

AI

SIDE HUSTLES

GUIDE



SMART SIDE PATH

The guide, at a glance

Eight compact chapters. Five practical models. One clear decision.

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Who this is for

You have seen what AI can do and you want in. The problem is not motivation and it is not opportunity. The problem is that there are too many options, and every one of them sounds good.

This guide does two things. First, it opens up five ways to make money with AI that are paying real people right now: what each one is, why the demand exists, how to start, and how you charge. Then it runs all five through the same scoring method and gives you a ranking, from fifth place to first.

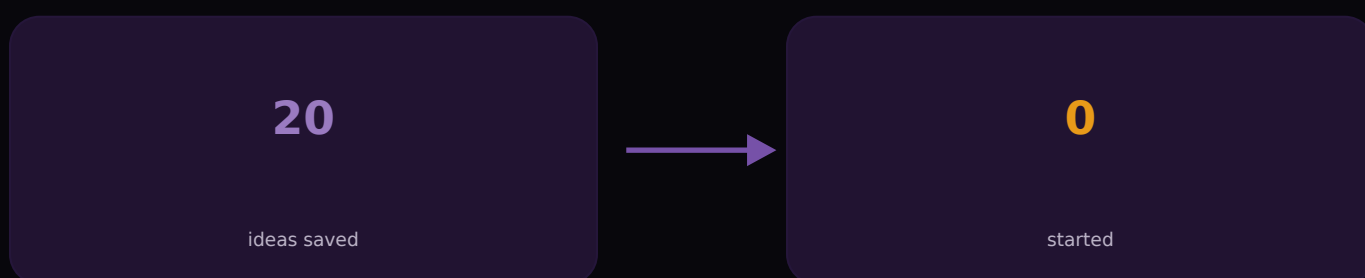
ONE NOTE

None of these five pays without work. All of them require prospecting, delivery, and showing up consistently for months. AI lowered the technical barrier to entry, not the need to do the work every day. Nothing here is a guarantee of results, and anyone promising you that is selling something else.

A hundred doors and none of them open

The cycle is always the same. You find a video, you get excited, you save it. The next video says something different, so you save that one too. Three weeks later you have twenty ideas saved and zero started.

You call it research. But research has an end, and what is happening to you does not. Every new option reopens the entire decision instead of closing part of it.



This is not a character flaw. You are standing in front of a hundred doors with no way to know which one to open. What breaks the loop is cutting the number of doors down and applying the same test to every one that is left.

DO THIS NOW

Open your list of saved ideas and delete everything that is not one of the five in the chapters ahead.

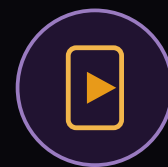


Don't Quit Your Job Start A Side Hustle



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AI UGC



WHAT IT IS

UGC is that vertical video where someone holds a product and talks to the camera like they are recommending it to a friend. It looks like an organic post - most of the time it is an ad.

WHY IT WORKS NOW

AI video tools removed the need to be on camera yourself. Write the script, pick or generate a face, upload product photos - the tool hands you a finished video. Twenty variations in an hour, none of them real.

HOW TO START

1) Produce three unsolicited pieces for a brand you like - that's your portfolio. 2) Tools like Higgsfield run \$15-\$99/month depending on credits. 3) Prospect small brands already running video ads, send the samples, quote.

\$150-\$300

per video, 2026 avg.

5 x \$2,000

\$10,000 / mo retainer

+ PROS

Almost no cost to start, low skill barrier, demand repeats monthly, high margins.

- CONS

Very crowded, selling becomes the real skill, AI realism still slips.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Selling 'AI videos.' Your client is buying creative that performs - deliver hook variations built for testing, not one good-looking piece.

AI websites



WHAT IT IS

Building websites for small businesses using AI tools instead of code.

WHY IT WORKS NOW

Around 27% of US small businesses still have no website in 2026 - roughly 8.9 million active companies invisible to the 80%+ of consumers who research online first. Tools like Lovable and Bolt collapsed the cost: describe what you want, upload a few images, the AI builds it.

HOW TO START

1) Use Google Maps to list businesses in a niche/city with no site. 2) Build the site before you ever speak to them, then show it finished. 3) Lovable: free (5 daily credits), Pro \$25/mo (~100 credits), Business \$50 - real bills run above the sticker price.

27%

US SMBs with no website

\$999 + \$99/mo

build + hosting model

+ PROS

High ticket even as a beginner, minimal upfront cost, obvious demand, tangible product to show.

- CONS

Heavy competition, one sale per client - stop selling, revenue stops.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Leading with SEO and ads because the monthly number looks better. Sell websites first, add services once you have happy clients.

AI short form clipping



WHAT IT IS

Taking a creator's long-form content and turning it into a queue of vertical clips ready to post.

WHY IT WORKS NOW

Every podcaster and YouTuber sits on hours of footage with strong moments buried in it. Short form remains the format marketers name as top ROI - a 30 minute recording yields roughly 10-15 clips. AI now scans footage, picks the best stretches, reframes to vertical, and burns in captions.

HOW TO START

1) Cut three free clips for a mid-sized creator who doesn't publish clips yet.
2) Opus Clip: free (60 min/mo), Starter \$15, Pro \$29 (~\$174/yr). 3) 1 credit = 1 minute uploaded, regardless of clips produced.

10-15 clips

per 30-min recording

5 x \$1,500

\$7,500 / mo

+ PROS

Recurring by design, lowest skill barrier - you run quality control, not editing.

- CONS

Smallest ticket on the list, growth means more hours, not more leverage.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Agreeing to unlimited volume. Cap clips per month and source-footage minutes, or one client destroys your margin.

AI voice agents



WHAT IT IS

A phone receptionist that runs on AI - answers on the first ring, 24/7, and books straight into the calendar.

WHY IT WORKS NOW

One widely cited study found only 37.8% of calls at small businesses get answered by a person, and ~85% of people who can't reach someone never call back - they call the competitor. Each missed call is estimated at \$100-\$200 in lost revenue.

HOW TO START

1) Tools like Vapi build the agent without code. 2) Vapi charges ~\$0.05/min orchestration, plus transcription, model, voice, telephony separately. 3) All-in cost usually \$0.07-\$0.25/min - 500 min/mo lands around \$75-\$125.

37.8%

of calls answered by a person

5 x \$1,000

\$5,000 / mo mgmt fees

+ PROS

Highest ticket on the list; canceling means going back to missing calls - sticky by nature.

- CONS

Steepest learning curve of the five; glitches and changes come back to you.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Selling before you have an agent working end to end. Build one for your own number first, call it thirty times, fix what breaks.

AI digital products



WHAT IT IS

A product you build once and sell unlimited times: an ebook, a course, a template, a paid community, a tool.

WHY IT WORKS NOW

Every other model ties income to showing up. Digital products break that link - the tenth sale costs exactly what the two-hundredth costs. AI now researches, structures, and drafts faster than any person can.

HOW TO START

1) Pick a problem you've already solved for someone; build the smallest version. 2) Choose a channel: your audience, a marketplace, or someone else's audience for a revenue split. 3) Platform fees decide your margin - Gumroad 10%+\$0.50 direct / 30% via Discover, Lemon Squeezy ~5%+\$0.50, your own Stripe ~2.9%+\$0.30.

10 x \$1,000

\$10,000 / mo, less than 1 sale/day

~0

marginal cost per sale

+ PROS

No ceiling tied to your hours - the closest thing to leveraged income here.

- CONS

The first product might not land; you still need an active distribution channel.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Spending two months building the perfect product before finding out anyone pays. Sell the promise first, to ten people, then build.

The CLEAR method

Five proven options are still five options. CLEAR applies the same five axes to every model - five points each, 25 maximum.



Competition

How crowded the lane is.



Longevity

Does it still pay in five years?



Effort

What it costs to acquire the skill.



Autonomy

Does it run without you?



Recurring

Does the model keep paying?

The ranking

PLACE	SIDE HUSTLE	C	L	E	A	R	TOTAL
1st	AI digital products	4	4	4	5	3	20
2nd	AI voice agents	4	3	2	4	3	16
3rd	AI websites	2	5	4	2	2	15
4th	AI clipping	2	2	4	2	4	14
5th	AI UGC	1	1	5	2	3	12

THE VERDICT

AI digital products. The other four all tie your revenue to your effort. This is the only one where that link can actually be broken: you build once, find the channel once, and the product keeps selling long after the work is done.

NEED CASH IN THE NEXT 30 DAYS?

Voice agents and websites pay faster - the ticket is high and the sales cycle short. The score measures the model over the long run, not how fast the first payment arrives.

Start this week

1

MONDAY

Pick one of the five. If it's a tie, use the score as tiebreaker - take digital products. Decision made, options closed.

2

TUESDAY

Subscribe to the main tool on the cheapest plan that lets you produce. If you don't use it this week, cancel it.

3

WEDNESDAY

Build one demo piece: three videos, a website, three clips, a working voice agent, or a product outline.

4

THURSDAY

Build a list of 20 targets who have the exact problem your demo solves.

5

FRIDAY

Reach out to all 20 with the demo attached. Do not ask for a meeting, show them the finished thing.

TWO RULES FOR THE NEXT EIGHT WEEKS

Don't open a second model until you've made 100 outreach attempts on the one you picked. Track contacts, replies, and sales, or you won't know whether the problem is the model or the execution.

Sources

MARKET + PLATFORM DATA

UGC rates, AI content labeling, and platform fee figures cite 2026 rate guides and pricing pages from Higgsfield, Influee, DansUGC, Gumroad, Lemon Squeezy, and Stripe, checked between April and July 2026.

Small-business website figures (27% with no site, 8.9M companies, 80%+ researching online) draw on 2025-2026 compilations from LeadsAgent, Zippia, and Wix. Lovable pricing checked May-July 2026.

TOOLS + RESEARCH

Opus Clip pricing and short-form ROI stats cite quso.ai, eesel, G2, and HubSpot's 2026 video report, checked in July 2026.

Missed-call statistics (37.8% answered, 85% non-callback, \$100-\$200 per miss) trace to the 411 Locals study and Numa's phone research, via 2026 compilations. Vapi voice-agent costs checked May-July 2026.

PRICING CHANGES

AI tool pricing changed several times during 2026. Treat these figures as order-of-magnitude references and confirm on the official page before subscribing to anything.

DECIDE. BUILD. SHIP.

The guide ends here. The work starts with one model and one week of focused action.