

THE EVERYTHING · FIELD GUIDES FOR TRADE BUSINESSES

The AI Locksmiths Playbook

How to run a locksmith business in the age of AI

— and out-earn outfits three times your size.

THE COMPLETE SYSTEM · NO FLUFF · FREE TO SHARE

THE EVERYTHING

Read this first

Ten years ago, running a proper locksmith business meant someone on the phone, a bookkeeper, and still working out the call-out, the labour and the hardware on a scrap of paper in the van between jobs.

Today, a one-van locksmith with the right setup answers every after-hours lockout, quotes straighter and gets paid quicker than a ten-van outfit across town — and spends zero nights on paperwork.

He's not smarter than you. He's not a better locksmith. And he's definitely not a computer person — one of the best we've seen was still pricing jobs on a pad on the passenger seat two years ago. He just worked out one thing before everyone else: **the boring half of the business** — the calls, the quotes, the on-site write-ups, the invoices, the insurer and property-manager chasing, the filing — can now do itself. So he put his energy where the money is: on the tools, and at the door.

This is the playbook for how he does it. No “50 prompts to copy”. No tech-bro nonsense. The actual system — how to think about it, what to set up, in what order, and the mistakes that make good locksmiths quit before it clicks. Read it start to finish and you'll run a tighter, more profitable locksmith business than you do right now, even if you never spend a cent on software.

A STRAIGHT WORD ON WHAT STAYS YOURS

Nothing in here calls a lock unbreakable, certifies that a door is secure, or decides who's entitled to get through it — and it never replaces your judgement at the door, the customer's proof of ownership, or the insurer's call on a claim. It carries the admin. Whether a lock comes open without drilling is a skill call; whether the person in front of you has a right to that door is a hard one; who foots the bill is a legal one. All three stay yours, start to finish.

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01

CHAPTER ONE

The New Playing Field

Someone standing at a locked door at midnight — or beside a car with the keys shut inside it — can't tell if you're a good locksmith. They judge you on what they can reach — and that's where most locksmith outfits quietly lose the best work of the week.

Nobody wakes up wanting a locksmith. The phone rings because something went *wrong* — locked out overnight, keys lost or stolen, a break-in through the front door, a snapped key in a shop shutter before opening. They don't ring one locksmith. They ring down the Google list until someone picks up — and the job goes to whoever gets three things right first:

- 1 Did you actually pick up — at 11pm, on a Sunday?** The lockout and the break-in happen after hours, and they go to the first locksmith who answers, not the best one. Ring out to voicemail and it's lost before you've asked a single question.
- 2 Did you get a van moving, fast?** Whoever says “someone's on the way” and means it owns the job — and the rekey and security upgrade that follow. The lockout isn't the small job — it's the audition for the big one.
- 3 Was dealing with you easy — and did you sound legit?** A real address, a licence you'll show, a branded van, a written price at the door. In a trade crawling with scammers, easy and above-board wins the rekey, the upgrade and the next call.

Notice what none of those are about? How cleanly you pick a lock. All three are about being reachable, moving fast and running the admin — the exact stuff you hate at the end of a day on the tools. And here's the bit nobody's telling you: the other side already runs on AI. The question isn't whether AI comes into locksmithing — it's whether it's working for you or against you.

The good news? This is the first time the technology favours the small operator. The big firms run committees, rollouts and training programs. You can decide on a Tuesday and be answering every call by Friday. The playing field just flipped: the small, fast, reachable locksmith can now look and perform like the big outfit — without the big outfit's overheads.

“But I'm not a computer person”

Neither are the trades doing this best. One of the fastest adopters we've seen is a trade-business owner with 26 years on the tools who only picked up a computer three years ago. His words: **“Don't worry about spelling. Don't worry about grammar.”** If you can send a text or leave a voice message, you can run everything in this playbook. Being able to say what you want is the new requirement — and locksmiths, who talk a rattled customer calm every day, are already good at that.

**\$300–
1,000**
+ per month

What most trade job-management and quoting software charges in AUD — and it still makes you do the typing and the on-site write-up. One owner was paying a grand a month, some months three, for software his crew barely used. Everything in this playbook either replaces that spend or makes it earn its keep.

The firms three times your size are slow because they're big. That's your opening. This playbook is about walking through it.

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CHAPTER TWO

Think AI-First

Before we touch a single tool, we need to fix how you think about this — because the biggest mistake isn't buying the wrong software. It's bolting AI onto your old way of working and wondering why nothing changed.

Every process in your business was built on one assumption: a human has to do each step. Someone answers the phone. Someone writes up the job and types the quote. Someone rings the insurer about the claim. Your whole day is shaped around that assumption — and that assumption just died.

Don't automate your old process. Re-draw it — with the AI touching everything first, and you supervising. Three mental shifts:

Shift one — delegate outcomes, not steps

Stop thinking “which buttons do I click”. You now talk to your business the way you'd talk to a good apprentice: say the outcome, let it work out the steps. One owner reorders stock by sending one message from the supplier counter — “grabbing the restricted blanks and two euro cylinders for the Nguyen rekey” — and the order, the expense and the books sort themselves.

Shift two — AI first, you second

The AI does the first pass of everything, and you approve, tweak or overrule. The quote is drafted before you sit down. One customer described it: **“Nine times out of ten it's perfect. Just go — yep, send.”** Your job shrinks to ten seconds of judgment, not forty minutes of typing.

Shift three — corrections are investments

With normal software, you fix the same mistake forever. With AI, you fix it once. Tell it a standard lockout quote carries the after-hours call-out, that a rekey job should always prompt “who else has a key?”, and that you never promise a firm price before you've seen the lock — it answers, **“I'll remember that from now on.”** Every correction compounds. Six months in, it quotes like you, writes like you and knows your rules — because you taught it, once.

The re-imagining exercise

Walk your business and ask one question about every interaction: “What would this look like if the AI touched it first?”

INTERACTION	THE OLD WAY	AI-FIRST
Lockout call comes in at 11pm	Voicemail. Job lost to whoever answered.	Answered, details captured, van booked — the rekey quote drafted by morning.
Wrong cylinder turns up from the supplier	You notice on site, chase the counter, lose the install slot.	Flagged against the job, re-ordered automatically — you hear only if it slips again.
Supplier's price-list update lands	Buried under 200 emails. Old rates on your next quote.	Extracted, applied to your rates — “cylinders and restricted blanks up on six lines.”
Job finishes	Invoice “tonight”. Review never asked for.	Invoice sent from the van. Review asked while they're still relieved.

Every chapter from here is just this exercise applied to one part of your business.

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CHAPTER THREE

Never Miss a Job Again

Let's start with the leak that costs you the most and hurts the least — because you never see the bill.

The highest-value jobs in locksmithing don't arrive at 10am with a polite enquiry. They arrive at 11pm as a lockout, as a break-in the owner just got a call about, as lost keys in a car park an hour from home — and they arrive while you're on the tools, driving, or asleep. The phone buzzes in the van. It rings out. That caller — a lockout tonight, a rekey next week, an insurance job behind it — rings the next locksmith on the list. Gone.

1 in 3

calls rings out

The typical locksmith misses around a third of inbound calls — a hand's-full moment under a dashboard, or already on another job. It's brutal here, because emergency lockout calls convert at roughly 70–85%: the person locked out isn't shopping, they'll hire whoever answers and says a van is coming. A missed call isn't a deferred sale — it's a sale handed to the next number on Google. And it drags your ranking down, so it costs you the next one too.

The customer locked out at midnight doesn't leave a voicemail. They ring the next mob. Voicemail is where the best jobs of the week go to die. The AI-first fix is bigger — because a call is really two problems.

Problem one — the call you couldn't take

An AI receptionist answers in your business's name, 24/7, sounds normal on the phone, and captures every detail — what's locked, where, what kind of door or car, who's paying — while you're still asleep or under a dashboard.

Problem two — the promise you couldn't keep

The second half of a missed call is the promise nobody wrote down. “I'll get someone out to you within the hour.” “I'll ring your property manager Monday.” The AI captures the promise and chases it — you, or the customer — until it's done.

- ✓ Every call answered in your business's name — including 11pm, including Sunday, including the Friday-night rush when every locksmith's phone in town is going at once.
- ✓ A searchable transcript of every call — “what did we agree about the call-out and who's paying?”
- ✓ Promises land somewhere that chases you — not a notebook, not your memory at the end of a 14-hour day.
- ✓ Job details from the call — lock or car type, address, who's paying — flow straight into the job, not re-typed three times.

The phone stops being the thing that costs you the best jobs and becomes the thing that books them — even at 3am, even when both hands are full.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Quote Before You Leave the Driveway

Locksmithing has a quoting trap most trades don't: the honest answer to “how much?” down the phone is “I can't say yet” — and out of your mouth that can sound exactly like the scammers' bait.

No firm price

down the phone

You haven't seen the lock, the door or the car. A euro cylinder, a mortice deadlock, a high-security restricted cylinder and a smart lock are wildly different work and parts — and whether it comes open without drilling is unknown until you're there. A firm phone price is a guess. Here's the bind: the scammers *also* quote a low, firm phone number — then triple it at the door. Refuse to quote and you can sound like one of them.

So the honest operator has to do the opposite of hide — **invert every scam signal, loudly**: a real local address, a licence you'll show, a branded van, and a written price at the door *before* any work. Not “trust me”, but “here's exactly who I am and what it'll cost once I've seen it.”

AI-first quoting makes that easy: the AI *qualifies* the job before a van rolls. Here's what that looks like in a real locksmith business today.

- ✓ **It asks the right questions first.** From the call, the AI works through what actually sets the price — lock or door type, or the car's exact year, make and model; lockout, rekey or lost keys; and who owns it and who's paying — so you roll a van to a real job, not a maybe.
- ✓ **It prices from YOUR structure.** Feed it your past jobs and it learns your call-out, your labour, your after-hours rate and your hardware margins — and gives an honest bounded range, not a number you can't honour.
- ✓ **It catches what you forgot.** It doesn't get tired at 11:30pm and leave off the after-hours call-out, the second cylinder, or the fact the customer has to prove the car's theirs.

Same day

quote, done right

A trade-business owner — 26 years on the tools, barely touches a computer: “Quotes that used to take me two or three days, my AI does in half a day. I did one yesterday that would've taken two days — sent it off the same day.” Pricing came in “pretty much on par” with his own numbers, because it learned from his past jobs.

The written on-site quote isn't red tape — it's the sell

Because the honest price depends on what you find at the door, the move is to get moving now and confirm the price on site, in writing, before you start. Framed right, that's not a delay — it's the thing that tells a nervous customer you're not the bloke who doubles it once the drill's out. “We give you a written price on site before we touch the lock” turns your honesty into the reason they picked you.

Then the bit everyone skips — the follow-up. One message, two days later: “Just checking you got the quote for the rekey and the new deadbolt.” That single message wins more jobs than dropping your rate ever will. AI-first, the follow-up isn't a habit you build. It's a thing that just happens.

THE POINT ISN'T THE SOFTWARE

It's the standard: qualify before you roll, never quote a firm price you haven't seen, put it in writing at the door, follow up every time. A locksmith with a notepad who hits that standard beats one with an app who doesn't. The AI just makes the standard effortless.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Get Paid Without the Awkward Chase

You've done the work. Now you've got to get the money — and in locksmithing that's rarely as simple as one customer and one invoice.

Who pays?

ask before you cut a key

The person who rings isn't always the one who pays. A lockout is usually the tenant's; a turnover rekey is the landlord's or property manager's; unit-entry and common-door hardware can be strata's; a break-in or stolen-keys job may be the insurer's, minus the excess; a fleet or multi-site job is the business's. Get that wrong and the invoice bounces around for weeks. Get it right up front and the money follows the work.

The chasing is a system problem, not a people problem. Fix the system and you never have the awkward conversation again.

- 1 Route by payer before the van rolls.** The first question — “is this you, a tenant, a landlord, strata, a claim or a fleet?” — decides the invoice, the paperwork and the upsell before you've left the driveway.
- 2 Invoice the right payer the second the job's done.** One sentence from the van: “invoice the Wilson rekey to the property manager.” On a claim it drafts to the insurer, so the customer's only out their excess.
- 3 Take the card on site.** A tap or a “pay now” link at the door gets paid faster than “here are my bank details” — and the reminders at day 3, 7 and 14 send themselves.
- 4 Escalate the tone only if you have to.** Most pay on nudge one or two. You stay the good guy the whole way.

Money is money: this is the one place you keep the AI on a short leash at the start. It drafts, you approve — until you've watched it be right for a month.

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CHAPTER SIX

The Inbox That Runs Itself

Your inbox is where quiet money leaks out and stress leaks in.

Supplier statements, insurer claim numbers, restricted-key orders, price-list updates, the builder chasing a lock schedule on a fit-out, a property manager asking who signs off a turnover rekey — all mixed in with junk, all landing while you're at a door with a pick gun in one hand and a torch in the other. One store manager started with a backlog of 24,000 emails: "I'd read one email, it'd get lost. I wouldn't even be able to find it again."

AI-first, the inbox becomes something that's already handled by the time you look:

- ✓ **Triaged.** The three emails that matter today float to the top, flagged with why — "this one's the insurer approving the break-in repair."
- ✓ **Drafted.** Routine replies — "yes we cut and program car keys", "we're booked till end of week" — written and waiting. You glance, tweak, send.
- ✓ **Answered on demand.** "What's the current price on that restricted cylinder from the supplier?" — and it finds the latest instantly.

THE PART NOBODY EXPECTS — IT GUARDS YOUR MONEY

Because the AI reads everything, it catches things. One business: "It's already saved me thousands in mis-ordered products — it said, hold on, based on your past jobs you probably want this one." Another had a supplier accidentally invoice at a 50% discrepancy — flagged automatically before it was paid.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Your Digital Office Manager

Every locksmith business has an office manager. Usually it's you, doing it badly at 10pm.

+20 jobs
in one week

One trade business's admin person went on leave for a week. The owner: "We haven't had her in the office for a week, and it's helped us do her job — and we've had probably an extra 20 jobs come in through this week." Not survive the week. Their biggest week.

The morning brief

Before you turn the key: today's jobs in order, which rekey is waiting on restricted blanks from the supplier, which lockout needs to become a security-upgrade quote, who to chase for payment, and the one thing that'll bite you if you forget it. Two minutes with a coffee — and your offside knows too.

Job files that build themselves

Every photo, quote, invoice, key code and insurer email attaches itself to the right job — so when the customer rings in eight months for another key on the same system, the whole history's there. The lockout, the rekey, the ID you sighted, the claim number, the email where strata said yes — all in one place.

The paperwork without the dread

The insurer's damage report, the record that you sighted proof the car or property was theirs, the strata approval before you touch a common door — prompted, captured against the job, and kept where you can find it. Never invented for you, and never a substitute for your own check at the door — just stopped from going missing.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Look Twice as Big as You Are

Here's a secret the big firms rely on you not knowing: most of “looking professional” is presentation — and presentation is now nearly free.

A one-van locksmith and a fifty-person outfit can send the identical, spotless, branded quote and claim report — and show the same real address and licence. The customer can't tell which is which — so the small operator who bothers gets treated like the big one, trusted like the big one, and can charge like it.

The referral flywheel — on purpose, not by accident

- 1 **Retain** — make the whole job easy, above-board and clear, so they'd have you back without thinking twice and keep your number on the fridge.
- 2 **Review** — ask for the Google review at the moment they're happiest, right after they're back inside and the panic's over, automatically, with the link. Reviews and fast response are what lift you up the rankings.
- 3 **Refer** — the rekey you did for one unit gets you the next in the block; the good turn for one property manager gets you all their doors.
- 4 **Resell** — the “who else has a key?” after a lockout becomes a rekey; the rekey becomes a deadbolt upgrade, a smart lock, a restricted-key system, a master key for the whole shop. It's all in the call transcript. A reminder at the right time turns one lockout into a security account.

START TODAY — EVEN WITH ZERO TECH

Ask every happy customer for a review before you pack up the van, and always ask the one question that opens the ladder — “want the old keys killed off so nobody else can get in?” A customer who's just been locked out or broken into is the most receptive you'll ever find them.

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CHAPTER NINE

The 30-Day Switch

Everything above works. The reason most locksmiths don't get it working is they try to do it all at once, get overwhelmed mid-job, and go back to the old way. So: one thing at a time, without stopping work.

- 1 Week 1 — Stop the biggest leak: the after-hours phone.** Every call answered, every lockout and break-in captured, promises pulled out automatically. This starts paying for the whole exercise immediately.
- 2 Week 2 — Fix quoting.** The AI qualifies the job and gives an honest range from your structure; you correct it — and every correction is a lesson it keeps. Written on-site quotes with the two-day follow-up.
- 3 Week 3 — Fix getting paid.** The right invoice to the right payer, insurer and property-manager paperwork handled, card on site, automatic reminders — with you approving everything money-related until it's earned the leash.
- 4 Week 4 — Hand over the back office.** Inbox triaged and drafted, morning brief running, job files building themselves, reviews asked automatically.

Why all four? Because one process never feels like much. Three is where the “holy hell” moment happens — because that's when the pieces start talking to each other. The call becomes the lockout. The lockout becomes the rekey. The rekey becomes the invoice and the review.

The trust dial — how to hand over without losing sleep

You don't hand a new apprentice the van and a job on day one. Same here:

- 1 **Weeks 1–2: it asks about everything.** Every email draft, every invoice — “here's what I'd send, OK?” You approve, correct, teach.
- 2 **Weeks 3–4: it asks about the important stuff.** Routine replies just go; money, insurers and new customers still get your nod.
- 3 **Month two onward: it asks about exceptions.** Now it runs, and you get the morning brief and the flags. You're still the boss — you've just stopped being the bottleneck.

The mistakes that make good locksmiths quit before it clicks

- ✓ **Doing all four weeks at once.** Don't. One a week. Each banks a win before you add the next.
- ✓ **Bolting AI onto the old process.** If you're still typing every job into the same old software and asking AI to “help”, you've missed the point. Re-draw the process (Chapter 2).
- ✓ **Treating it like software instead of staff.** Software you configure once and curse forever. This, you teach — and it gets better every week.
- ✓ **Waiting for perfect.** A rough system running today beats a perfect one you'll set up “when things quiet down”. Things never quiet down.



BEFORE YOU PUT THIS DOWN

The 2-Minute Leak Audit

Most locksmiths aren't short of skill or hours — they're losing jobs they already had a shot at winning. A typical solo turns around 900 jobs a year, yet close to a third of calls ring out — and lockout calls convert at 70–85%. Recover the emergency calls you're missing and you add hundreds of jobs a year before buying a single new lead. Be honest — tick the ones that are true right now.

- ✓ I regularly miss calls after hours and on weekends — and I don't know how many jobs it's cost me.
- ✓ A lockout or break-in has gone to voicemail and I never knew the phone rang.
- ✓ I've given a firm price down the phone before seeing the lock — or lost a job because I wouldn't.
- ✓ I don't always follow up after sending a quote.
- ✓ I've started work before I confirmed who was actually paying — owner, tenant, landlord, strata or insurer.
- ✓ I leave the insurer or property-manager paperwork to the customer instead of handling it.
- ✓ I don't always check the person is entitled to the door or the car before I open it.
- ✓ My invoices take longer than two weeks to get paid.
- ✓ My inbox stresses me out, and important stuff gets buried.
- ✓ If a customer rang about a job from last year, it'd take me a while to find the details.

0–2

Tight ship. A few tweaks and you're flying.

3–6

You're leaking real jobs in the boring half — and it's all fixable. Start with Week 1.

7+

Mate, the best jobs of the week are walking to whoever answers next. Good news: it's exactly the stuff that's now easiest to fix.

The biggest lever isn't more leads — it's answering more of the calls you already get. Your biggest tick is your biggest opportunity. Start there.

Want it set up for you?

Everything in this playbook, you can build yourself — and you should, if you've got the time and the patience. Plenty do. If you'd rather it was just done — the AI that answers your phone at 3am, captures every lockout and break-in, qualifies the job and gives an honest range, routes the invoice to the right payer, handles the insurer and chases the money, all in one, working in your locksmith business this week — that's what we build. It's called .

- ✓ 14-day free trial. Cancel anytime. No lock-in, no contracts.
- ✓ Nothing important — a quote, an invoice, a customer message — ever goes out without you seeing it first.
- ✓ It lives in Microsoft Teams and the tools you already use.

See it working on your own jobs at the-everything-app.com — no credit card to look.

Honest note: this won't fix a broken business, and it won't call a lock unbreakable, decide who's entitled to a door, or make the insurer's call on a claim — that's still you, the customer's proof of ownership, and the insurer. What it fixes is the office job you've been doing for free after dark.