

A first route to a paying customer

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Illustrative sample. Fictional scenario and planning inputs; no client engagement or measured results are represented.

DECISION QUESTION

Should we commission a \$25,000 MVP for an AI ticket-routing product?

INITIAL RECOMMENDATION

Start with one customer workflow. Evaluate routing inside the existing helpdesk, with agents confirming the result. Use that evidence to shape a paid pilot; decide on a custom product after observing its value in live work.

The situation and the first useful outcome

A founder with customer-support experience wants to sell to heads of support at B2B SaaS companies. Two potential design partners are accessible, but neither has committed to buy. The proposed \$25,000 MVP would add its own interface and helpdesk integrations.

The first useful outcome is getting billing and technical requests to the right owner with less handling effort. Support agents remain in control, and the existing helpdesk remains the system of record.

Three routes we would consider

APPROACH	TRADE-OFF	POSITION
Configure the existing helpdesk	Could address the need with rules and current features. Capability and upkeep still need checking.	Benchmark first. If it is sufficient, use it.
Add AI-assisted routing	Could help with ambiguous requests while preserving the current workflow. Review effort may erase the advantage.	Evaluate a narrow version against the baseline.
Build a standalone product	Adds control over the experience, plus integration, onboarding and operating commitments.	Revisit after a paid pilot demonstrates value.

What remains unverified

- 01 Whether existing routing leaves a problem worth paying to solve.
- 02 Whether ticket access, consistent route labels and fast human review are practical.
- 03 Whether a buyer will pay for this result separately from their helpdesk.

The recommendation follows from the missing evidence about customer workflow and demand. A confirmed need for a separate product or unavailable helpdesk integration would change the choice.

What would make this worth building?

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The economics turn on human review

Workflow-level illustration: 6,000 eligible tickets per month. Manual routing takes 45 seconds of active work per ticket, including corrections. Labour is valued at \$30/hour. These are assumptions. Configured helpdesk performance still needs measuring.

Assisted routing assumes 10% of tickets need an additional 120 seconds of exception handling. That adds 12 seconds per ticket on average. Tools add an assumed \$150/month.

SCENARIO	HUMAN TIME / TICKET	HOURS / MONTH	LABOUR + TOOLS / MONTH
Manual baseline	45 sec	75.0 h	\$2,250
Assisted: 20-second review	32 sec	53.3 h	\$1,750
Assisted: 30-second review	42 sec	70.0 h	\$2,250

At 20 seconds of review, the scenario releases about 22 hours/month: \$650 of labour capacity, less \$150 of tools. At 30 seconds, that \$500 monthly advantage disappears. Faster first action or better routing quality could add value, but neither has been measured.

This is a routing cost comparison, not full TCO or product margin. Build, onboarding, maintenance, selling and overhead are excluded. Released capacity becomes cash savings only if spending actually falls. Quality must be comparable.

A bounded next step

WHEN	OWNER	ACTION
Days 1-2	Support lead	Confirm data access and correct routes. Set aside 20 setup tickets and 100 untouched evaluation tickets, including ambiguous and urgent cases.
Days 3-7	Engineer + agents	Freeze the setup, then compare manual, configured and assisted routes on the evaluation set. Record route quality and all review/correction time.
Days 8-10	Founder + buyer	Review the findings together. Choose existing tooling, agree a paid assisted pilot, or investigate the specific blocker.

Proposed limit: 10 working days, up to 24 engineering hours, 6 support-team hours and \$150 for tools. Agree labour rates first. Stop and rescope if access or labelling blocks the work. This is a separate task your team can run.

What would move the decision forward

Before testing, agree a screen for a live pilot: comparable routing quality, no increase in priority-handling errors, and at least 20% less active handling time than the best acceptable manual or configured approach. A 100-ticket replay is an initial screen; confirm the benefit in a monitored live pilot. Consider a custom build after a buyer commits to a paid scope and live use demonstrates repeatable value.

The recap provides an initial direction. Independent investigation, evaluation and implementation are separately scoped.