

AI ROI 2026

What an AI Voice Agent Costs and Saves: 2026 ROI

A numbers-first companion to our AI phone guides: what an AI voice agent really costs per call, how it stacks up against a human, and a clearly-illustrative worked example showing where the return actually comes from.

The economics of AI answering finally add up in 2026. A routine four-minute call handled by an AI voice agent costs roughly **\$0.28. \$0.60**; the same call handled by a person costs about **\$3. \$7** (illustrative of the 2026 market). Gartner forecasts conversational AI will cut global contact-centre labour costs by **\$80 billion in 2026**. But the biggest return for a small Australian business usually isn't the per-call saving, it's the **missed calls you start recovering**, because an AI voice agent answers 24/7 with no extra shifts. The trick is knowing what to automate (repetitive, structured, low-emotion calls) and what to send straight to a human (emotional, complex, high-value or regulated). And in Australia, a genuine local accent matters, callers hang up on an obvious offshore voice. This is the honest ROI breakdown, with every figure hedged as illustrative.

■ The short version

Factor	Human agent	AI voice agent
Hours available	Business hours only	✓ 24/7
Calls at once	X One at a time	✓ Many in parallel
After-hours & weekend cover	Extra shifts / penalty rates	✓ Included
Sick days, leave, turnover	X Always a factor	✓ None

■ Key points

- Stop losing calls, and start counting the return

The scenario (all figures illustrative)

A small Australian services business, say a plumbing or clinic operation, takes about **30 calls a working day**, roughly **600 a month**. Between busy periods, lunch breaks, jobs on site and after-hours enquiries, it misses about **8 calls a day**, around **160 a month**. Industry estimates suggest a majority of small-business calls go unanswered and that most people who hit voicemail simply ring the next business rather than leave a message. Every one of those is a quote never given.

■ Questions the full guide answers

- ☐ How much does an AI voice agent cost per call?
- ☐ Will an AI voice agent replace my staff?
- ☐ How do I actually calculate the ROI for my business?
- ☐ Which calls should I not give to an AI voice agent?
- ☐ Does the AI voice agent really need an Australian accent?
- ☐ Is the \$80 billion Gartner saving figure realistic for a small business?

This is the summary. The guide has the detail.

Every point above is worked through in full on our site, with the Australian context, the numbers and the exceptions. If you would rather talk it through, call **1300 663 222** or visit vocphone.com/about/contact-us.