

AI ROI 2026

AI Voice Agents by the Numbers: The 2026 Cost and ROI Guide

A numbers-first companion to our AI phone guides. The real per-call economics of AI voice agents versus humans, the savings reshaping contact centres, and a worked, clearly-labelled illustrative ROI example for a small Australian.

On illustrative 2026 figures, a routine four-minute call handled by an **AI voice agent costs roughly \$0.28 to \$0.60**, against **\$3 to \$7** for the same call handled by a person. Gartner forecasts that conversational AI will cut global contact-centre labour costs by **\$80 billion in 2026**. The bigger prize for most small businesses is not shaving cents off answered calls, it is **catching the calls that currently ring out**, because industry estimates suggest a majority of small-business calls go unanswered and most voicemail callers never ring back. The smart play is to automate the **repetitive, structured, low-emotion** calls (after-hours answering, bookings, FAQs, routing, lead qualification, missed-call recovery) and route anything **emotional, complex, high-value or regulated** to a human fast.

The short version

Measure (illustrative 2026)	AI Voice Agent	Human Agent
Cost per 4-minute call	\$0.28. \$0.60	\$3. \$7
100 routine calls / month	~\$28. \$60	~\$300. \$700
Availability	✓ 24/7, no extra shifts	~ Rostered / paid hours
Simultaneous calls	✓ Many at once, no queue	✗ One at a time
Cost when the phone is quiet	✓ Near zero	✗ Paid regardless

■ Key points

- Your Next Reads

The Two Sources of Return

1. Lower cost per call: routine calls handled for roughly \$0.28. \$0.60 each instead of \$3. \$7, and answered 24/7 without rostering extra shifts.

■ Questions the full guide answers

- ☐ How much does an AI voice agent cost per call compared with a human?
- ☐ Will an AI voice agent replace my staff?
- ☐ What kinds of calls should I let AI handle, and what should go to a person?
- ☐ Does the AI voice agent's accent really matter?
- ☐ How quickly can an AI voice agent pay for itself?
- ☐ Are these cost and ROI figures guaranteed?

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 881 662** or visit **unidenvoice.com/get-started**.