
FROM THE MEHRUTHERM BLOG · AI AUTOMATION

Every Quote Takes an Hour to Write. It Doesn't Have To.

A request comes in and someone loses an hour writing up the estimate. Here is how to draft quotes automatically from the details you already have, with a person checking every number before it goes out.

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A request comes in. A homeowner wants a price on a job, a property manager needs a number before the budget meeting, a new customer found you online and asked what it would cost. This is the good kind of problem: someone wants to pay you.

Then the quote has to get written. Someone sits down, pulls up what you charged for a similar job last spring, checks the measurements, looks up current material prices, adds the usual line items, and types it all into a clean document that looks like your business and not a scribble on a notepad. An hour later, it goes out.

For a lot of small service businesses, that hour is the quiet tax on every single job. It falls on the owner, or on the one person who knows the pricing, and it only happens when they finally get a minute. So the quote that could have gone out the same afternoon goes out three days later, if it goes out at all.

The quote is often where the job is won or lost

The uncomfortable part is that the first quote to arrive frequently wins, almost regardless of price. People reach out to two or three businesses, and the one that responds while the project is still fresh in their mind feels like the one that wants the work. The slow quote, however fair, lands after the customer has already started leaning somewhere else.

So the delay is not just an inconvenience for you. It is lost jobs you never see, because nobody tells you they went with whoever answered first. We wrote about the same pattern with plain inquiries in [when someone wanted to hire you and nobody wrote back in time](#). Quotes are that problem with a price tag attached.

What actually eats the hour

It helps to notice that most of the hour is not judgment. It is fetching.

You are gathering the measurements or job details the customer already gave you, looking up what you charged for the nearest comparable job, pulling current prices for the materials involved, applying your standard markups and minimums, and arranging all of it into the format you send out. The thinking part, deciding whether this job has a wrinkle that changes the number, is maybe five minutes of that hour. The rest is lookup and layout, done by hand, the same way every time.

That split matters, because the fetching and formatting is exactly the kind of repetitive, rule-shaped work that can be handled for you, while the judgment stays with the person who has it.

How a drafted quote works

The idea is simple: the moment a request comes in with the details of the job, those details are turned straight into a draft quote, before anyone sits down to write one.

The draft pulls from what you already have. Your past jobs tell it what similar work has cost. Your price list fills in the line items. Your standard terms, minimums, and markups are applied the way you would apply them. A minute or two after the request arrives, there is a complete, properly formatted quote sitting there in your business's own style, with every number filled in.

What it does not do is send itself. The draft waits for you. You open it, read it the way you would read one you wrote, fix anything the job calls for, and then it goes out. The slow, repetitive part is done before you start; the part that needs your eyes still gets them.

Writing every quote by hand

- × An hour of lookup and formatting per request
- × Only happens when the owner finally gets a minute
- × Numbers drift depending on who wrote it and when
- × The quote lands days later, after someone else answered

A drafted quote you review

- ✓ A complete draft ready minutes after the request
- ✓ Pricing pulled from your past jobs and your own list
- ✓ The same standards applied to every quote
- ✓ You read it, adjust it, and send it the same day

This is not a far-off idea. It is close to work we have already built for a local well drilling company, where a request comes in, real data from nearby properties helps estimate the job, and a quote is drafted automatically. A person there reviews and adjusts every quote before it goes to the customer, so the speed never comes at the cost of a number nobody checked.

You still hold the pen

The worry we hear most is the reasonable one: I am not going to let a machine send prices to my customers. Good. You should not, and the whole point here is that you do not have to.

A drafted quote is a starting point, not a decision. Nothing reaches a customer without a person approving it, which means a strange job still gets your judgment, an unusual request still gets flagged, and your name only goes on numbers you stood behind. The automation takes over the gathering and the typing. It does not take over the part where you decide what something is worth. If you are weighing how much to trust this kind of help in general, [we put the plain version of that question here](#).

Where to start

You do not automate every quote at once. You start with the one you write most often.

Most service businesses have a handful of job types that make up the bulk of their quoting, and one of them is almost always the clear first candidate: common, fairly standard, and done enough times that the pricing is well understood. Get drafting working for that one, use it for a few weeks, and let it prove itself on the jobs you know cold before it ever touches the odd ones. The unusual, high-stakes quotes can keep being written by hand for as long as you like. Before you begin, it is worth running through [the questions we would ask before automating anything](#), so the first thing you hand off is the thing that actually earns it back.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **The slow quote loses the job**, often to whoever simply answered first, no matter how fair your price was.
- Most of the hour a quote takes is **lookup and formatting**, not judgment. That part can be handled for you.
- A drafted quote arrives **minutes after the request**, built from your past jobs, your price list, and your standard terms.
- **Nothing sends itself.** You read, adjust, and approve every quote, so your name only goes on numbers you checked.
- **Start with the job you quote most**, prove it there, and leave the unusual ones to your own hand for as long as you want.

Getting a quote out fast, and getting it out consistent, is one of the most direct ways technology can put money back in a small business. The work is already yours. This just takes the hour of fetching and typing off your plate and leaves you the five minutes that actually needed you.

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Spending an hour on every estimate when the job is really five minutes of judgment? Get in touch and we'll look at the quotes you write most often, and whether drafting them automatically, with you approving every one, would win you back the time and the jobs you're losing to a slow reply.

mehrutherm.com/quote