

AutomatED

FREE GUIDE · 2026 EDITION

The Top 10 AI Tools for Business

The tools worth your money this year — what each one does, what it costs, and exactly where it fits. Tested on a real business, not a spreadsheet of features.

We test AI tools so you **don't waste money.**

Most tool lists are **noise**. This one isn't.

There are thousands of AI tools and 90% are a waste of time. These ten are the ones that genuinely save hours or make money for an owner-run business — chosen after building real systems on a live company, with real money on the line. Each entry tells you what it does, what it costs, who it's for, and the honest verdict.

Think

ChatGPT, Claude & Perplexity do the thinking, writing and research.

Automate

Make and Fathom remove the repetitive admin from your week.

Grow

HubSpot, Tidio, Canva, ElevenLabs & Gamma win and serve customers.

01 ChatGPT AI ASSISTANT

Free · Plus \$20/mo · Team \$25/seat

The all-purpose assistant — drafting, brainstorming, summarising, quick analysis and idea-bouncing.

Use it for Your daily thinking partner for almost any task.

Val's verdict If you buy only one AI tool, start here. The Swiss Army knife everyone should own.

02 Claude AI ASSISTANT

Free · Pro \$20/mo (\$17 annual) · Team \$25/seat

Long documents, careful writing, data analysis and coding. Handles big files and nuanced work.

Use it for Anything long-form or where accuracy and tone matter.

Val's verdict My pick for serious writing and document work — it reads a 50-page file without breaking a sweat.

03 Perplexity AI RESEARCH

Free · Pro \$20/mo

Answers your questions with live, cited web sources — research without ten browser tabs.

Use it for Market research, competitor checks and fact-finding.

Val's verdict Replaces an hour of Googling with a 30-second sourced answer. Brilliant for quick due diligence.

04 Make.com AUTOMATION

Free · Core ~\$10.59/mo · Pro ~\$18.82/mo

Connects your apps and automates repetitive tasks with no code — the wiring behind a hands-off business.

Use it for Killing manual copy-paste between your tools.

Val's verdict Cheaper and more powerful than Zapier once you learn it. This is where real leverage starts.

05 Fathom MEETING NOTES

Free (unlimited) · Team \$29/mo

Joins your calls, transcribes them and writes the summary plus action items automatically.

Use it for Never taking manual call notes again.

Val's verdict The most generous free tier in the category. Switch it on and forget note-taking forever.

06 Tidio (Lyro AI) CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Lyro AI from \$39/mo

An AI chatbot trained on your content that answers customer questions on your site 24/7.

Use it for Handling routine FAQs without hiring a support agent.

Val's verdict Resolves ~70% of common questions on its own. Watch the add-on pricing as volume grows.

07 HubSpot CRM / SALES

Free CRM · paid tiers scale up

A genuinely free CRM with built-in AI that drafts emails and summarises every contact record.

Use it for Organising leads and never dropping a follow-up.

Val's verdict The best free CRM to start with — and the AI assist is actually useful, not a gimmick.

08 Canva (Magic Studio) DESIGN

Free · Pro \$15/mo

20+ AI design tools — Magic Write, Magic Design, background remover, instant resize for every platform.

Use it for Social posts, marketing graphics and quick brand assets.

Val's verdict One subscription replaces a freelance designer for everyday content. Unbeatable value.

09 ElevenLabs AI VOICE

Free · Creator \$22/mo

Strikingly realistic AI voiceover and voice cloning from plain text.

Use it for Faceless video, voiceovers, and phone / IVR systems.

Val's verdict The gold standard for AI voice — uncannily natural. Powers a faceless content channel on its own.

10 Gamma PRESENTATIONS

Free · Plus \$10/mo · Pro \$20/mo

Generates polished decks, one-pagers and proposals from a single prompt.

Use it for Pitch decks and client proposals, fast.

Val's verdict A finished deck in minutes that doesn't look AI-made. A huge time-saver for sales.

At a glance

Tool	Category	Free tier	Paid from
ChatGPT	AI Assistant	Yes	Plus \$20/mo
Claude	AI Assistant	Yes	Pro \$20/mo (\$17 annual)
Perplexity	AI Research	Yes	Pro \$20/mo
Make.com	Automation	Yes	Core ~\$10.59/mo
Fathom	Meeting Notes	Yes	Team \$29/mo
Tidio (Lyro AI)	Customer Support	—	Lyro AI from \$39/mo
HubSpot	CRM / Sales	Yes	paid tiers scale up
Canva (Magic Studio)	Design	Yes	Pro \$15/mo
ElevenLabs	AI Voice	Yes	Creator \$22/mo
Gamma	Presentations	Yes	Plus \$10/mo

Bonus: AI bookkeeping

QuickBooks and Xero now auto-categorise transactions and surface cashflow insights for you. If you're still doing the books by hand, this is the easiest hour you'll ever win back.

Want this done for you?

Knowing the tools is step one. Wiring them into your business — so leads get answered, follow-up never stops and your numbers run themselves — is what we do. Book a free 20-minute fit call and we'll find the biggest, fastest win in your business.

Book a free fit call → calendly.com/valdosev/30min

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Prices shown are provider list prices in USD and were correct at the time of writing (June 2026); they change often and may differ by region or billing term — always check the provider's site. Tool names and trademarks belong to their respective owners. This guide is independent and not sponsored.