THE STRATEGIC QUESTION

Zero-Base AI: what business would you build today?

Start from the ideal customer relationship. Rethink the business that could deliver it.

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What if you are using AI to perfect a business you would no longer choose to build?

The organisation chart looks familiar. So do the products, pricing and customers you have decided are too expensive to serve. Add AI to each department and the whole arrangement starts moving faster. The question is whether it is still the right arrangement.

Many business models contain compromises that have hardened into assumptions: only large accounts can receive tailored advice; specialist knowledge must be sold by the day or the report; selling, implementation and support must be separate activities. Those choices often reflected the cost of expertise, attention and coordination. They were not laws of customer behaviour.

Where AI changes those costs and capabilities, it reopens the choices. A service once reserved for a few customers might become viable for many. Information might become an ongoing decision capability. A transaction might become a relationship built around a result.

That is the ambition of Zero-Base AI: rethink the business through customer value and profitable revenue growth, with AI making previously impractical or impossible commercial models worth considering.

The starting question is more demanding than where to deploy the next tool: what business would we design today if we began with the ideal customer relationship, the value we want to create and capture, and the capabilities AI makes possible?

EXHIBIT 1 | Change the question. Change the business.

IMPROVE THE EXISTING BUSINESS	DESIGN THE BUSINESS YOU COULD BUILD
How can AI help us do what we already do?	What becomes possible if the old constraints change?
Faster tasks Better decisions More efficient delivery	Different offers and relationships Previously uneconomic customers New ways to earn revenue
Existing model improved	Business model reconsidered

THE RELATIONSHIP COMES FIRST

Imagine the relationship before the organisation

Picture a supplier that understands what you are trying to achieve, helps you recognise the right solution and proves its relevance without making you sit through a ceremonial product demonstration. Agreement is straightforward. Implementation begins with the knowledge already shared. The service learns as your needs change and helps you keep extracting value.

You do not explain the same problem to Sales, implementation and Support. You do not become the unpaid project manager of your supplier's internal coordination. You retain control over consequential decisions, while the work around them becomes easier.

Now look from the supplier's side. You can recognise where you are relevant, distinguish a real opportunity from a poor fit, earn trust and deliver on the promise. What you learn from serving customers changes what you offer next.

Designing that whole relationship can change the business itself: the product boundary, the customers you pursue, how you charge and where human expertise belongs. Zero-Base AI works backwards from this relationship through three connected stages: Reimagine, Redesign and Realise.

EXHIBIT 2 | Design the relationship. Work back to the business.

THE IDEAL CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP
Understand objectives → Establish trust → Find the right solution
Agree → Implement → Create value continually

01 / REIMAGINE **What value should the relationship create?**	Customer objectives · Trust and effortless progress · Continuing value OUTPUT: A CUSTOMER PROMISE
02 / REDESIGN **What business could deliver and capture it?**	Offer, market and revenue model · Organisation, processes and AI · Economics and advantage OUTPUT: A BUSINESS DESIGN
03 / REALISE **What will turn the promise into revenue?**	Test demand and delivery · Implement roles and capabilities · Earn, measure and improve OUTPUT: EVIDENCE AND REVENUE

Customer evidence reshapes the design
CUSTOMER VALUE + PROFITABLE REVENUE GROWTH

01 / SOFTWARE

From a tool customers operate to a capability they acquire

Consider a B2B planning-software company. Today it sells licences, implementation and support. Customers must provide the people and expertise to turn the product into a functioning planning capability. Smaller firms may lack both.

Imagine a different offer. A customer explains its planning objectives and constraints. The service helps connect the necessary information, configure the working process and guide the first decisions. It then monitors agreed indicators, identifies exceptions, prepares revised scenarios and coordinates approved actions. Specialists intervene where judgement, negotiation or significant change requires them.

The customer is acquiring an ongoing planning capability, combining software, AI and expertise. That is a different promise from access to a product they must learn to exploit. Elements of the attention associated with a dedicated strategic account team could extend far beyond the largest customers.

The addressable market changes: firms without an internal planning team may now be able to use the offer. Pricing could combine a recurring capability fee, an agreed scope of service and additional specialist intervention. Revenue would depend less exclusively on how many people log in.

The organisation changes too. Implementation, product expertise and customer success become parts of one value-delivery model. Experts handle difficult cases and improve reusable knowledge. Someone owns the customer's planning capability across onboarding and continuing use, rather than passing responsibility along at contract signature.

The commercial question is whether customers will pay for that capability and whether it can be delivered profitably as they grow. A customer does not need a more articulate supplier who still fails to help.

The three scenarios are illustrative possibilities, not reported client outcomes. Each depends on capabilities and economics that must be established in its intended setting.

02 / SPECIALIST RESEARCH

From supplying information to supporting decisions and action

A specialist research business traditionally sells reports or bespoke assignments. The customer buys information, interprets it, decides what to do and finds a way to act. Much of the value depends on work that happens after the research supplier has finished.

Start instead with a smaller manufacturer deciding where to expand. Imagine a service that maintains an understanding of its products, capabilities and commercial objectives. Using distinctive research and permitted customer information, it compares market options, explains the evidence, tests assumptions and updates recommendations when conditions change.

The relationship need not stop at a recommendation. With customer approval, the service could turn a selected opportunity into a market-entry brief, identify potential channels, prepare partner criteria and feed agreed actions into the commercial team's workflow. Expert review concentrates on ambiguous evidence and consequential decisions.

The offer becomes a continuing decision-and-action service. The customer can ask what has changed for its business and what it should do next, rather than repeatedly commission a new information product.

That could open a market among firms unable to afford recurring bespoke consulting. The revenue model might combine a subscription for monitored decisions with fees for deeper analysis or execution support. Shared research and reusable analytical work support the economics; customer-specific expert effort must remain visible.

Researchers, sector experts and commercial specialists would work around recurring customer decisions. Product development would follow those decisions and the evidence needed to support them, rather than simply the next report in the catalogue.

A conversational wrapper around public information would be easy to imitate. The advantage must come from distinctive evidence, trusted interpretation, sector relationships or an ability to help customers act. Producing more research is useful. Becoming part of how customers decide and move is a larger commercial possibility.

03 / INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION

From selling components to ensuring operational continuity

A maintenance manager asks a distributor for a replacement pump. The immediate requirement is a component. The underlying need is a production line that keeps running.

Imagine designing the relationship around that need. The supplier maintains an agreed understanding of the customer's installed equipment and operating priorities. It connects maintenance signals, approved technical knowledge, parts availability and service partners. It helps anticipate failures, prepare compatible alternatives and coordinate intervention before downtime becomes prolonged.

The customer could acquire a continuity service spanning multiple component suppliers, with defined monitoring, maintenance and response commitments. Smaller industrial sites that cannot justify a large in-house reliability team might become viable customers.

Revenue could combine a recurring service fee, parts and intervention charges. Stronger performance commitments would become an option only where the supplier has sufficient control over delivery. The value proposition changes the economics: the business earns for helping sustain operations as well as responding when something breaks.

The distributor must then organise as an orchestrator of continuity. Technical authority, stock planning, field service and partner coordination become central to the offer. Account ownership extends across the operating result. Charging for uptime while controlling only the chatbot would be an imaginative way to acquire liabilities.

Predictive maintenance and service subscriptions already exist. The strategic question is whether AI changes interpretation and coordination enough to make a particular service viable across equipment, customers or sites that were previously too costly to support.

The promise determines the organisation

Across these examples, the offer, market, revenue model and organisation move together. A business selling continuous value cannot be managed solely through separate targets for leads, signed contracts and closed tickets. Someone needs authority across the customer promise, supported by the people, processes and evidence required to keep it.

The existing business contains valuable assets: expertise, trust, relationships and proprietary knowledge. Zero-Base AI asks how to deploy them differently. It does not require throwing them away.

REIMAGINE. REDESIGN. REALISE.

Make the ambition earn its investment

Reimagine the value and relationship. Choose an important customer need or market opportunity. Describe what an exceptional relationship would achieve before accepting today's product boundaries, departmental responsibilities or service economics. Name the inherited assumption you are reopening.

Redesign the business that could deliver it. Connect the offer, market, price and revenue model to the organisation, processes, AI capabilities and human expertise required. Ask why customers would choose you when competitors can also buy AI. Compare the new design with improving the existing process. Reinvention has to earn its investment.

Realise the opportunity. Test the commercial proposition, implement the necessary changes and follow them through to profitable revenue. The first experiment can be small; the question it tests must remain ambitious.

For the research service, an impressive demonstration can answer questions from reports while leaving the business model untouched. The useful test is whether customers pay for repeated decision support, act on it and remain profitable after expert intervention. For software, establish whether the capability delivers useful planning outcomes at a sustainable service cost. For industrial distribution, prove technical reliability and fulfilment before strengthening the promise.

Where necessary, deliver parts manually while testing demand. Record that effort honestly and establish how the intended design could reduce it. Customer enthusiasm alone cannot prove scalable economics. Include acquisition, integration, knowledge maintenance, review, exceptions and delivery in the case.

Zero-based design and customer-led business transformation are established disciplines. Blossomator brings them together here around a commercial question: which customer relationship could now be valuable and viable, and what business would make it real? Evidence from implementation must keep reshaping the design.

Ask your leadership team which customer need you have learned to accept as too expensive, too complex or too small to serve. Then ask which assumption makes it so.

Your next growth opportunity may be sitting inside a decision that used to make perfect sense.

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