CONCLAVO

ORIGINAL RESEARCH



CONCLAVO RESEARCH BRIEF

Why does AI recommend your competitor?

By Conclavo

@Conclavo_ Conclavo Strategy Room

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY · THE DECISION FOR AN OPERATOR

A cheaper offer can still lose every recommendation

We asked Codex to choose for a founder who wanted the least work before reaching a customer. With no approval step, Codex recommended Render in all 24 trials at $26.60 a month. With open-ended review, Render got none at half the price. Both offers fit the $30 budget.

RENDER PICKS · LEAST-WORK BUYER · 24 TRIALS PER OFFER



The review offer gave no deadline. Doubling the price left both results unchanged.

A low-cost first test: try 24 fresh chats per version. As an example, require four extra picks out of 24 on both the first run and a fresh repeat before trying the change with customers.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Test one obstacle before cutting price. A repeat earns a customer pilot. Expand when the extra profit from customers covers the cost (page 14).

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STUDY OVERVIEW · NOVEMBER 2026

How we tested what changed the recommendation

Fresh Codex agents used frozen copies of six hosting providers' pages to choose a provider and plan. We varied the buyer's priority and the offers. The outcome was the recommendation the agent recorded.

3,300
completed AI shopping trials
3,192 scored trials + 108 pilot trials

97	experimental conditions
55	frozen provider documents
2	hosting scenarios

We balanced the order of the six providers. We checked decisions against the logs, counted one outcome per assignment and kept ties and no-picks in the totals.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Use the hosting results to choose a question. Run the comparison again with your buyer, price range and credible alternatives.

Research evidence · companion PDF

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YOUR BASELINE · A COPYABLE BUYER REQUEST

Start with the buyer whose business you want

Starting out? Use a prospect's words. Already selling? Use a recent lost deal. Ask what the buyer would use instead. If no rival is named, pick one that meets the same need and budget. Walk both offers. Choose the first extra cost, wait or task your team can actually change.

EXAMPLE · BOOKKEEPING SOFTWARE

"I run a two-person shop. I have last month's sales in a spreadsheet and $40 a month for bookkeeping. Which service should I use to get my first monthly report? Pick a plan and tell me why."

RECORD THE BASELINE

Give fresh AI chats the same request and saved offer pages. Alternate which seller appears first. Record the first choice, plan, monthly cost, runner-up if named, and any unanswered question.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Start with the words your buyer used. Add a request for speed or reliability only when you mean to test that priority.

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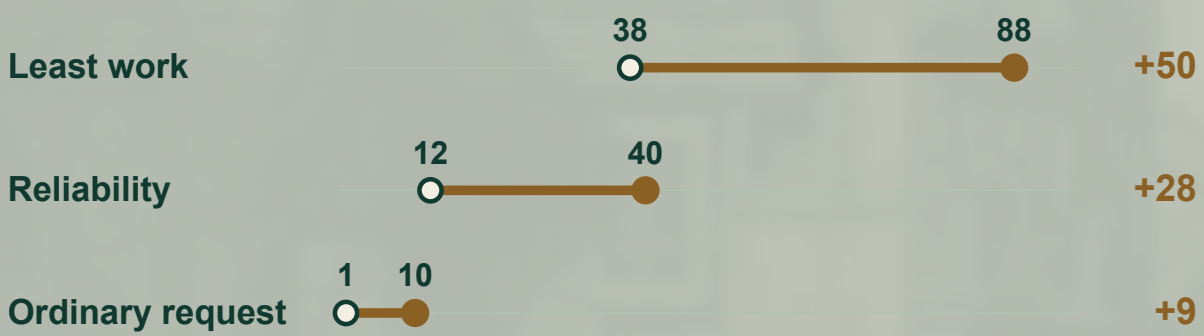
OBSERVED · BUYER PRIORITIES

The same setup step mattered more to one buyer than another

The setup step was one edit to the instruction that starts the software. When Render accepted the existing instruction, its recommendations rose for all three buying priorities.

RENDER PICKS OUT OF 96 FOR EACH OFFER

Open circle: edit required Filled circle: existing command accepted



Two apps weighted equally. Every offer stated a hypothetical 5% denial risk.

The easiest-launch group gained 50 picks per 96 trials. The general request gained nine. A single average would hide which buyer's request moved the most recommendations.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Test your suspected obstacle with the original brief and with one realistic buyer priority added. Mix both prompts into the same run.

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OBSERVED · WHAT THE AI SAID VERSUS WHAT IT CHOSE

A common complaint can point to the wrong fix

In 84 of 96 original trials, Codex raised a question about Netlify's database billing. We tested one possible fix: spell out whether the database costs money while idle.

ORIGINAL 96 TRIALS AND TWO FRESH 24-TRIAL TESTS

84 of 96

flagged billing at baseline

Idle time billed

0 of 24 chose Netlify

Idle time free

0 of 24 chose Netlify

All 24 choice trials in each test received the clarification and picked Fly.io.

Neither answer won Netlify a recommendation. An unresolved question earned a place on the test list. Its frequency alone gave no reason to fund a billing change.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Keep the AI's explanations beside its choices. Give priority to fixes that change the choice when you test them.

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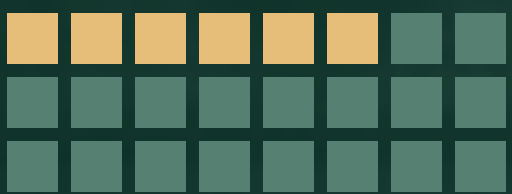
OBSERVED · HOW A BUYER PRICES THE OFFER

A worked price example can put a seller in contention

A founder needed one monthly budget for hosting and data. The private Railway offer included an $8 bill for a comparable workload.

FULL-STACK BUYER · ONE SQUARE PER CHOICE TRIAL



6 of 24

picked Railway with the hypothetical $8 example. The other 18 picked Fly.io.

Without a comparable bill: 0 of 24 chose Railway. All six who chose it with the example had found a cheaper Fly.io option.

The example changed two things the buyer could see: a concrete amount and evidence of how it was calculated. Either could have mattered.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

To test the value of proof, quote the same total in both versions. Show the calculation in only one.

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EXECUTIVE DECISION GUIDE · PROPOSED TESTS

Choose the first change your result can justify

The bill is unclear	**Show a worked total** Keep the amount fixed. Show the inputs a buyer needs to check it.
The buyer must wait	**Remove or bound the wait** Keep price fixed. Test a deadline your operations team can meet.
Setup needs extra work	**Accept what the buyer has** Keep the result fixed. Remove one conversion or manual step.
A lower price looks decisive	**Change the price alone** Keep setup and proof fixed. Check which plans still fit the cap.

INTERPRETATION · CHOOSE ONE TEST BASED ON YOUR BUYER'S OBSTACLE

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Start with one change your team can deliver. If the offer already works, test clearer proof. If customers really face the obstacle, test a working change.

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OPERATOR PROTOCOL · TWO VERSIONS OF ONE OFFER

Make the test fair enough to act on

SAME BUYER, BUDGET, MODEL AND COMPETING OFFERS

A · Current offer

Use today's page.

B · Changed offer

Edit one fact you can deliver.

Mix the two versions across fresh chats.

Within each vendor order, randomly assign equal numbers of trials to A and B. Save the pages, prompt, model and first final choice.

COUNT EVERY ASSIGNMENT

For each version, count your wins, each rival's wins, ties and no-picks. Divide your wins by all assigned trials. Retry on the same assignment. Count it once and report any unresolved trials.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

For a two-seller pilot, try 24 chats per version: 12 with you first and 12 with the rival first. Set the repeat threshold before either run.

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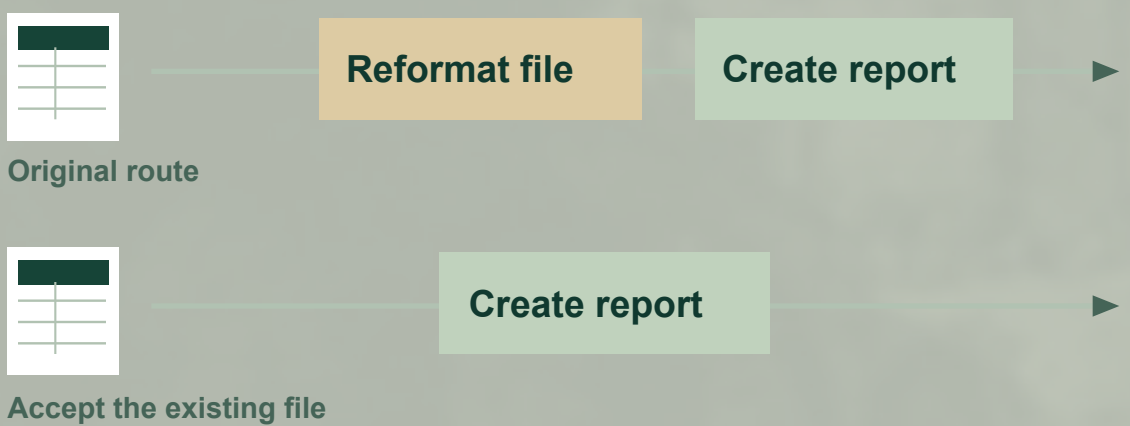
WORKED EXAMPLE · A PROPOSED TEST OUTSIDE HOSTING

Test an easier spreadsheet import for a shop's first report

Suppose your bookkeeping software already accepts a shop's spreadsheet. Your guide still asks the owner to rearrange the columns. Which instructions help the AI recommend you?

ILLUSTRATION · TWO OFFERS FOR A BOOKKEEPING CUSTOMER



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

Keep the file, features, subscription price and rival fixed. In the new guide, show the working import with the original file. Run both guides with fresh chats in the same mix of orders.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

If the product needs a code change to accept the file, test a working prototype before promising that route to customers.

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WORKED EXAMPLE · ILLUSTRATIVE COUNTS FOR THE BOOKKEEPING TEST

Would you ship this change?

EXAMPLE ONLY · FRESH TRIALS · SAME BUYER AND RIVAL

A · Reformat first

6 / 24

chose your service

Rival: 16 Ties: 2 No pick: 0

B · Import as is

12 / 24

chose your service

Rival: 10 Ties: 2 No pick: 0

25% to 50%: a gain of 25 percentage points.

Suppose you agreed to repeat if the new guide earned at least four extra picks out of 24. Six clears that bar. Start fresh. If the repeat also clears four, pilot the guide with shops. This example rule buys a field test; it does not establish a sales gain.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

If the repeat is flat, keep the original and test the next obstacle. If only the easiest-start buyers respond, try the change with that group first.

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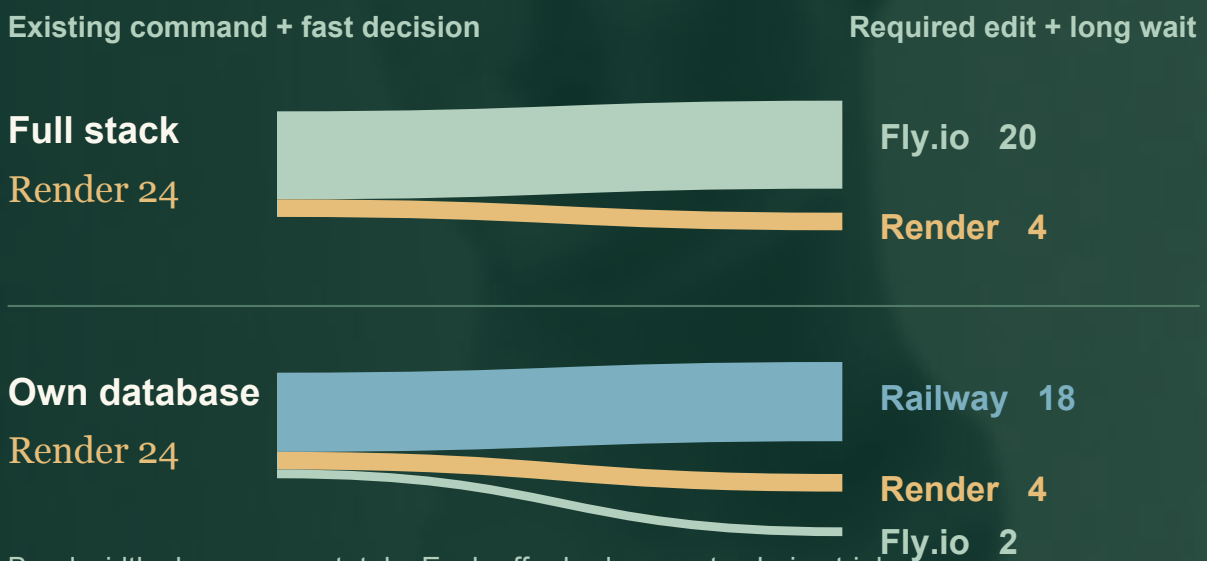
OBSERVED · TWO KINDS OF BUYER

Check which competitor gained the picks you lost

When Render required an edit and allowed a day for a decision, both easiest-launch groups gave it only 4 of 24 picks. Different rivals won the other 20.

LEAST-WORK RECOMMENDATIONS · 24 TRIALS PER BUYER TYPE AND OFFER



Band width shows group totals. Each offer had separate choice trials.

The buyers also differed in traffic and operating needs. Those differences give a sales team specific customer situations to investigate.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Record the winning rival by buyer type. The competitor to benchmark for one buyer may barely figure in another buyer's decision.

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OBSERVED · WHAT A LARGER REPEAT REVEALED

Rerun a close result before you change policy

At a 12-hour decision deadline, an early comparison suggested that raising the stated chance of denial from 4% to 5% cost Render 14.6 percentage points. We sized a fresh comparison to detect that drop.

FRESH 12-HOUR COMPARISON · 264 TRIALS PER OFFER

4% denial risk

193 / 264

recommended Render

5% denial risk

174 / 264

recommended Render

Observed drop: 7.2 percentage points

Paired test p = 0.084. The preset threshold was 0.05.

The larger test still couldn’t tell whether the extra point of denial risk reduced recommendations. The apparent drop was about half the earlier estimate.

CONCLAVO’S GUIDANCE

When a repeat shrinks the gain, revisit the business case. Keep an expensive policy change on hold until the evidence supports it.

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OPERATING SCORECARD · AFTER A SUCCESSFUL REPEAT

Follow a recommendation through to a paying customer

An AI can choose the same provider and still recommend a different purchase. In a later full-stack comparison, 93 of 96 general requests led to one Fly.io machine. All 96 reliability requests led to two.

A MEASUREMENT PLAN FOR A SELLER

- **Recommendation** — Studied here
  Which provider and which plan?
- **Activation** — Measure in the field
  Did the buyer reach the first useful result?
- **Commercial outcome** — Measure in the field
  What did the buyer pay, and did they stay?

Randomly offer comparable shops the old or new guide. Track first reports and paid accounts over the same period. Example: a $2,000 rollout needs 10 extra paying accounts at $200 contribution per account to break even. Use the measured customer gain to estimate the return.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Set a field target before launch. Fund expansion when the expected added contribution clears the rollout cost with enough margin for uncertainty.

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APPENDIX · EVIDENCE AND LIMITS

What the study measured

SCOPE

One Codex model and a $30 monthly budget. Two hosting scenarios used a working repository. The archive contained 55 usable first-party documents. Experimental terms appeared in private copies.

STRONGEST COMPARISON

The final 576 trials mixed three buyer priorities, two workloads, two setup rules and two decision deadlines. Other results come from separate stages. All 3,192 scored trials and 108 pilots are accounted for once.

APPLICATION

The measured outcome was an AI recommendation. Purchases, activation, uptime and retention need field evidence. The bookkeeping example and operator tests are proposals.

CONCLAVO'S GUIDANCE

Use the linked companion report for the counts, offer changes and limitations behind the hosting findings.

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH



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Which buyers could your company win?

To sponsor a research report and/or request a client engagement, email

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