modus.

FREE GUIDE · 01

Keep up in 5 minutes a week.

How to build an AI news brief that watches your industry for you — and actually keeps working after week one.

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR OWNER-OPERATORS
30 MINUTES TO SET UP · 10 MINUTES A WEEK TO KEEP

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START HERE

What this is, and what you'll have at the end of it.

There is more news in your industry every week than you could ever read. So you skim, you skip — and you hear about the thing that mattered two weeks too late. Meanwhile someone else read it and got in front of your customer first.

This guide walks you through building one thing: a short brief, written by an AI assistant, delivered on a schedule you choose, covering only your industry, your region, and your definition of what matters. Three to five items. Two minutes to read.

It is not a subscription, not a piece of software to buy, and not something you need a technical person for. If you already pay for an AI assistant, you already own everything required. If you don't, this is one of the few reasons to.

What you'll have when you're done

Your Monday brief — 3 items

MONDAY 6:30 AM · 3 ITEMS · EST. READ 2 MIN

Regulation. The certification requirement you asked me to watch was amended last Thursday — the compliance date moved. Affects the two contract types you bid on. *Source, dated, linked.* → Check whether your current bids assume the old date.

Competitor. A regional operator posted three job openings for a service line you don't currently offer. → Worth knowing before your next quote in that segment.

Local. A municipal infrastructure budget was approved in your service area. → Tender activity typically follows.

Illustration of the output shape, not a real brief. Yours will be about your trade.

What it costs

A paid plan on an AI assistant you may already have. Roughly 30 minutes to set up, and about 10 minutes a week for the first two weeks. After that, the cost is reading it.

What it is not

It is not automation of your business. It's an information routine — the smallest useful thing an AI assistant can do for an owner, and a fair way to find out whether these tools are worth anything to you.

THE HONEST PART

Most people who try this abandon it in week two, because the first briefs are mediocre. They are supposed to be. **Step 4 is the entire guide.** If you only have time for one step, read that one and plan for it before you start.

BEFORE YOU START

Pick the assistant you already pay for.

All four of the major assistants can now run a prompt on a schedule without you being there. They differ in cadence, in how many scheduled items you're allowed, and in where the result lands. **None of them offer this on a free plan.**

Don't shop. If your business runs on Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace, start with the one that's already licensed — the brief is not worth a second subscription until you've proven it works for you.

ASSISTANT	PLAN REQUIRED	CADENCE	ACTIVE LIMIT	WHERE IT LANDS
Claude Cowork	Any paid plan — Pro, Max, Team, Enterprise	Hourly, daily, weekly, weekdays, or manual	Not published	Each run is its own session; runs even with your computer off
ChatGPT Scheduled tasks	Go, Plus, Pro, Business, Enterprise	You choose; no more than once per hour	Go 3 · Plus 5 · Pro and Enterprise up to 15	Push notification, email, or both
Gemini Scheduled actions	Google AI Pro or Ultra, or a qualifying Workspace account	Stated in plain words inside your prompt	10	Appears as an unread chat in the Gemini app
Copilot Scheduled prompts	Microsoft 365 Copilot licence	Set when scheduling the prompt	10	Bolded in your Copilot chat list; email optional

Verified against each vendor's own documentation on 5 August 2026. Full references on the back page. These products change often — if a screen doesn't match, the vendor's help centre is right and this page is out of date.

One requirement that matters more than the brand: the assistant must be able to search the live web. All four can. An assistant working only from its training data will confidently tell you about last year.

The four steps

01 Pick your sources — five to ten, chosen by you p. 4

02 Teach it your business — one paragraph p. 6

03 Schedule it — the prompt and the setup p. 8

04 Give it feedback for two weeks — the step that makes it work p. 10

– When it doesn't work · Going further · Limits · Worksheets p. 11

STEP 01

Pick your sources. You choose — not the algorithm.

Five to ten sources that actually matter. This is the step that decides whether your brief is useful or generic, and it's the one you cannot delegate.

Left to itself, an AI assistant will go where the volume is: national outlets, aggregators, and whatever is being republished the most. That's how you end up with a brief about artificial intelligence instead of a brief about your trade. You know which association actually sets the rules, which trade publication the estimators read, and which regulator can shut a job site down. It knows none of that until you tell it.

The five buckets

Aim for at least one source in each. Ten is a ceiling, not a target — a tight five beats a sprawling twelve.

BUCKET	WHAT BELONGS HERE	WHY IT EARNS A SLOT
Your association or ordre	The professional body, trade association, or ordre that governs or represents your trade	Rule changes, certification requirements and training deadlines appear here before they appear anywhere else
Your regulator	The bodies that can fine you, licence you, or stop your work	These are the items with a date attached and a consequence for missing it
Trade press	The one or two publications people in your trade actually read	Pricing pressure, supply issues, and what your customers are being told
Local and regional	Your city, MRC, and regional news; municipal and public tender notices	Contracts, budgets, and projects in your actual service area — the highest-yield bucket for most trades, and the one people forget
Customers and competitors	The public pages of the businesses you sell to and bid against	Hiring, expansion, and new service lines are visible long before they show up in a quote

> **QUEBEC NOTE**
>
> Name your French-language sources explicitly and by name. If your list is mostly English, the brief will drift English and you'll miss provincial and municipal items entirely. If you want the brief itself written in French, say so in the prompt — see Step 3.

If you don't know your sources, ask — then decide

Not knowing the full list is normal. Have the assistant propose candidates, then cut. The decision stays yours; you're only outsourcing the search.

```
I run a [trade] business in [city / region], Quebec.
We serve [who your customers are].

List 12 to 15 public sources that would tell me about changes
affecting a business like mine. For each one, give me:
  - the name and the website
  - which category it falls in: association, regulator,
    trade press, local news, or public tender notices
  - one line on what kind of item it typically publishes
  - whether it is French, English, or both

Prioritize Quebec and my region over national sources.
Do not include general business or technology news outlets.
Tell me if you are unsure a source is still active.
```

Then apply three cuts, in this order:

- **Cut anything national and general.** If it isn't about your trade or your territory, it's noise wearing a suit.
- **Cut duplicates.** Two publications covering the same beat will give you the same item twice and make the brief feel padded.
- **Cut anything you can't picture acting on.** If you can't imagine a headline from that source changing something you'd do this month, it doesn't belong.

The month-four rule. Put a reminder four weeks out. Any source that hasn't produced a single item you cared about gets removed. Sources are a list you prune, not a list you grow — this is the one maintenance habit that keeps a brief short enough to read.

Write them down

Use Worksheet 1 on page 15, or a note on your phone. You'll paste this list into the prompt in Step 3, and you'll come back to it every time the brief drifts. A source list that lives only inside a chat window is a source list you'll rebuild from memory in three months.



Sources chosen → business taught → brief scheduled. Each step narrows what reaches you.

STEP 02

Teach it your business. One paragraph does it.

The assistant can find the news. It cannot know that a labour shortage is an opportunity for you and a threat to the shop across town. That distinction is the whole value of the brief, and it takes one paragraph to establish.

Skip this step and you get a competent summary of your industry. Do it and you get a summary of your industry *relative to you* — which is the only version worth two minutes on a Monday.

The five fields

FIELD	WHAT TO WRITE
What we do	Plainly. The work you actually invoice for, not the description on your website.
Where and who	Your territory and your customer type. Residential or commercial, public or private, one region or five.
What counts as a threat	What would genuinely cost you money. A rule change, a price move, a competitor entering your segment.
What counts as an opportunity	What you'd act on this month. A project announced, a contract opening, a shift you could quote against.
What to ignore	The most-skipped field, and the one that shortens your brief fastest. Name the topics that are never actionable for you.

A filled example

Generic example — replace every word of it with your own.

```
ABOUT MY BUSINESS

We are a 12-person mechanical contractor in the Eastern Townships.
We install and service heating and ventilation systems, about
70% commercial and institutional, 30% residential.
We bid on municipal and school-board contracts.

A THREAT is anything that changes what we're allowed to install,
what our certifications require, what our equipment costs,
or a competitor moving into commercial work in our region.

An OPPORTUNITY is a public building project announced in our
territory, a grant or rebate program our customers qualify for,
or a supplier or competitor leaving the market.

IGNORE: consumer product reviews, national real estate news,
anything about artificial intelligence in general, and anything
outside Quebec unless it changes a rule that applies here.
```

Save it where the assistant will reuse it

A paragraph typed into a single chat disappears with that chat. Every assistant has somewhere durable to keep it, and using that place is the difference between setting this up once and re-explaining your business every week.

Claude
Put it in a Project, or in the scheduled task's own instructions. The task carries its own prompt with it on every run.

ChatGPT
Custom instructions, a Project, or simply inside the scheduled task's prompt text. The task text is the most reliable of the three.

Gemini
A Gem, or written directly into the scheduled action's prompt. Scheduled actions require activity history to be turned on.

Copilot
Inside the prompt you schedule. Write it out in full — Copilot schedules the prompt you wrote, not the conversation around it.

Whichever you pick, **also keep a copy outside the tool** — a note, a document, anywhere you'd find it. You will edit this paragraph a dozen times over the next month, and you'll want the current version when you switch assistants or set up a second brief.

> KEEP IT CLEAN
>
> Describe your business, not your customers by name. A sector description does everything the brief needs. There's no reason to put a client list, a contract value, or anyone's personal information into a prompt — and good reasons not to. More on page 14.

How to tell it's working

Read your paragraph back and ask one question: *could a competitor down the road have written this exact paragraph?* If yes, it's still a description of your industry rather than a description of your business. The threat and opportunity lines are usually where the specificity has to come from — those are the two the assistant actually uses to sort what it finds.

Worksheet 2 on page 16 is this paragraph as a fill-in form. Write it by hand once before you type it — it's faster, and it's the only part of this setup that benefits from thinking rather than typing.

STEP 03

Schedule it. Here's the prompt.

This is the whole thing in one block. Paste it in, replace the bracketed parts with your two worksheets, and set it to run.

```
Every [Monday at 6:30 AM], search the web and write me a short
news brief for my business.

[PASTE YOUR "ABOUT MY BUSINESS" PARAGRAPH FROM STEP 2 HERE]

SOURCES — check these first, every time:
[PASTE YOUR 5-10 SOURCES FROM STEP 1 HERE]
You may also use other credible sources, but these come first.

WHAT TO COVER: only items published in the last 7 days.

FORMAT — maximum 5 items, ranked most important first.
For each item, exactly four lines:
  1. WHAT HAPPENED — one sentence, plain language
  2. WHY IT MATTERS TO ME — one sentence, specific to my business
  3. WHAT I MIGHT DO — one concrete action, or "nothing yet"
  4. SOURCE — publication name, date, and link

RULES:
- If nothing meaningful happened this week, say exactly that
  in one line. Do not fill the brief to reach five items.
- Never guess at a fact or a link. If you cannot verify
  something, leave it out and tell me you left it out.
- Include the publication date on every item. If you cannot
  find a date, do not include the item.
- Keep the whole brief under 300 words.
- Write in [French / English].
```

THE TWO LINES THAT DO THE WORK

"If nothing meaningful happened, say so" is what stops the brief padding itself with filler — the single most common reason people stop reading after three weeks. **"Never guess at a link"** is what stops it inventing sources. Neither is optional. Leave them in.

Where to put it, by assistant

Paths verified against vendor documentation on 5 August 2026. References on the back page.

ASSISTANT	HOW TO SCHEDULE IT
Claude	In Cowork, click **Scheduled** in the left sidebar, then **New task** in the upper right. Choose *Set up manually* and enter the task name, the prompt above, the approval mode, and the frequency — hourly, daily, weekly, weekdays, or manual. Each run happens in its own session and runs remotely, so it works with your computer off. Manage, pause, resume, delete or run on demand from the same page.
ChatGPT	Open **Scheduled** in the sidebar (web, mobile, or desktop — on desktop, select ChatGPT from the top-left menu first), create a new task, and choose when it should run. You can also just ask ChatGPT to schedule it in plain words. Set notifications to push, email, or both. To change one later, click the task pill or title in the chat to open the sidebar.
Gemini	Type the prompt at gemini.google.com and state the timing inside the prompt itself — *"every Monday at 6:30 AM"*. Gemini replies with a summary of the scheduled action. Manage them under **Settings & help → Scheduled actions**. Activity history must be on, or scheduling is unavailable.
Copilot	In Copilot Chat, type the prompt, hover over it, and select **Schedule this prompt**. Choose when it runs, how many times, and whether you want an email notification. Results appear bolded in your chat list. Manage everything from the **Settings and more** menu.

Pick the time honestly

The most common reason a brief fails is that it arrives when the owner is on a job site. Ask yourself where you are and what you're holding at the moment it lands. Monday before the day starts works for many people because the week's decisions haven't been made yet. Friday afternoon works for almost nobody.

- **Weekly beats daily** for almost every trade. Daily briefs run out of real news by Wednesday and start padding.
- **Turn on the notification.** A brief that sits unread in an app is a brief you cancelled without deciding to.
- **Run it once manually first.** Don't wait a week to discover the prompt needs work. Every assistant lets you run on demand.

Before you walk away: read that first manual run and check three things. Are the links real and do they open? Is every item from the last seven days? Is anything in there that you'd describe as generic? If all three are clean, schedule it. If not, that's Step 4 starting early — which is fine.

STEP 04

Give it feedback for two weeks. This is the step that makes it work.

Your first brief will be mediocre. So will your second. That's not a sign it doesn't work — it's the part most people mistake for failure and quit on.

An assistant sorting your industry's news is guessing at your judgment from one paragraph. It gets closer every time you correct it, and it stops the moment you stop. Two weeks of two-minute corrections is the entire price.

The three sentences that fix a brief

After you read each brief, reply with whichever apply. Plain language — no prompt technique needed.

Too much of this
"Item 3 is the kind of thing I'll never act on. Stop including that category."

You missed this
"You missed [the thing]. That's exactly what I need. Where should you have found it?"

Wrong depth
"Item 2 was right but I couldn't tell what to do. Be more concrete on the action line."

THE MOVE NOBODY MAKES

Corrections given in a chat die with that chat. The scheduled task runs the prompt it was saved with, not the conversation you had about it. So end every feedback session with one sentence:

"Now rewrite the full instructions for this scheduled brief so they include what I just told you, and show me the new version."

Then paste the new version back into the scheduled task. That single habit is the difference between a tool that gets sharper every week and a gadget that stays the same and quietly gets ignored.

What each week should look like

WEEK	EXPECT	YOUR JOB
Week 1	Five items, two or three of them generic. Some sources ignored. Possibly one bad link.	Cut hard. Name the categories to drop. Re-state any source it skipped.
Week 2	Three or four items, mostly relevant. The action lines still vague.	Push on the action line. Ask for concrete, not "monitor this closely".
Week 3	Two to four items you'd actually mention to your partner. An occasional honest "nothing meaningful this week".	Stop correcting. Start reading. Do the source prune at week 4.

If week 3 still looks like week 1, the problem is almost never the assistant — it's that the business paragraph is too generic or the source list is too broad. Go back to Step 1 and Step 2 rather than adding more instructions.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Five ways this goes wrong, and what to do about each.

WHAT YOU'RE SEEING	WHAT'S ACTUALLY CAUSING IT	THE FIX
The brief is about the industry, not about you	The business paragraph is too generic — usually the threat and opportunity lines. The assistant has nothing to sort against.	Rewrite those two lines with things that have actually cost or made you money. Add the "ignore" line if you skipped it.
Links don't open, or the item doesn't exist	The assistant filled a gap rather than reporting one. Every one of these tools does this occasionally.	Keep the "never guess at a link, tell me what you left out" rule in the prompt. Then verify anything you'd act on before you act on it. This never goes to zero.
Your best sources never appear	They're behind a paywall or a login, or the site blocks automated reading. The assistant can only see what's public.	Ask it directly which of your sources it can and can't read, then replace or accept. For the ones it can't reach, it can still tell you a topic is moving — you go read it.
Everything is in English, or provincial news is missing	English-language sources dominate the open web, so an unguided search drifts there.	Name your French sources by name in the prompt, and state the language you want the brief written in. Ask explicitly for Quebec and municipal coverage.
You've stopped reading it	Either it arrives at a time you're unavailable, or it's too long, or it's padding with filler to hit five items.	Change the time first — it's the most common cause and the easiest fix. Then cut the maximum from five items to three. A short brief you read beats a thorough one you don't.

THE ONE THAT ISN'T FIXABLE

These assistants are confidently wrong sometimes. Not often, but reliably enough that it matters. A brief is a way of noticing things early — it is not a source of record. Before you change a bid, a price, or a compliance date because of something in your brief, open the link and read the source yourself. That takes a minute, and it is the minute that makes the whole routine safe to rely on.

Point the same setup at your customers and your competitors.

The news brief is the easy version. The same four steps — sources, context, schedule, feedback — work on any question where being early is worth something.

Once your Monday brief is running without corrections, set up a second one. Don't merge them: a brief that tries to do two jobs does neither, and you'll cut the one that matters to shorten the one that doesn't.

A watch brief on your market

Same structure, different sources: the public pages of the businesses you bid against and the ones you sell to. Hiring posts, new service pages, project announcements, press mentions, public tender notices in your territory.

The useful question isn't "what are they doing" — it's *"what changed since last month, and does it affect a quote I have out?"*

A brief on one specific thing

Narrower and often more valuable: one regulation you're waiting on, one grant program your customers use, one supplier whose pricing moves your costs.

These run monthly rather than weekly, and they're the ones that pay for themselves in a single hit.

Stay on the public side of the line. Everything above uses information those businesses chose to publish. That's ordinary commercial awareness — the same thing you'd do by reading their website, just on a schedule. Don't ask an assistant to get at anything that isn't public, and don't put anyone's personal information into a prompt to do it.

What you've actually learned here

The brief is worth having. But the method underneath it is worth more, and it's the part that carries to everything else you might do with these tools:

- **You define what matters, the tool does the volume.** Every failure in this guide traces back to skipping the human half.
- **Context beats prompting.** One paragraph about your business does more than any clever phrasing.
- **The feedback loop is the product.** Anything that doesn't get corrected doesn't get better, and quietly gets abandoned.
- **Start with the smallest useful thing.** A two-minute brief that works is worth more than an ambitious build that doesn't.

That last point is the one worth taking seriously before you try anything larger. Most of what goes wrong with AI in a small business isn't the technology — it's automating something that was already broken, or building something nobody ends up using.

READ THIS PART

What to keep in mind before you put anything into a prompt.

Nothing in this guide requires you to hand over sensitive information — and that's worth keeping true as you go further.

Your business paragraph describes a sector, a territory, and a customer type. That's all the brief needs. There's no reason to name a client, quote a contract value, or include anyone's personal information, and there are good reasons not to.

Three things worth knowing

What you type goes to the vendor

Whatever you put in a prompt leaves your business and is processed on the vendor's systems, typically outside Quebec. That's fine for a sector description. It's a different question for a client list, an employee file, or a contract — and it's a question you should have answered *before* you paste, not after.

Personal information carries obligations in Quebec

Quebec's private-sector privacy law applies to businesses of every size — there is no small-business exemption. If your use of an AI tool grows to include customer or employee information, you take on real obligations about what you collect, where it goes, and what you tell people. Worth understanding before it becomes relevant, not after.

Free plans and paid plans are not the same deal

How a vendor handles your data — including whether it may be used to improve their models — can differ between consumer plans and business plans on the same product. If you get past this brief and start using an assistant for real work, read the terms for the plan you're actually on.

> NOT LEGAL ADVICE
>
> This is a practical note from an operations point of view, not a legal opinion. If you're weighing whether a specific tool is appropriate for specific information, that's a question worth answering properly — with your own review of the vendor's terms, and professional advice where the stakes justify it.

And the honest ceiling on all of this

A news brief tells you what's happening outside your business. It does nothing about what's happening inside it — the quote that takes four days to go out, the invoicing that eats a Sunday, the information that lives in one person's head. Those cost more than being late to a headline. They're just harder to see, because you've been working around them for years.

IF THIS WORKED

There are usually ten more of these in how a business runs. The brief is just the one you can see.

Setting this up takes half an hour and tells you something useful: whether these tools do anything for you, in your business, on your work. Most owners find out the answer is yes — and then find out that the useful part isn't the news brief at all. It's everywhere else the same method applies.

That's the work we do. Modus is an operations and AI consulting firm for founder-led businesses across Quebec. We look at how your business actually runs, find the manual work that's growing faster than your revenue, and apply automation only where the return is real. We won't sell you something you don't need.

DIAGNOSTIC MODUS

A structured look at how your business runs — and where the hours are actually going.

Vendor-neutral, documented, and yours to keep whether or not you ever work with us again.

modusai.ca/diagnostic · info@modusconseil.ca

WORKSHEET 01

Your sources.

Five to ten. Aim for at least one per bucket. Set a reminder four weeks out and cut anything that hasn't earned its slot.

#	SOURCE	BUCKET	WEBSITE	KEEP?
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

Buckets: association / ordre · regulator · trade press · local & regional · customers & competitors

Sources it told me it can't read (paywalled, login, blocked)

WORKSHEET 02

Your business, in one paragraph.

What we do — the work you actually invoice for

Where we work and who we serve

A THREAT is… (what would genuinely cost us money)

An OPPORTUNITY is… (what we'd act on this month)

IGNORE — topics that are never actionable for us

Test: could a competitor down the road have written this exact paragraph? If yes, the threat and opportunity lines need to be more specific.

WORKSHEET 03

Two-week feedback log.

DATE	TOO MUCH OF…	IT MISSED…	INSTRUCTIONS UPDATED?

Every session ends the same way: **"Now rewrite the full instructions for this scheduled brief to include what I just told you, and show me the new version."** Then paste it back into the task.

COPY THIS

The prompt, clean.

Replace everything in brackets. Paste the whole thing into the scheduled task.

```
Every [DAY AND TIME], search the web and write me a short news
brief for my business.

ABOUT MY BUSINESS
We are [SIZE AND TRADE] in [REGION], Quebec.
We [WHAT YOU DO], serving [CUSTOMER TYPE].

A THREAT is [WHAT WOULD COST YOU MONEY].
An OPPORTUNITY is [WHAT YOU'D ACT ON THIS MONTH].
IGNORE: [TOPICS THAT ARE NEVER ACTIONABLE FOR YOU].

SOURCES — check these first, every time:
  1. [SOURCE]
  2. [SOURCE]
  3. [SOURCE]
  4. [SOURCE]
  5. [SOURCE]
You may also use other credible sources, but these come first.

WHAT TO COVER: only items published in the last 7 days.

FORMAT — maximum 5 items, ranked most important first.
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  1. WHAT HAPPENED — one sentence, plain language
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  4. SOURCE — publication name, date, and link

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  one line. Do not fill the brief to reach five items.
- Never guess at a fact or a link. If you cannot verify something,
  leave it out and tell me you left it out.
- Include the publication date on every item. If you cannot find
  a date, do not include the item.
- Keep the whole brief under 300 words.
- Write in [FRENCH / ENGLISH].
```

REFERENCES

Every product detail in this guide was checked against the vendor's own documentation on 5 August 2026.

These products change frequently. Where a screen doesn't match what's described here, the vendor's help centre is current and this guide is not.

- Anthropic — *Schedule recurring tasks in Claude Cowork*, Claude Help Center. support.claude.com
- OpenAI — *Scheduled Tasks in ChatGPT*, OpenAI Help Center. help.openai.com
- Google — *Schedule actions in Gemini Apps*, Gemini Apps Help. support.google.com/gemini
- Microsoft — *Schedule Copilot prompts*, Microsoft Support. support.microsoft.com

Modus is vendor-neutral by design: tied to no platform or partner program, and no vendor named in this guide has any relationship with us. The four are listed because they are what an owner in Quebec is most likely to already have.

Rather have us do it?

Book a call. Scan the code or click the link.

modusai.ca/en/#contact

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