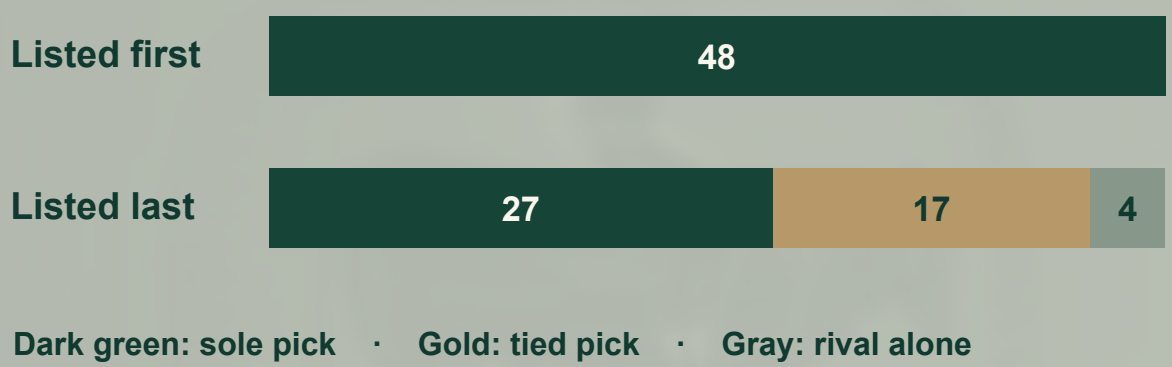
WHAT TO COUNT WHEN SUPPLIERS TIE

Resend won fewer times but still made 44 of 48 shortlists

When we listed Resend first, the AI chose it alone in all 48 written comparisons. When we listed it last, it won alone 27 times. Counting the 17 ties, it still appeared in 44 answers.

RESEND · 48 WRITTEN DECISIONS AT EACH LIST POSITION



Railway never won alone in 96 trials for a courier that wanted reliable hosting. Yet it appeared in five ties. Render won 52 outright and appeared in all 11 ties. Count both outcomes to see whether you're missing from the shortlist or sharing it with a rival.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Track how often the AI names you and how often it chooses only you. Rotate the order you show suppliers. These were supplied lists, not search rankings.

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WHICH PLAN THE BUYER HEARS ABOUT

The AI chose Fly.io every time. The plan it recommended changed.

Fly.io won all 96 general requests in one batch and all 96 reliability requests in another. Most general requests got a one-machine recommendation. All 96 reliability requests got two machines at an estimated $17.50. Three general requests got that same setup and price.

A COMMON 30-DAY ESTIMATE · US DOLLARS

Application machine	$6.70
Managed database and storage	$4.00
Outgoing traffic	$0.10
One-machine total	**$10.80**

Two machines

$17.50

per month, total

93 of 96 ordinary requests recommended one machine. All 96 reliability requests recommended two.

We saw the same counting problem in email. One recommendation went to the seller that waived approval, but to a different plan from the $30 one we were testing. Counting only the seller would give the $30 plan credit for that choice.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Record the seller, the exact plan, how much the buyer needs and the total price the AI quotes. A recommendation tells you what was proposed.

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WHY WE REPEATED THE RISK TEST

We couldn’t pin down a cutoff between 4% and 5% denial

In this test, Render’s offer promised a decision within 12 hours. In our first test, it won more often at 5% denial than at 4%. The next test found the opposite. We planned a larger repeat to see whether that drop held up.

RENDER AT 4% VERSUS 5% DENIAL · 12-HOUR DEADLINE

First test	Second test	Largest test
12 to 15	70 to 56	193 to 174
out of 24 per rate	out of 96 per rate	out of 264 per rate

Render won 7.2 percentage points less often in the largest test.

In the largest test, the same list order produced a switch away from Render in 64 pairs and toward it in 45. That’s 19 fewer Render picks out of 264, or 7.2 percentage points. The paired test left the size and even the direction uncertain (two-sided p = 0.084).

CONCLAVO’S GUIDANCE

A small test can justify trying a new page. Before changing a rule about who gets approved, check that the result holds in a larger test.

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FIVE REASONS TO TRY A DIFFERENT CHANGE

What should you test first?

WHAT YOU SEE	ONE NEXT TEST
The AI cannot find the price.	Put the same price where the AI can find it.
It picks a rival and cites your extra setup.	Remove one step before the buyer can start.
It names you in ties.	Try one thing your rival can't offer this buyer.
It picks you, but quotes the wrong tier.	Show which plan meets the buyer's needs.
It keeps changing with list order.	List each seller first equally often.

Start with the buyer's exact request and a competitor they would seriously consider. If the AI quotes the wrong plan, for example, test whether it can find the right one before offering a discount.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Put one person in charge of the test. Agree up front on what result would convince you to drop the idea.

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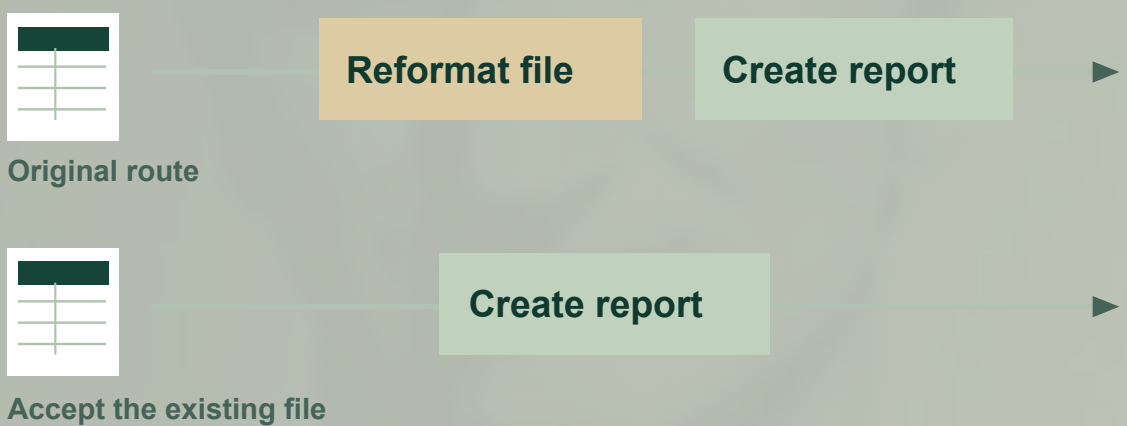
SMALL BUSINESS EXAMPLE · BOOKKEEPING SOFTWARE

Can a shop owner use the sales file they already have?

Your guide asks the shop owner to rearrange columns. Check that your software can read the original file. Then test a simpler guide.

ILLUSTRATION · TWO OFFERS FOR A BOOKKEEPING CUSTOMER



Hypothesis: removing file conversion may help the buyer seeking the least work.

Use the same buyer request, file, price and rival in fresh chats. Show half today's guide and half the simpler guide. Count the recommendations.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

If the original file won't import, fix that first. Then try the change with customers and count how many finish a report and become paying accounts.

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HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE · A LARGE COMPANY'S SOFTWARE RENEWAL

Does your quote answer the questions finance and IT will ask?

A customer can renew its current contract for $95,000. Finance has a $100,000 first-year limit. IT needs service back within four hours of an outage. Your Pro plan is $80,000 plus $12,000 to switch, and it promises recovery in two hours.

FOUR VERSIONS OF THE SAME QUOTE

Current quote
Existing offer and contract

First-year cost
Add migration and recurring totals

Recovery time
Show the contracted tier's coverage

Both
Show the total and recovery time

Pro meets both requirements. Keep its actual terms fixed and change what the quote spells out. Ask the AI which offer it would send for approval. Count how often Pro advances against the renewal under each version.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Try the clearer quote with real buyers. Track which proposals make it to review, which become signed orders and how much margin is left after implementation.

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A CHECKLIST YOU CAN REUSE

Write down the test before you run it

DECIDE THESE FIVE THINGS FIRST

Buyer's goal	Who needs to do what, by when, under which cap?
Other options	Which sellers, tiers and existing contracts fit?
One change	Which fact or working step changes in version B?
Keep the same	Buyer request, model, order mix and all other terms.
Count	Sole, tied, no pick, exact plan, bill and unresolved runs.

For a quick first test, try 24 new chats per version. With two sellers, list each first 12 times per version. With more sellers, give each the same number of turns in each position. Decide how many trials to run and what result you need before seeing the answers.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Save the pages, buyer's exact words and seller order. Record the first choice before asking why. Keep ties, refusals to choose and incomplete trials separate.

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AN EXAMPLE WITH ROUND NUMBERS

A better AI result earns a customer test. Will the change pay off?

Suppose the AI recommends you alone 6 times in 24 with today's guide and 12 times with the rewrite. You agreed beforehand that four extra wins would justify a repeat. Six clears that bar. If a fresh test clears it too, try the guide with customers.

HOW MANY NEW PAYING ACCOUNTS WOULD COVER THE COST?

$2,000	$200	10
Rollout cost	**Revenue less added costs per account**	**Added accounts to break even**

Ten accounts cover the rollout cost. Allow room for uncertainty before expanding.

Randomly assign comparable buyers to the old or new offer and follow both groups for the same time. Count extra paying accounts. Subtract the cost of serving them and any margin you give up on existing business.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

A small business can try the change with one group of customers. A larger company can pilot it with one sales team and include rollout and purchasing costs.

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WHAT THE STUDIES TELL US

Which findings can you use in your own business?

IN BOTH STUDIES

What the buyer wanted affected how much the AI valued easier setup or approval. Recording the supplier, the plan and any ties gave us a fuller picture of each recommendation.

QUESTIONS WORTH BORROWING

The email tests changed where facts appeared, which offers the AI saw and in what order. The hosting tests changed setup work, review time and the chance of rejection. Your customers may respond differently.

WHAT REAL CUSTOMERS CAN TELL YOU

Ask a prospect what they need to do first. Use a lost deal to identify a real rival. Then check whether your change leads to more signed orders, renewals or profit. The studies measured AI recommendations.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Pick one improvement you can deliver. Test it against the alternatives your customer is actually considering.

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APPENDIX · METHODS

How many trials did we run?

EMAIL

Codex ran four tests on the public web, 1,068 with written offers and 96 on private website copies covering 31 documents. We label the smaller, earlier tests that used other models and different tasks.

HOSTING

We scored 3,192 Codex trials and ran 108 pilot trials. The trials covered 97 conditions in total. We saved 55 usable provider documents. The final 576 trials compared two workloads and three buyer priorities in the same batch.

HOW TO READ THE COUNTS

Each count belongs to the buyer and offers on that page. Changes to private pages were hypothetical. The two studies ran at different times, so combining their results into one percentage would be misleading.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

For the exact offers, prices and limits of each comparison, open the original studies below.

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APPENDIX · GUIDE TO THE SOURCE REPORTS

Where can I find the original comparisons?

COULD THE AI FIND THE ANSWER?

The email report covers missing pricing pages, four live browsing tests, Postmark's guide link and Resend's approval terms. The hosting report covers Netlify's billing rule and Railway's example bill.

WHAT MADE A RIVAL MORE ATTRACTIVE?

The email report compares setup guides, individual and combined edits, buyer goals, prices, budgets and list order. The hosting report compares price, setup commands, review deadlines and denial risk, including repeat tests.

HOW DID WE COUNT A WIN?

The reports show the sellers and plans the AI named, including ties. They also track facts recalled after a choice, switches between sellers and cases where the AI chose nobody.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Ready to try this yourself? Page 17 helps you choose a change. Page 20 shows how to run the test.

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APPENDIX · WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE ANSWER CHANGED

Did a rival get the recommendation, or did nobody get it?

WE HID A PAGE

In a small email test, one local model first chose a supplier that met the buyer's needs in 17 comparisons. With the key page hidden, it chose nobody in 11, picked an ineligible rival in four, kept its choice in one and gave one invalid answer.

WE REMOVED A SETUP STEP

Across 96 matched hosting comparisons for the easiest launch, 51 favored Render only when it accepted the existing setup. With an edit required, 29 of those chose Railway, 21 chose Fly.io and one chose nobody. One other pair switched away from Render when the edit was removed.

WHAT TO TRY NEXT

If the AI often chooses nobody, check whether it can verify that any offer meets the buyer's needs. If one rival keeps winning, keep that offer fixed and test your change against it. These examples used different models and tasks.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Record both answers for each comparison. Knowing who gained a recommendation can tell you more than knowing how many you lost.

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APPENDIX · TIME AND RISK

Who cared most about a faster answer? Buyers asking for an easy launch.

SAME WAIT, DIFFERENT ODDS

With a 12-hour deadline, Render won 24 of 24 at 1% denial, 15 at 5% and zero at 20%. Guaranteed approval won all 24. Possible denial with no stated odds won 14. We tested hypothetical policies.

SAME ODDS, DIFFERENT WAITS

At 5% denial, Render won 24, 22, 16 and 14 times out of 24 as the wait rose from five minutes to one hour, 12 hours and 24 hours. In later tests with general and reliability requests, Fly.io won all 24 at every deadline for each request.

WHY BUYER INSTRUCTIONS MATTER

Those groups ran separately. Page 12 compares all three requests together across two workloads. Removing a setup edit helped Render even for buyers whose choices barely changed with a faster answer.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Start with differences large enough for customers to notice and your team to deliver. Repeat the test before setting a precise deadline or approval rule.

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WORK WITH CONCLAVO

Why does the AI choose your competitor?

Talk to us about testing your offer or sponsoring a study.

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