

AI EXPLAINED · TRENDS 2026

Domain-Specific AI: Hire the Specialist, Not the Temp.

Business AI is moving from one general model to specialists built for one job and grounded in your information. What that means, and how to test it.

A general AI model is a bright temp on day one: articulate, fast, and unaware of your prices, hours and rules. **A domain-specific model, grounded in your business, is the receptionist who knows the work.**

■ The shift, in numbers (Gartner predictions)

- By 2027, **more than 50%** of the GenAI models enterprises use will be specific to an industry or business function, up from **about 1% in 2023**.
- By 2027, organisations will use small, task-specific models **at least 3x more** than general purpose LLMs (press release, 9 April 2025).
- Why: general models lose accuracy on tasks that need business context; smaller specialists are faster and cheaper to run.

■ Where a general chatbot goes wrong

Caller asks	General chatbot	Grounded specialist
"Open Saturday arvo?"	Typical hours, or a guess	Your real hours, then offers a booking
"How much for a callout?"	An internet average	Your fee, or "someone will confirm"
"Do you come to Kellyville?"	"Yes, the whole area!"	Checks your service area
"It's urgent, water everywhere"	Takes a message	Follows your urgent rule, puts it through

■ Three ways a model becomes a specialist

Method	What it does	Who does it
Industry training	Built on one field's material (e.g. finance, medicine)	Large companies
Fine-tuning	Teaches the shape of one task, e.g. phone calls	Your AI supplier
Grounding (RAG)	Looks up your FAQs, prices, calendar before answering	You and your supplier

Rule of thumb

Fine-tuning teaches the AI **how to do the job**. Grounding gives it **the facts of your business**. You need both.

■ Why the phone is a hard domain

- Hear callers over noise, in broad Australian accents, with local place names.
- Reply within about a second, and cope with interruptions.
- **Act:** transfer, text a link, book a time, take a sensible message.
- Know when to stop and hand over to a person.

■ Questions to ask an AI vendor

Ask	Good answer	Warning sign
What is it built for?	Business calls, with examples	"It can do anything"
Where do answers come from?	Your information; admits gaps	"The AI just knows"
How do I update it?	You edit it, changes apply now	A ticket for every change
Where is it processed?	Clear, per feature	"In the cloud"
Is my data used to train?	Plain yes or no, in writing	A long policy link

■ Test it with your own questions

- 1 List your **ten most common calls** in customers' words.
- 2 Add **three awkward ones**: urgent, upset, and one it should not answer.
- 3 Load your **real** hours, prices and service area.
- 4 Ring it from a mobile, with noise. **Interrupt it.**
- 5 Score accuracy, honesty about gaps, actions completed and pause length.

■ Do this quarter

- Write your business facts in one place.
- Pick one job for AI, not ten.
- Set hand-over rules for urgent calls.
- Check the Privacy Act change from **10 Dec 2026**.

The test result to look for

Right on most calls, and **hands the rest to a person gracefully**. Confident and wrong is the temp with good manners.

Prefer AI inside your phone system

Fewer companies between the caller and the answer means **shorter pauses, one bill and one number to ring** when something is wrong. Ask every vendor where calls are processed and stored, per feature.