PETE GIORDANO

Product and GTM Strategy Advisor
Scale Venture Partners

EVERETT BERRY

Head of GTM Engineering
Clay

Presentation

HOW TO PRICE AI

SCALE

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Pete Giordano

Product & GTM Strategy Advisor

Google Cloud, VMware, DoubleClick, Accenture

Confusing cloud of pricing models

Seat-based   Hybrid pricing   Skill-based   Outcome-based   Subscription

Usage-based   Activity-based   Output-based   Performance-based

FTE-based   Feature-based   Value-based   Success-as-a-service   Volume-based

Credit-based   Seat-based   Work-based   Platform-fee   Consumption-based

Task-based   Dynamic-pricing   Revenue Share   Pay-for-Performance

Named user licenses   Flat-rate   Conversation-based   Conversion-based

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Actually only three primary hybrid pricing models

Seats

Role-based

FTE-based

Named user licenses

Usage

Output-based   Activity-based

Volume-based   All-you-can-eat

Task-based   Consumption-based

Outcomes

Success-based   Revenue Share

Outcome-based   Performance-based

Value-based

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Everything else is how to describe it and sell it to customers

Packaging & Positioning

Seats

Usage

Outcomes

Guardrails

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Make pricing easier for you

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Our guest

Everett Berry
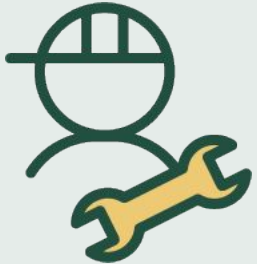
Head of GTM Engineering 🌈 clay

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AI fundamentally changes the core value delivery model

Traditional SaaS
Enable users to deliver results

AI SaaS
Deliver Results

Pay for access

Pay for results!

Seats-as-a-Service

Success-as-a-Service

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AI creates value in ways traditional SaaS can't

Works 24/7

Proves its value

Gets better over time
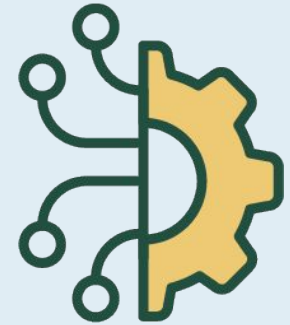
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AI costs scale differently than traditional SaaS

Legend: ● Traditional SaaS Cost   ● AI Cost

Y-axis: Cost per customer
X-axis: Number of users/usage
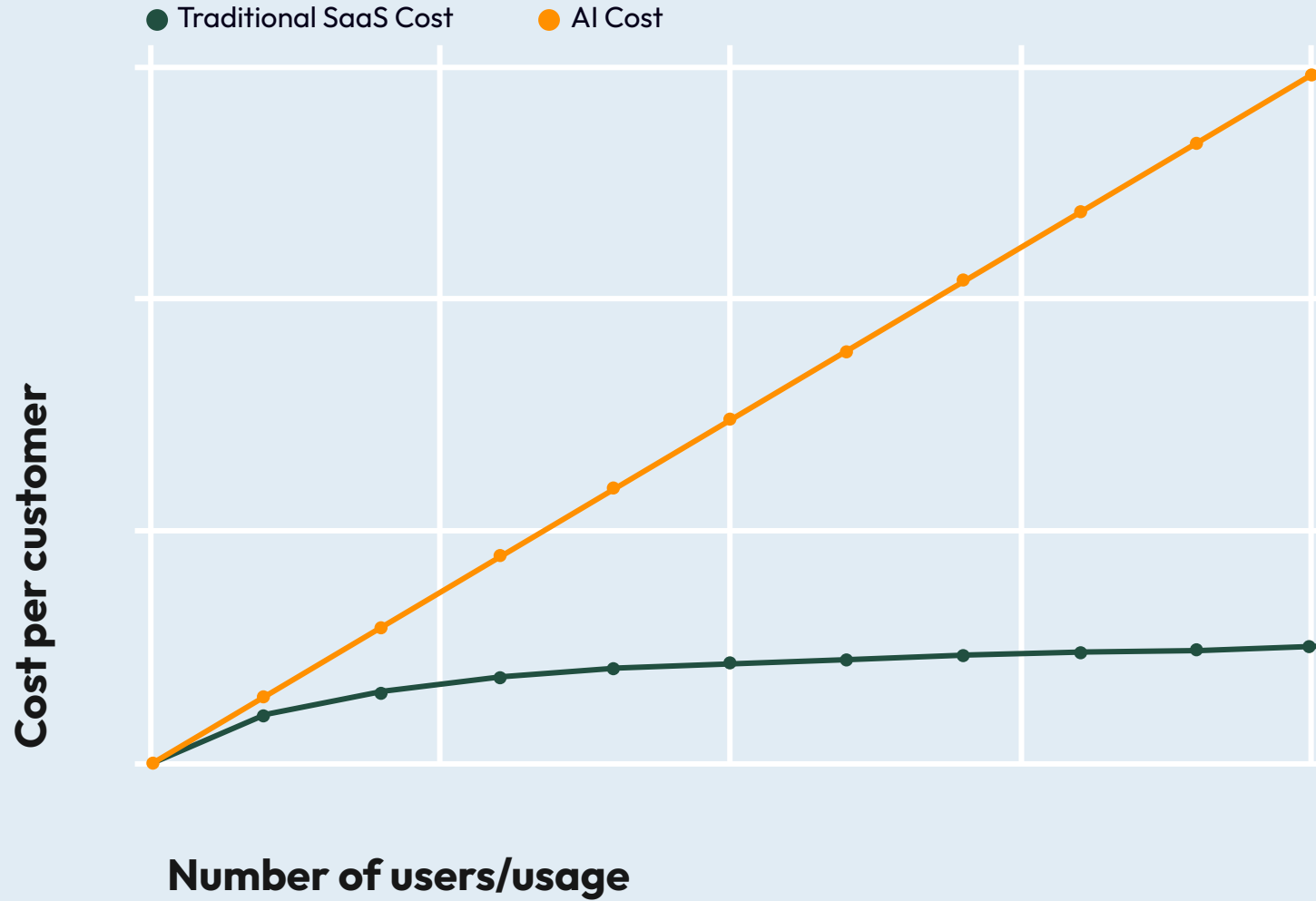
Every AI interaction costs you real money

A few power users can blow your budget

Without guardrails, goodbye margins

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Golden Rule No. 1
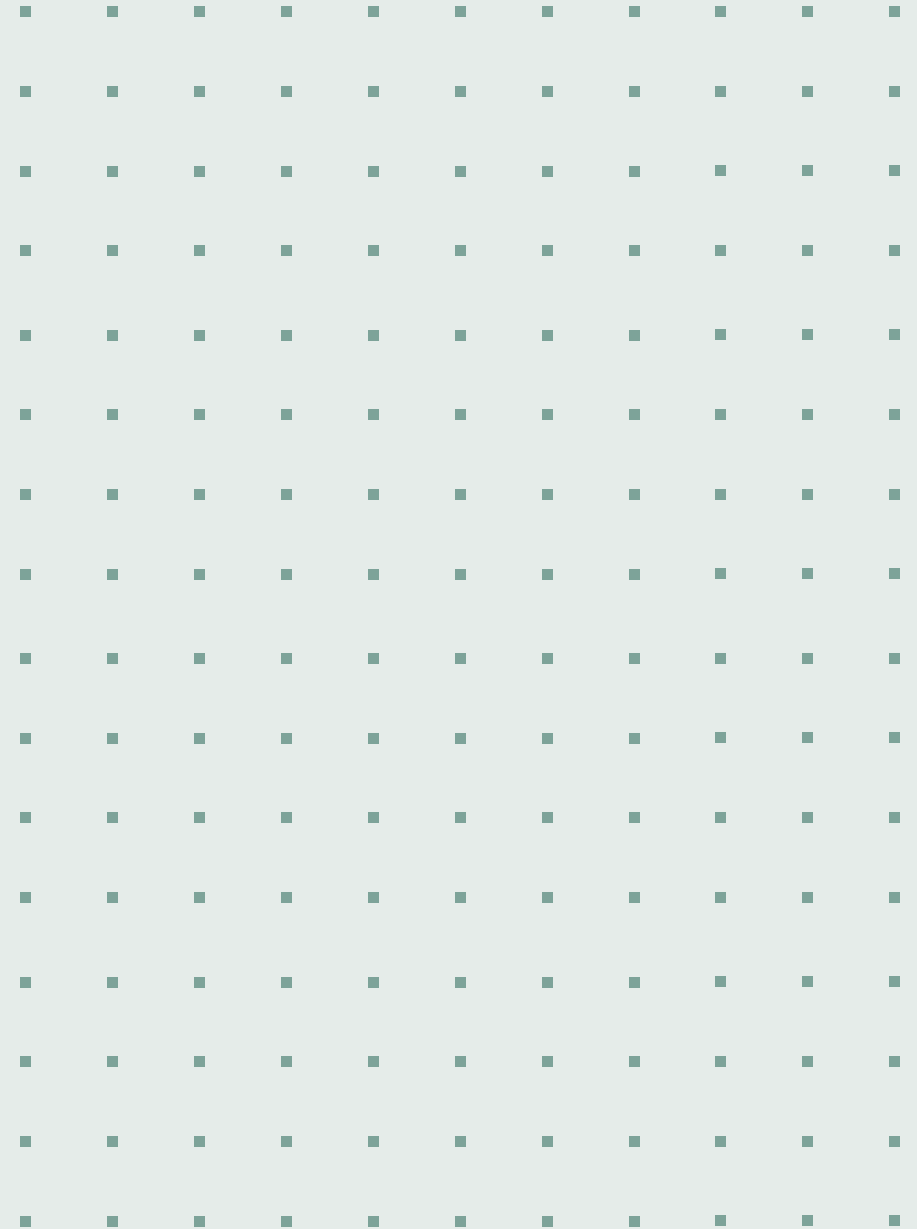
Find your value

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Golden Rule No. 2

Match your model

Golden Rule No. 3

Build guardrails

SCALE

Three golden rules for AI pricing success

1

Find value

Product-led data enrichment and growth automation
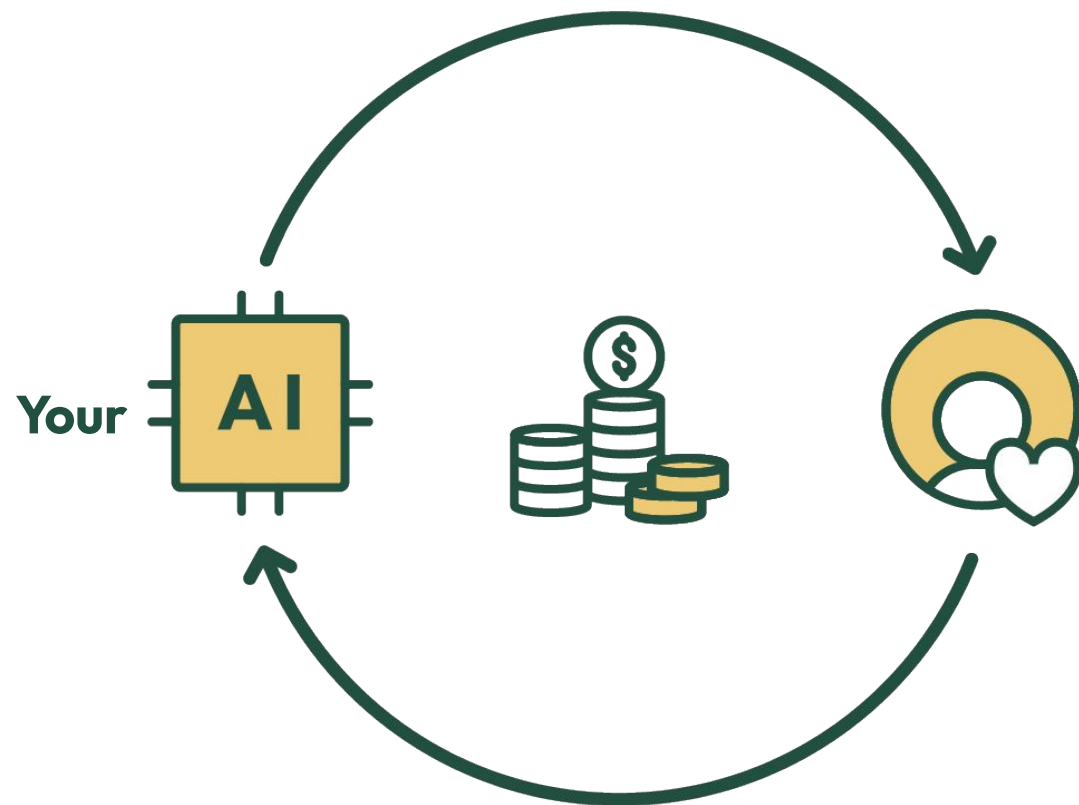
2

Match your model

Credit consumption that scales with leads

3

Build guardrails

Credits are capped and features are gated

SCALE

Find what your customers truly value

Your **AI**

Get this right or nothing else matters

Find your value metric by asking these questions

|		
What specific problem does your AI solve?	How do customers measure success with your product?	What unit naturally scales with that value?

Clay's search-based value ties directly to enrichment

"Boost your enrichment coverage ... by searching 100+ providers for any data point."

	Free	Starter	Explorer
Try Clay for free →	**$0**/month Billed yearly. All credits granted upfront 1.2K credits/year ⌄	**$134**/month Billed yearly. All credits granted upfront 24K credits/year ⌄	**$314**/month Billed yearly. All credits granted upfront 120K credits/year ⌄
Users	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
People/Company searches	Up to 100/search	Up to 5,000/search	Up to 10,000/search

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Match your pricing model to how value is delivered

Earn more revenue

Value delivered
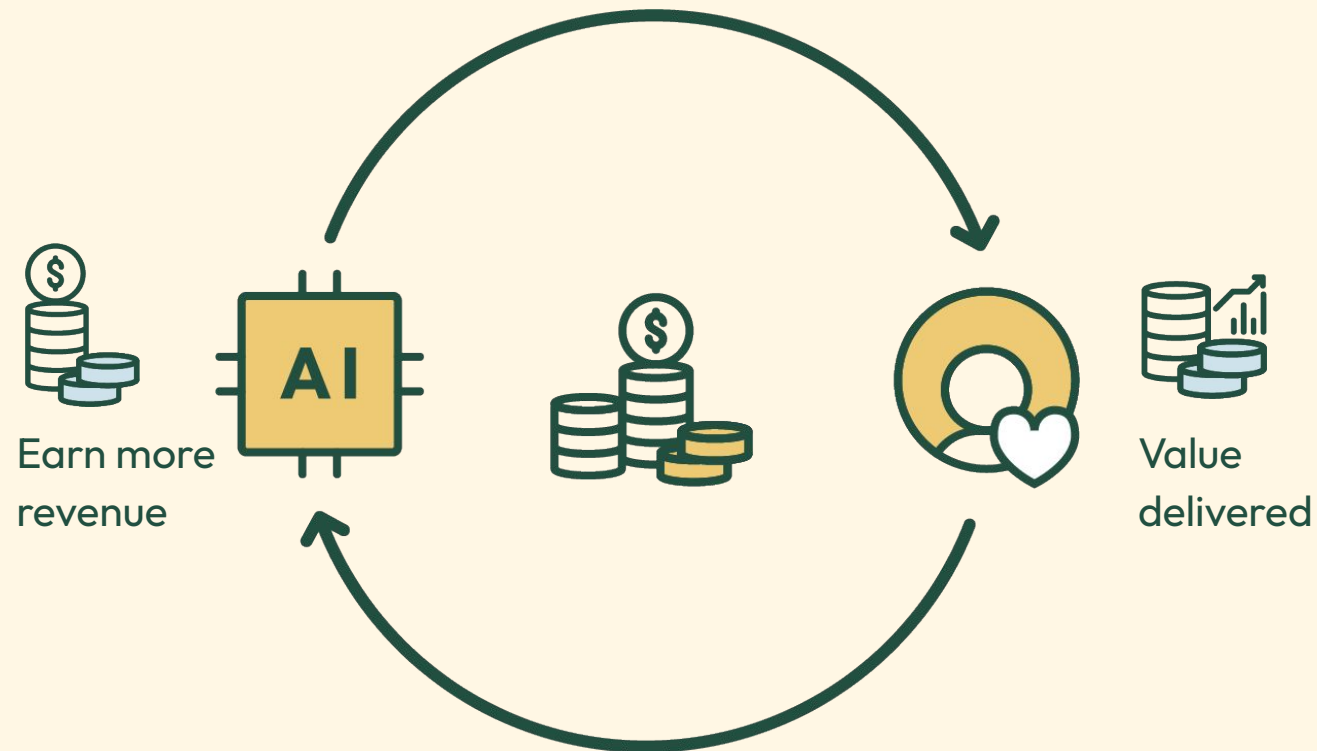
When your customers win, you should earn more.

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Find your pricing model by asking these questions

How do your customers experience and measure value?

Can you predict how much they'll use your AI?

How quickly do costs climb with usage?

Hybrid models give you predictability plus upside
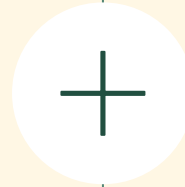
Hybrid model = base access + value scaling
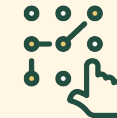
Base Access Model
Subscription or platform fee

+

Value scaling
Growth Driver

Seats

Usage

Outcomes
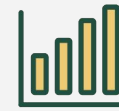
*Predictable

*Unlimited upside potential

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Clay's hybrid usage model scales with enrichment value

Base:
Tiered predictable pricing scales with enrichment activity

+

Value Scaling:
Enrichment activity, more credits = more searches

Pricing tiers

	Free	Starter	Explorer
			MOST POPULAR
	$0/month	$134/month	$314/month
	Billed yearly. All credits granted upfront	Billed yearly. All credits granted upfront	Billed yearly. All credits granted upfront
Try Clay for free →	1.2K credits/year ⌄	24K credits/year ⌄	120K credits/year ⌄

People/Company searches

Up to 100/search	Up to 5,000/search	Up to 10,000/search

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Build guardrails that protect without limiting
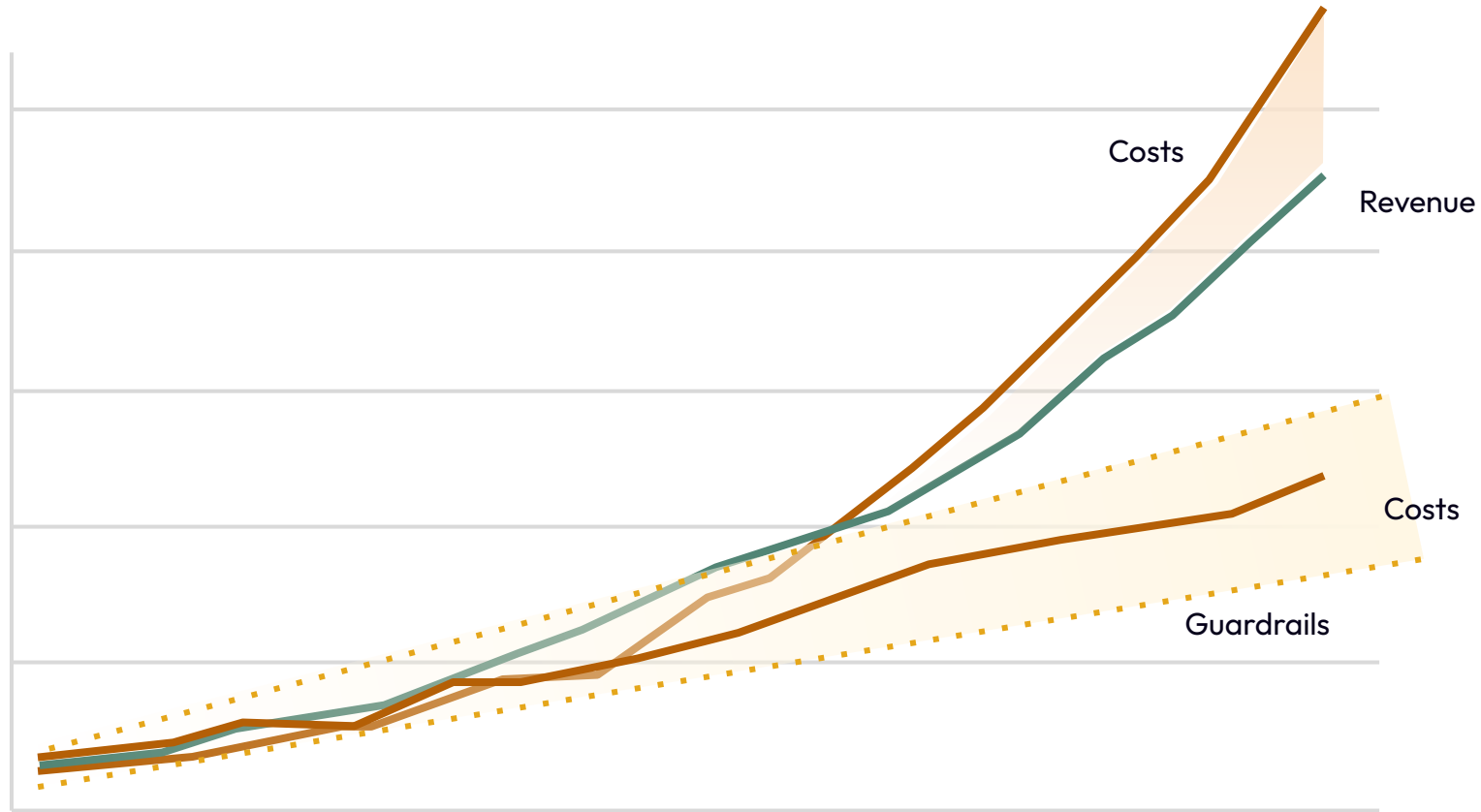
Key to sustainable AI economics

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The balancing act: variable costs vs. customer expectations

Customer needs:

Fair pricing aligned with value

Consistent, forecastable costs

Protection from bill shock

Don't just price for value—price for adoption, growth, and trust

Initial market fit:

- ✓ **Aligned with value**
- ✓ **Acceptable**
- ✓ **Consumable**
- ✓ **Predictable**

Strategic market fit:

- ✓ **Scalable**
- ✓ **Auditable**
- ✓ **Sustainable**
- ✓ **Differentiable**

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Three golden rules for AI pricing success

1

Find value

2

Match your model

3

Build guardrails

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The Problem tells you how to price it.

Procurement tells you how to sell it.

Get started and download the "How to Price AI" one-pager!

How to price AI — SCALE

The three golden rules of AI pricing

1 Find what your customers value

Align your pricing metric to how customers measure value in their business

Discover what your customers truly value when using your AI. Focus on business metrics they already track: time saved, revenue increased, quality improved, or conversion rates enhanced.

2 Match pricing to value delivery

Ensure revenue scales proportionally as customers realize more value

When customers win more, you should earn more. Hybrid models combine predictable base revenue with unlimited upside tied directly to value creation.

3 Build guardrails to protect

Implement guardrails that protect margins without limiting value creation

Protect both sides from volatility with usage limits, monitoring tools, and clear policies that maintain profitability while providing customers with predictability.

AI pricing decision tree

	MAIN VALUE COMES FROM	PRIMARY VALUE METRIC	BASE
What value does your AI primarily deliver?	Enabling individual users/teams — Value increases as more people use the system	Per-user/seat	Subscription + feature tiers
	Processing volume or throughput — Value increases with more operations completed	Usage/consumption	Platform fee + tiered usage rates
	Specific business results achieved — Value increases with more successful outcomes	Outcome-based	Platform fee/ subscription + per-outcome pricing

Value metric validation checklist

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS
- **Aligned with value:** Directly maps to how customers measure success
- **Acceptable:** Intuitive and easy for prospects to understand
- **Consumable:** Matches how organizations budget and purchase
- **Predictable:** Can be reasonably forecasted by both parties

LONG TERM CHARACTERISTICS
- **Scalable:** Grows naturally as customers expand usage
- **Auditable:** Can be measured clearly without disputes
- **Sustainable:** Remains relevant as markets and costs evolve
- **Differentiable:** Sets you apart from competitors

Hybrid model = base + value scaling

Base component — Subscription or platform fee

+ **Value Scaling** — Growth driver

PLATFORM FEE	SUBSCRIPTION	PER USER/SEAT	USAGE-BASED	OUTCOME-BASED
Entry ticket/access charge, typically lower than full subscription	Recurring payment for defined capabilities and features	When value is people-driven	When value is activity-driven	When value is results-driven

Base component options — SCALE

Platform fee

An 'entry ticket' or access charge to use the platform at all

Best for products where most value (and cost) comes from usage or outcomes

KEY CHARACTERISTICS
- Often lower than a full subscription
- Usually charged per account/ organization, not per user
- May be flat or tiered by non-feature factors (e.g., company size)

COMMON EXAMPLES
- API services with usage-based pricing
- Data enrichment platforms with search/ query-based pricing
- AI infrastructure with pay-as-you-go models

REAL EXAMPLE
OpenAI—base platform access with per-token pricing

Subscription

Recurring payment for ongoing access to a defined set of capabilities

Best for products with predictable value delivery unrelated to usage volume

KEY CHARACTERISTICS
- Predictable recurring revenue
- Easy for customers to budget and forecast
- Typically includes full access to core functionality

COMMON EXAMPLES
- Knowledge management tools
- Collaboration platforms
- Project management software

REAL EXAMPLE
Notion—fixed monthly subscription with AI as add-on

Tiered subscription

Multiple subscription levels with increasing capabilities or limits

Best for products serving diverse customer segments with varying needs

KEY CHARACTERISTICS
- Provides clear upgrade paths as customers grow
- Allows price discrimination based on segment needs
- Can combine feature differences and usage limits

COMMON EXAMPLES
- CRM platforms with basic/pro/ enterprise tiers
- Marketing automation tools
- Analytics platforms with graduated capabilities

REAL EXAMPLE
Hubspot—starter/professional/ enterprise tiers with escalating capabilities

Decision factors

KEY QUESTION	IF YES	IF NO
Does most of your value come from usage volume of specific outcomes?	Consider platform fee	Consider subscription models
Do you have significant per-user infrastructure or support costs?	Avoid platform fee, use per-user pricing	Any model could work
Do you serve multiple distinct customer segments with different needs?	Consider tiered subscription	Simple subscription might suffice
Are your marginal AI costs high or unpredictable per customer?	Platform fee + usage-based component	Any model could work
Do customers expect budget predictability above all else?	Fixed subscription with clear usage limits	Consider usage-based models

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Pete Giordano

Product & GTM Strategy Advisor
Google Cloud, VMware, DoubleClick, Accenture

Peter.Giordano@scalevp.com
@ThisIsPeterG

Everett Berry

Head of GTM Engineering

Everett.Berry@Clay.com
@Everett

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