

The Future is Now:
**How Small Businesses
Are Harnessing AI in 2025**

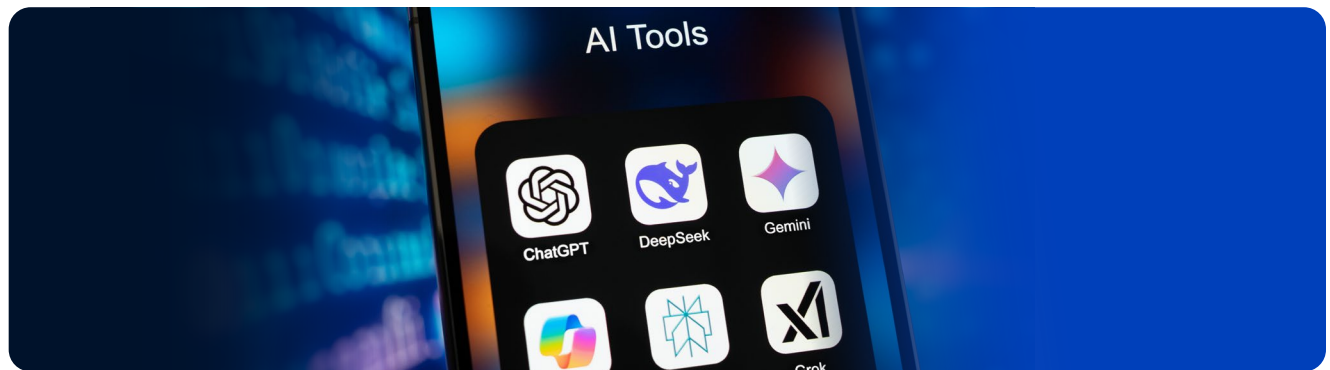
Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Small Business AI Adoption is Accelerating.....	4
Top Ways Small Businesses Are Using AI	4
Industry Insights: Who's Using AI the Most?	6
The Most Popular AI Tools and Platforms.....	7
AI's Impact: How Helpful Is It?	8
Challenges and Concerns Around AI	9
Looking Ahead: Future AI Plans	11
Conclusion	12

Executive Summary

AI adoption among small businesses surged in 2025, transforming how owners work, market, and grow.

Revenued surveyed nearly 300 small business owners in 2025. In early 2025, 60% reported not using AI. By September, over 90% were using at least one AI tool — a dramatic shift within months.



Key Findings

- Marketing & content creation lead the way. About 66% of small businesses use AI for writing posts, creating ads, and designing visuals — making it the most common entry point.
- Customer service is the second strongest use case. 33% of businesses rely on AI chatbots or automated responses to handle inquiries 24/7.
- Other applications are expanding. From bookkeeping and scheduling to drafting documents, AI is increasingly embedded in day-to-day operations.
- ChatGPT dominates. Nearly 70% of respondents use ChatGPT or OpenAI models, followed by Google Gemini, Canva's Magic Studio, Grammarly, and QuickBooks AI.
- Impact is significant. 60% rated AI's helpfulness 4 or 5 out of 5, citing major time savings, better efficiency, and reduced costs.
- Challenges remain. The biggest concerns are lack of training, accuracy of outputs, cost, integration with existing systems, and data privacy.

Looking Ahead

Nearly half of respondents say they are "likely" or "very likely" to expand their AI use in the next year. Owners see AI as essential for staying competitive — a way to do more with fewer resources. For small businesses, AI is no longer a buzzword; it is a practical, everyday tool shaping how they operate, grow, and serve customers.

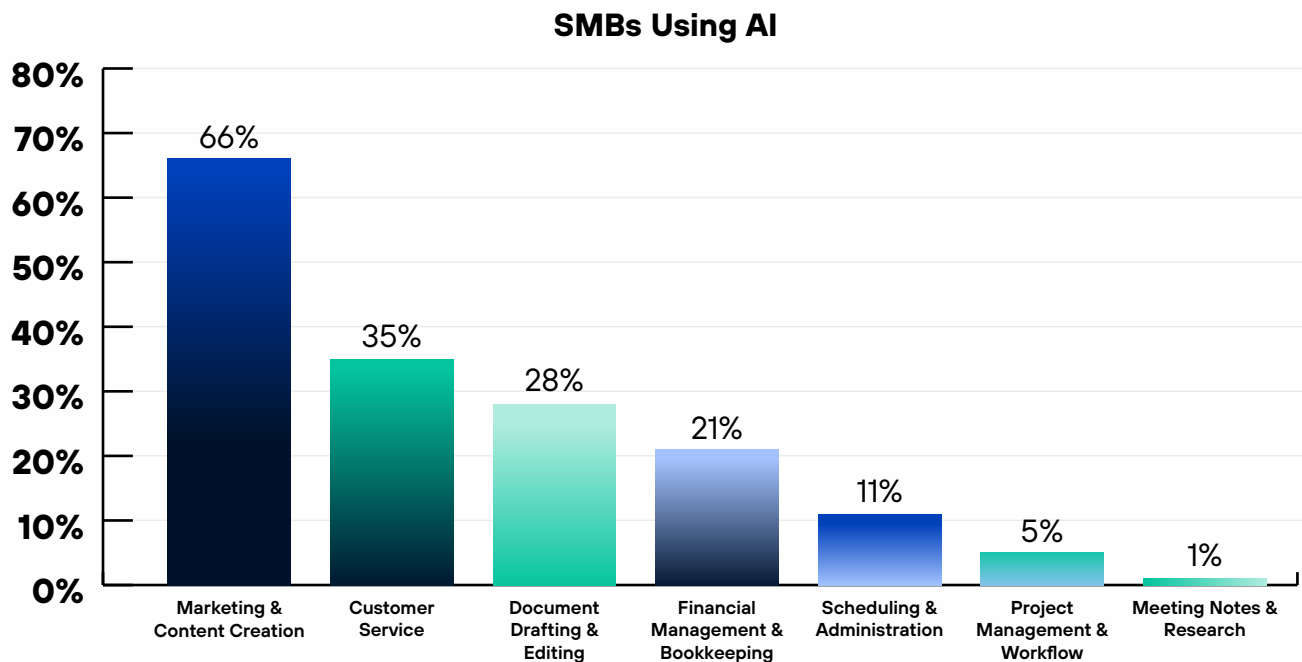
Small Business AI Adoption is Accelerating

Revenued conducted two surveys in 2025, with nearly 300 responders, among small business owners to understand their use of AI tools. In the first survey, conducted in early 2025, a majority of small businesses (60%) reported not using AI in their business.

A follow-up survey in September 2025 suggested a rapid shift: over 90% of respondents were using at least one AI tool in their operations. This dramatic increase over just a few months suggests that 2025 has been a true tipping point for small business AI adoption. Not only are many business owners now using AI, they're also open to new AI-powered services.

When asked if they would use AI-driven financial insights from Revenued, 87% responded positively or were open-minded (about 38% said "Yes" and 49% "Maybe"), with only 13% saying "No". Even some owners who weren't using any AI yet said they would consider an AI-based financial tool, showing a strong curiosity and willingness to try AI solutions.

Top Ways Small Businesses Are Using AI



Sources: Revenued Small Business AI Surveys, 2025 (AI in Action How Small Businesses Are Using Artificial Intelligence in 2025).

Among those small businesses that have adopted AI, there are clear trends in how they're applying these tools. The most common use-cases for AI in 2025 include:

- **Marketing & Content Creation**

The most common application of AI is in **marketing and creative tasks**. About two-thirds of AI users reported relying on tools for things like writing social media posts, generating ad copy, designing graphics, and even creating product descriptions for online stores. Business owners noted that AI helps them maintain consistency and visibility in increasingly competitive markets.

- **Customer Service**

Just over one in three businesses use AI for **customer service automation**, including chatbots and automated replies. This allows small teams to provide 24/7 responses to customer inquiries without hiring additional staff. For example, one therapy practice uses AI to analyze client progress, highlighting how these tools can extend beyond retail into professional care.

- **Document Drafting & Editing**

Nearly three in ten businesses use AI to **draft or edit documents**—from polishing emails to creating contracts and proposals. Owners said these tools save them time and improve professionalism, especially for those who don't have a dedicated admin or communications team.

- **Financial Management & Bookkeeping**

About one in five small businesses are leveraging AI for **bookkeeping, accounting, and financial insights**. This includes expense tracking, invoice management, and forecasting tools like QuickBooks AI. Owners appreciate how these features surface insights that might otherwise be missed.

- **Scheduling & Administration**

Roughly one in ten AI users turn to tools that **manage calendars, schedule appointments, and send reminders**. For very small teams, AI assistants that handle scheduling free up valuable time for direct client work.

- **Project Management & Workflow**

A smaller group is experimenting with AI for **task tracking and workflow automation**. These early adopters are finding ways to streamline project planning and reduce manual coordination.

- **Meeting Notes & Research**

Only a handful of businesses are using AI to **take notes during meetings or assist with research**, suggesting these applications are still in the early stages of adoption among small businesses.

Notably, only a small minority in the September survey (under 8%) said “We’re not currently using AI tools” at all. In other words, by late 2025, most respondents had found at least one practical area where AI could help their business – especially in customer engagement or marketing. The range of uses spans from creative tasks to back-office admin work, indicating that AI’s versatility is being put to work in businesses of all kinds.

Industry Insights: Who’s Using AI the Most?

The survey responses came from a wide range of industries, giving us a window into how AI adoption looks across different types of small businesses.

- **Healthcare & Construction Lead the Way**

Both surveys consistently showed strong representation from **healthcare and construction businesses**. These sectors rank among the most active adopters of AI tools in 2025. In healthcare, owners often look to AI for **customer communication and progress tracking**, while construction companies lean on AI for **marketing content, scheduling, and financial management**.

- **Retail & Professional Services Stay Strong**

Traditional sectors like **retail, professional services, and home improvement** were heavily represented in the earlier survey. Retailers are particularly active in using AI for **marketing and customer service automation**, while professional services firms tend to emphasize **document editing and client communication**.

- **Creative & Digital Sectors Emerging**

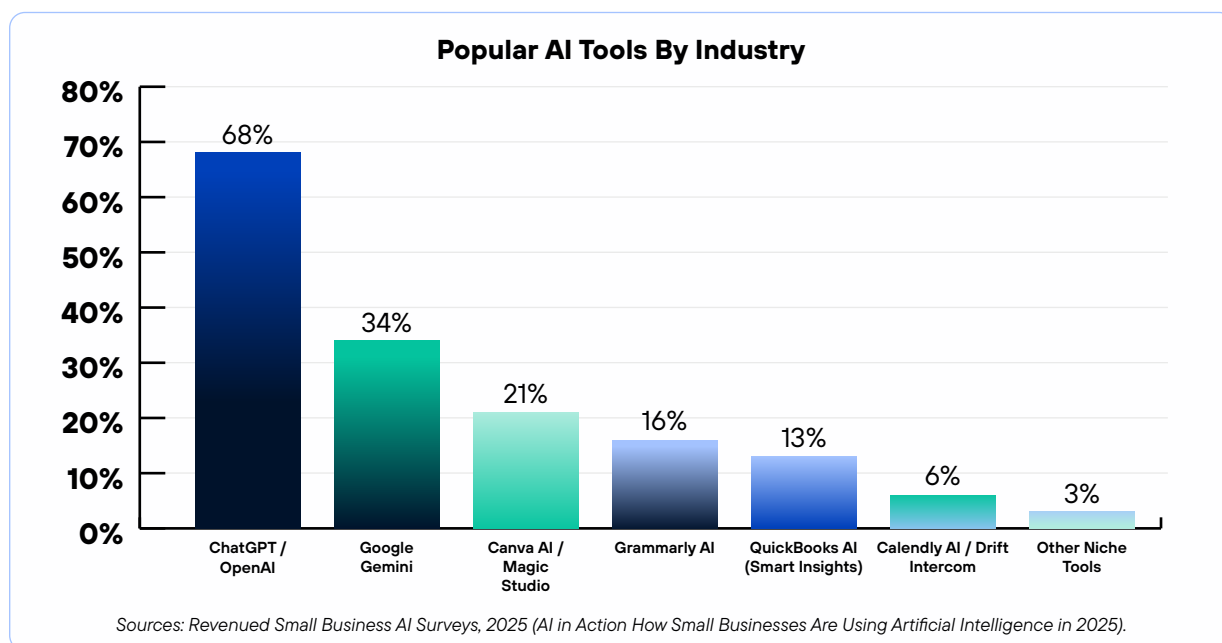
By the time of the September survey, we saw more **creative and digital industries** joining in – including **fashion, marketing, software, and education/childcare**. These businesses often experiment with AI for **content creation, social media, and design tasks**, reflecting how AI has become a mainstream tool for growing a brand online.

- **A Blend of Traditional and New**

Overall, the data shows that AI adoption extends well beyond “tech-heavy” industries. **Both traditional trades (construction, transportation, home services) and newer digital-first businesses (fashion, consulting, marketing, software)** are exploring AI in ways that fit their needs. This mix suggests that AI is becoming a **universal small business tool**, adaptable across industries.

The Most Popular AI Tools and Platforms

Certain AI platforms have clearly become favorites among small businesses. By far the most widely used tool is OpenAI's ChatGPT (and similar OpenAI models) – our survey found that **about two-thirds of small businesses using AI rely on ChatGPT or OpenAI** in some form. This aligns with how dominant ChatGPT has been in mainstream AI usage in 2025. The second-most common is Google's "Gemini" AI (Google's emerging AI platform), used by roughly one-third of respondents for various tasks. Other popular tools include Canva's AI design features ("Magic Studio"), Grammarly's AI writing assistant, and QuickBooks' AI "Smart Insights" for finances, each of which was used by 10–20% of respondents.

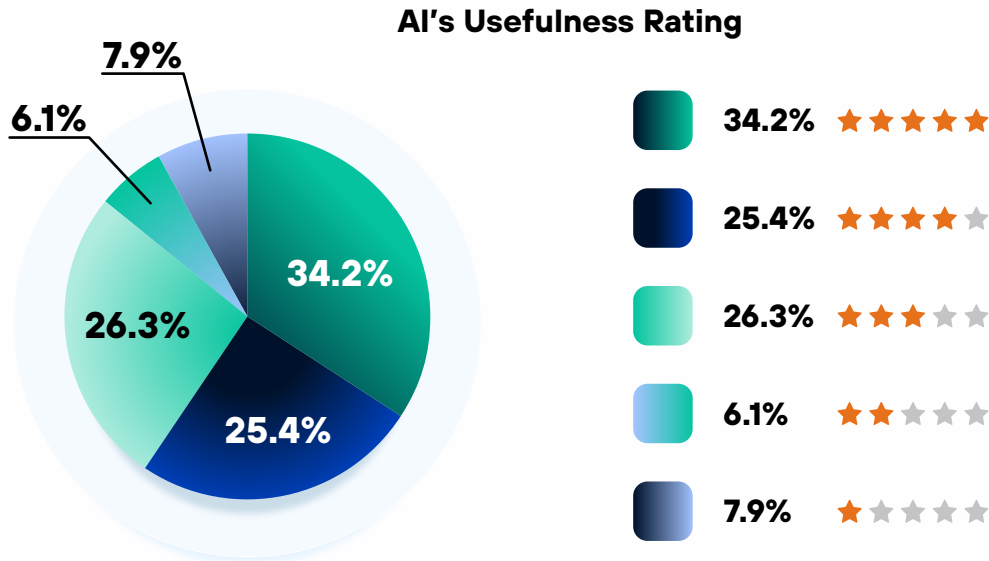


Many small businesses rely on a mix of AI tools, combining different platforms to cover specific needs. For example, one construction company (Oneway Renovation & Construction Inc.) shared that they use ChatGPT for content, QuickBooks AI for finance, and Grammarly AI for writing/editing, all together to cover different needs. Another respondent in retail (Baked Batata LLC) said they experiment with both OpenAI and Google Gemini for marketing content, taking advantage of each platform's strengths. This mix-and-match approach shows that small businesses are pragmatic, adopting whichever AI tools provide value rather than sticking to a single provider.

"Fiverr is great because of the ability to outsource different business needs and QuickBooks because of the easy accessibility"

– Professional Services Business Owner (MD)

AI's Impact: How Helpful Is It?



Sources: Revenued Small Business AI Surveys, 2025 (AI in Action How Small Businesses Are Using Artificial Intelligence in 2025).

In other words, about six in ten respondents feel AI is significantly improving their business, while very few see little benefit. From a productivity standpoint, these tools are helping small teams save time and punch above their weight. Owners most often cited benefits such as faster content creation, greater efficiency in routine tasks, and cost savings from automating work that once required manual effort. For instance, marketing tasks that might have required hiring a contractor can now be partially handled by AI, and bookkeeping tasks that took hours might be done in minutes with an AI-powered system.

"Scheduling and client communication are easier with AI assistants."

- Simply Love Property Management (MD)

"Bookkeeping and financial insights are where AI saves me the most time."

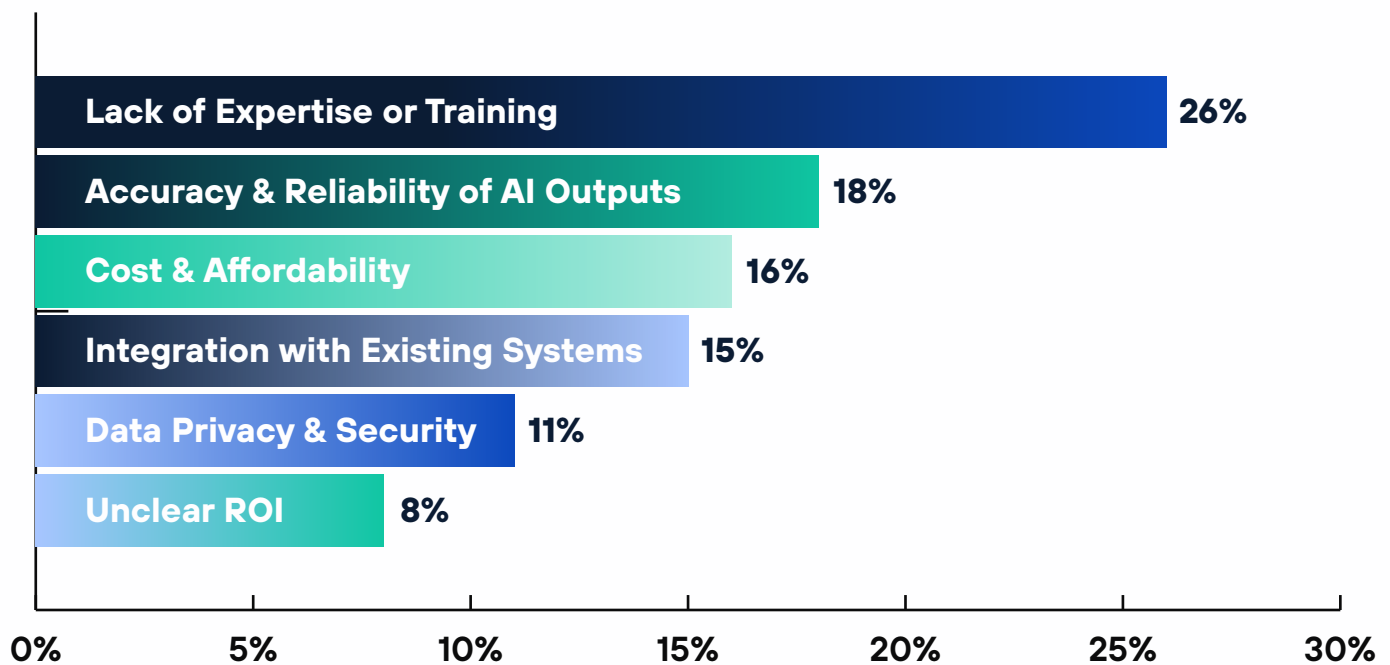
- Construction Business Owner (Texas)

The overall sentiment is that AI is acting as a force-multiplier for small businesses – doing more with less – which is extremely valuable given the limited time and resources many owners have. However, not everyone is glowing about AI's impact. A few respondents noted that AI outputs sometimes need careful checking or additional tweaking, which can eat into the time savings. This aligns with the handful of lower helpfulness ratings. Still, even some who were cautious acknowledged the potential: they might rate current tools a 2 or 3 out of 5 but still plan to continue using them as the technology improves.

Challenges and Concerns Around AI

Despite the enthusiasm, small businesses do face real challenges in using AI tools. We asked owners about the biggest obstacles or concerns regarding AI, and their answers highlight a few key issues:

Top Concerns Surrounding AI



Sources: Revenued Small Business AI Surveys, 2025 (AI in Action How Small Businesses Are Using Artificial Intelligence in 2025).

- **Lack of Expertise or Training (26%):** The top-cited challenge was a knowledge gap – many owners and staff aren't sure how to best use AI tools or lack the training to fully take advantage of them. Small businesses often don't have in-house IT departments or AI specialists, so learning these new tools can be daunting. This is a barrier to implementation: some respondents know AI could help them, but finding the time to learn and train themselves or employees is tough.
- **Accuracy & Reliability of AI Outputs (18%):** The next big concern is whether AI's suggestions or content can be trusted to be correct. Owners worry about AI making mistakes – for example, producing content with factual errors, or chatbots misunderstanding customer questions. For critical tasks (like financial forecasts or important communications), small errors can be costly. Thus, some businesses feel they must double-check AI outputs, which adds extra work. Maintaining quality and accuracy is a notable pain point.
- **Cost & Affordability (16%):** While many AI tools have free versions, advanced features or higher usage often come with a price. Cost was the third-most common challenge, as some businesses feel high-end AI platforms or API usage fees are still too expensive for their budget. Small businesses are extremely cost-conscious, and an AI tool must demonstrate clear ROI to justify its expense. One respondent bluntly listed "Cost/affordability" as their chief concern holding back further AI adoption.
- **Integration with Existing Systems (15%):** Some businesses struggle to integrate AI tools into their existing workflows and software. For instance, getting an AI tool to work with an established POS system, CRM, or project management tool might require technical steps that are non-trivial. If an AI solution doesn't "play nice" with the software a company already uses, that creates friction. A number of respondents cited integration issues as a headache, saying it's not always clear how to incorporate AI seamlessly into what they already do.
- **Data Privacy & Security (11%):** Given rising awareness of data security, privacy concerns were mentioned by about one in ten businesses. Owners emphasized the need for AI services to handle sensitive business and customer data securely. Some are hesitant to upload proprietary data to AI tools (especially cloud-based ones) without assurances it won't be misused or leaked. This concern is especially pronounced in industries handling confidential client data (e.g. legal, healthcare).
- **Unclear ROI (8%):** A smaller group of respondents said they find it hard to gauge the return on investment from AI tools. These owners might feel that AI is a shiny new thing, but they aren't yet convinced that it tangibly boosts the bottom line. They may be experimenting with AI, but haven't seen concrete results like increased sales or significant cost savings, leading to skepticism.



Looking Ahead: Future AI Plans

Despite the challenges, most small businesses anticipate increasing their use of AI in the coming year. In our September survey, we asked how likely they are to expand AI usage in the next 12 months. 45% said they are “likely” or “very likely” to increase their AI use. One out of four, or 23% were on the fence, and the remaining (32%) indicated they are not likely to adopt more AI tools in the near term. **In practical terms, that means nearly half of small businesses are actively planning to deepen their reliance on AI soon**, while only one-third remain skeptical or satisfied with current usage. Those who are bullish on AI plan to integrate it further into marketing, customer engagement, and analytics to drive growth. Many see AI as essential to remaining competitive—a way to achieve more with fewer resources. As one business owner in fashion put it, **AI tools offer capabilities that enable a small team to run a marketing campaign or data analysis that would have required outside help before**. The survey data reflects this optimism: businesses that already find AI helpful are doubling down on it (several respondents who rated AI’s helpfulness as 5 also answered that they are very likely to expand usage).

On the other hand, the minority who aren’t looking to increase AI usage tend to overlap with those facing bigger challenges (e.g. concerns about cost, accuracy, or lack of know-how). For example, a children’s education company in our survey reported using AI for marketing and customer service but still rated their likelihood of increasing use as low, likely due to data privacy worries in handling student information. These reservations are keeping some businesses in a “wait and see” mode – they might hold off until AI tools feel more proven, or until their specific concerns are addressed by providers or the industry.

Conclusion

In summary, 2025 has seen a wave of AI adoption among small businesses, transforming how they operate. Small firms are using AI to automate customer interactions, create content, manage finances, and more – tasks that once consumed significant time or budget. The benefits (improved efficiency, cost savings, enhanced capabilities) are driving this rapid uptake, and most users are positive about the impact on their business. At the same time, business owners are mindful of the hurdles: they're learning as they go, seeking reliable results, and watching out for costs and privacy. The general sentiment is that AI is here to stay in the small business toolbox, and its role will only grow. As one respondent succinctly put it, embracing AI is becoming crucial for "productivity" and staying competitive. For small businesses in 2025, AI is no longer just a buzzword – it's a practical reality. Learning how to navigate it will be critical to future success.
