STRAW MAN · 5 AUGUST 2026

A small business AI architect company

Enterprise-grade operating capability, delivered to businesses that could never afford it — priced on the outcome, not the hour.

Company name — still to be decided

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THE PROBLEM

They run real businesses on paper and memory

320+

member companies in one buying group alone

~80%

of them on QuickBooks or something smaller

4 weeks

typical time from work done to invoice sent

What that actually costs the owner

1. **Cash** — Work is financed by the contractor until the invoice goes out — and then disputed because nobody recorded what was done.
2. **Visibility** — No reliable picture of job cost, technician productivity, truck or asset status. Decisions run on instinct.
3. **Capacity** — The owner personally is the system. Growth stops at the limit of what one person can hold in their head.

THE TRAP

And why they cannot fix it themselves

No one whose job this is

There is no CIO. There is an owner, a bookkeeper and a dispatcher, and all three are already at capacity.

Software is sold, not delivered

Every vendor sells a licence and leaves. Nobody is accountable for whether the crew actually uses it.

The last attempt failed

Most have already bought something that did not stick. That memory is the real barrier to the next conversation.

Everyone is shouting “AI”

Indiscriminately, at the same buyer, with no proof. Scepticism toward big technology is entirely rational here.

THE INSIGHT THIS BUSINESS IS BUILT ON

“I am not concerned that the offering is the bottleneck. I am convinced that access to the client base is the bottleneck.”

Gus Byleveld, 5 August 2026

What this rules out

Building a product first and hoping to sell it. Any plan whose first milestone is code.

What it rules in

A relationship-led entry through people who are already trusted by this buyer — and selling the outcome before we build it.

WHAT WE ARE

We are the architect, not the builder

An architect draws the plans and decides who does the plumbing and who does the roof. They are accountable for whether the building stands up — not for laying every brick. That is the position we take with a small business and its operating systems.

"I think we need to look at this as almost like a small business AI architect company."

Dirk van der Merwe

Why the position is the right one:

- Four senior people do not scale as a delivery shop — they scale as judgement.
- It is the highest-margin seat in the value chain and the hardest to displace.
- It lets us bring partners in without pretending we do everything ourselves.

The brain trust

1. **We define**

   the problem worth solving and what good looks like

2. **We design**

   the operating architecture across their systems

3. **We deliver**

   through AI, our own hands, or a named partner

4. **We stay**

   accountable for the outcome we sold

THE SCOPE

What we architect: five layers, one business

Dirk's frame. AI supplied as a metered service across each layer, plugging into whatever the client already runs — not replacing it.

Infrastructure	Back office	Front office	Sales	Operations
Connectivity, data, identity — the boring foundation a small business never gets to have.	Accounting, payroll, compliance. Where QuickBooks lives and where the manual work hides.	Quoting, scheduling, customer communication. The parts the owner does personally at 9pm.	Pipeline, follow-up, retention. Usually a phone and a memory.	Field work, fleet, assets, job costing. The gap QuickBooks does not close.

Commercially: AI as a Service, paid per use

Enterprise capability without an enterprise cheque. Cost scales with the client instead of gating them at the door — and it lets us start in one layer and expand into the next without a new sale.

THE WEDGE

The first thing we sell: time to invoice

"One of their biggest gaps, and that's across these industries, is time to invoice." — *Albert Kleynhans*

Today

- Technician finishes, writes something on paper
- Paperwork reaches the office days later, incomplete
- Office chases the detail; the customer queries the bill
- Invoice goes out around four weeks after the work

After

- Capture happens at the job, on the phone already in the pocket
- Photographs of parts and work become structured detail
- Job card is complete and signed before the van leaves
- Invoice lands in their existing accounting system the same day

Why this one first

Measurable

Days to invoice is a number the owner can already produce.

Felt

It is a cash problem, not a software problem. They care about it today.

Provable

Which means we can be paid on it rather than on hours.

Access is the strategy. Here is the hypothesis.

Untested. This is the thing the group agreed to build and prove first.

1. **Start inside an existing relationship**

   Not cold. Accrete is a preferred member of a 320-company buying group in the pool trade and has been to its conference two years running.

2. **Go in person, because nothing else works**

   Email and webinars into blue-collar trades have already been tested and produced no traction. The feedback was blunt: you need to get in front of these guys.

3. **Lead with the outcome, never with AI**

   Time to invoice, cash, control. The technology is how, not what. This buyer has heard “AI” from everyone and believes none of it.

4. **Use pools as the launching pad, not the destination**

   Underneath it is construction and trades — electrical, plumbing, roofing, HVAC. Same buyer, different uniform.

The test: can we put ourselves in front of ten qualified owners, through a route we can repeat, within ninety days?

THE MODEL

We do not want their money until it works

1

Outcome-based entry

The client pays when the result is demonstrated, against a baseline both sides agreed at the start. It removes the only objection that matters at the door.

“You have nothing to lose. I don't want your money until I've proved that the solution works.”

2

Metered thereafter

Once it works, AI as a service across the five layers, paid per use. Revenue grows with the client's use rather than with a renegotiation.

3

Reuse is the margin

We solve one client's problem properly, then capture it as a runbook. If the second deployment costs a fraction of the first, this compounds.

The honest cost of this model

An outcome deal needs a baseline both sides accept — and most businesses this size cannot produce one. Establishing it is real work, it happens before we are paid, and it is also the thing that qualifies the client.

LANDSCAPE

Everybody sells software. Nobody sells the outcome.

Field service platforms ServiceTitan, Jobber, Housecall Pro	Sell a licence and leave. Implementation risk sits with the buyer; nobody owns whether the crew adopts it.
Odoo Belgian open-source suite, from $24.90 per user	Cheap and broad, and it does field service. But it wants to replace QuickBooks, and its offline mobile app is where it is weakest — exactly our two strongest points.
Mid-market ERP NetSuite and peers	Right answer for the 20% who are big enough. Too much system, and too much money, for the other 80%.
Generic AI consultancies Everyone, right now	Selling the technology rather than a result. This buyer has stopped listening.

Our position

We are not another system. We keep the systems they already have, make them work together, and stand behind a number.

WHY US

We have already built the hard version of this

EH

Eduardo Haddad

Deloitte, HP, Google. ERP and finance transformation; brought AI into finance operations. Builds working systems hands-on.

DV

Dirk van der Merwe

Accenture. Large ERP programme design and delivery. Was a small business operator himself — knows how this buyer decides.

AK

Albert Kleynhans

Founded Accrete in 2008. Enterprise SAP and Oracle, then the lower mid-market on NetSuite. Holds the client relationships.

GB

Gus Byleveld

Architect, then pre-sales at Bentley Systems, then revenue operator and fractional CRO. Completing an AI MBA.

What is genuinely unusual here

Most early ventures are three people who all do the same thing. This one has enterprise delivery, an existing client base in the target trades, revenue operations, and someone who can build. Between us we have already done, at hundred-million-dollar scale, exactly what these businesses need at a hundredth of it.

THE PLAN

What we do next, and what would tell us to stop

Weeks 0–1	Weeks 1–4	Weeks 2–8	Weeks 8–12
Agree the language	**Test market access**	**Sell before we build**	**Measure reuse**
This deck, Dirk's framework, and a proposal for how the partnership is structured. Four people, one vocabulary.	Put the hypothesis in writing and go and try it. Target: ten qualified owner conversations through a repeatable route.	Describe the outcome, get a real yes from a real owner, then build the narrowest thing that delivers it.	Deliver it, capture the runbook, and find out honestly what the second one would cost.

The number the whole thing turns on

If client two takes a third of the hours of client one, this compounds and we invest. If it takes the same, we have built a consultancy — a fine business, but a different one, and we should say so out loud rather than drift into it.

STILL OPEN

What this deck does not yet answer

Deliberately listed rather than glossed. These are the decisions in front of the four of us.

1	**What is the shape?**	One company the four of us own, or a network of separate businesses that co-sell? Everything printed waits on this.
2	**Where does Accrete end and this begin?**	Two of us come from it. It needs saying plainly and early, not when a client asks.
3	**Who is the customer, precisely?**	Pool construction, pool service, or trades generally. They are not the same buyer and the access play differs.
4	**What is each person in for?**	Hours, money, exclusivity. Three of the four have day jobs. This is the biggest unspoken risk.
5	**And it still has no name.**	Which is why the title slide has a blank on it.

“Focus on making shoes.
We will help you run the business
so you can make more shoes.”

Dirk van der Merwe, 31 July 2026

It works because it never mentions AI.