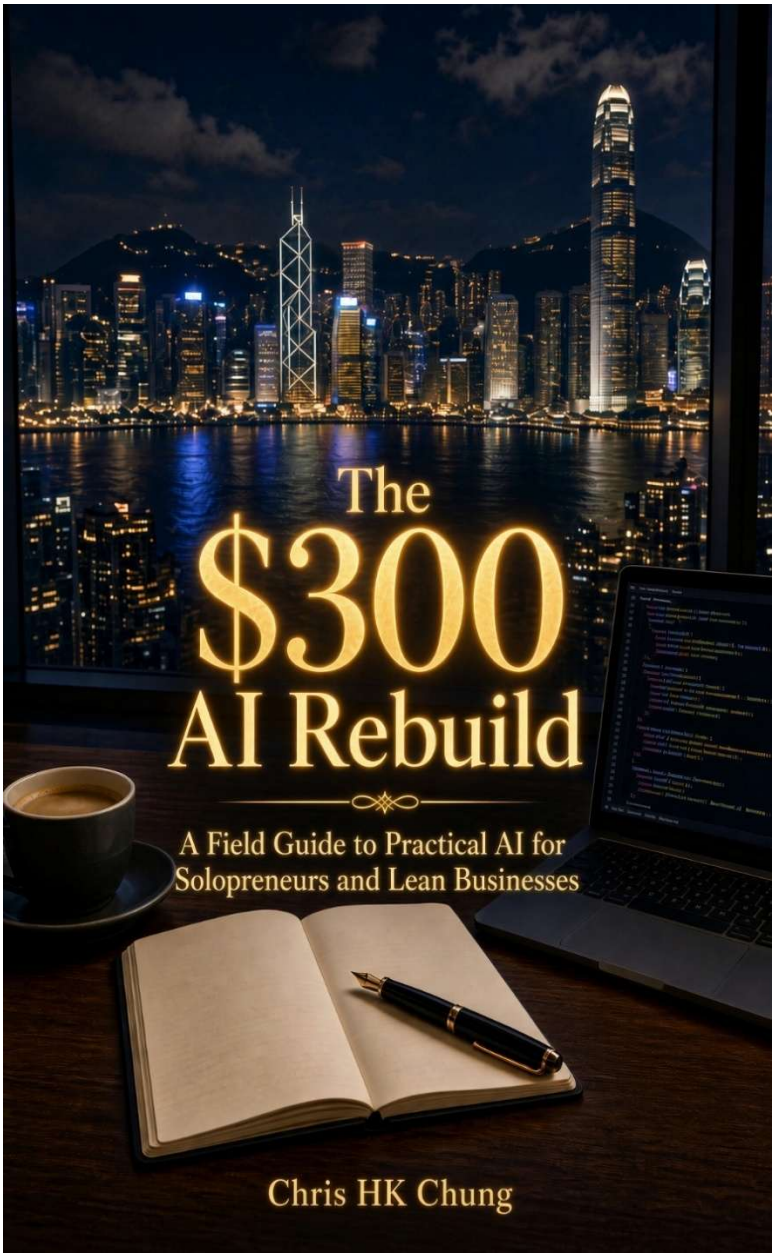
The
$300
AI Rebuild
A Field Guide to Practical AI for
Solopreneurs and Lean Businesses
Chris HK Chung

The $300 AI Rebuild

A Field Guide to Practical AI
for Solopreneurs and Lean Businesses

Chris HK Chung

Copyright © 2026 by Chris HK Chung
All rights reserved.
First English edition, 2026.
Published by IB Singularity Life
www.ib-hk.com | www.i-bridgelife.com

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (including without limitation electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher. This book may not be lent, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent. This work is reserved from text and data mining.

Disclaimer

This book is for informational and educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional or legal advice. The author and publisher make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the completeness, accuracy, reliability, suitability, or availability of the book or any information, products, services, or related graphics in it. Any reliance you place on such information is strictly at your own risk. Consult a professional financial advisor or attorney before

making financial decisions. The author and publisher assume no responsibility for errors, inaccuracies, or omissions, and shall not be liable for any loss or damage of any kind, including direct, indirect, incidental, consequential, special, or exemplary damage, arising from or in connection with the use of this book or the information in it.

For my parents, who taught me.
For my family, who care for me.
For my friends, who support me.

And for AI, which forced me to adapt and pursue a better future.

Contents

Introduction 9
Who This Book Is For 12
How to Use This Book 13

Part 1: Starting with a Real Problem
1.1 From US$300 to a New Beginning 16
1.2 Why I Turned to AI 19
1.3 What Beginners Actually Need to Learn in AI 21
1.4 From Everyday Language to Powerful Prompts 23

Part 2: Build Useful AI Workflows
2.1 Control Your AI Cost (Cloud vs AI PC) 30
2.2 Cloud AI, Local AI and Regional Access 34
2.3 Skill First, App Later 38

Part 3: Turn Skills into Offers
3.1 Why AI Is Leverage, Not a Business Model 42
3.2 The AI-Powered One-Person Company (OPC) 45
3.3 Build a Zero-Budget Side Hustle 48
3.4 Digital Products vs AI-Enhanced Physical Products 51
3.5 AI Art & Video: Opportunities and Limitations 53
3.6 Real Income Patterns 56

Part 4: Validate and Develop Products

4.1 Find Products Through Real Frustrations 60

4.2 The Four-Step Product Validation Filter 62

4.3 Source Products on a Small Budget 68

4.4 OEM vs ODM 73

Part 5: Find Customers

5.1 Beyond SEO: Why AEO / GEO Matters 79

5.2 Use AI For Prospect Research 85

5.3 Why Every Solopreneur Needs a Simple Online Hub 91

Part 6: Key Lessons (Operate Responsibly)

6.1 What AI Can and Cannot Do 96
(Automation vs Prediction)

6.2 Why You Need at least Two Computers 103
(Data, Privacy and Security)

6.3 Final Thoughts 105

About the Author 107

Acknowledgements 109

Thank you

In a fast-moving market, theory won't save you.

Real-world execution will.

Introduction

More than ten years ago, my world collapsed overnight. I lost nearly everything after falling victim to a scheme run by a relative I trusted completely.

I was left with less than US$300 (around HK$2,300) in my wallet. In a high-cost city like Hong Kong, that figure is terrifying. It couldn't cover a week's rent in a tiny subdivided flat, let alone feed a family.

As the primary provider for my family, the pressure was suffocating. I sank into deep depression. Many nights I lay awake staring at the ceiling, wondering how I would buy food the next day, pay my child's school fees, or afford medicine for my mother. I felt like a complete failure.

Then came the post-COVID reality. Hong Kong's recovery was painfully slow. Prices for everyday essentials, from dim sum at the local Cantonese restaurant to electricity bills, skyrocketed.

I knew that if I didn't make a radical change, my family would sink financially. I became obsessed with finding a path forward.

Starting a traditional brick-and-mortar business was almost impossible. Renting a physical shop in Hong Kong needs serious

upfront capital for deposits, inventory, and marketing. With US$300, those doors were shut. I tried a small online store with minimal stock, but it failed during the pandemic lockdowns.

Failure wasn't an option. The family burden and the cost of living left me no choice but to keep pushing.

So, I turned to artificial intelligence.

I began learning from scratch: reading technical documentation, taking online courses, testing tools in real situations. I documented my experiments on Painless AI Lab, sharing practical workflows for building simple automation tools, sourcing products, and validating business models on a budget.

I did not enter this field as a computer scientist, software engineer, or AI expert. I entered as a business professional in Hong Kong trying to adapt, learn new skills, and create better opportunities.

Like many people, I was curious about AI and quickly felt overwhelmed by the endless wave of tools, data, noise, and hype. I needed something clear and practical: real experiments, real mistakes, real lessons, and strategies I could use.

This book is not a technical textbook. It is a collection of practical lessons from my own process of learning AI, testing tools, building simple tools, sourcing products, and turning that knowledge into real-world results.

Who This Book Is For

- Beginners who feel overwhelmed by the flood of AI tools, courses, and online advice, and want a clear, pragmatic starting point.
- Solopreneurs or side-hustlers on a limited budget who want to use AI to test ideas, build simple tools, or create small income streams without a big team or large capital.
- Someone living in a high-cost city (like Hong Kong) who wants realistic skills to hedge against economic shifts without taking reckless financial risks.
- Pragmatists who prefer real-world execution, failures, and hard-won lessons over theory.
- Anyone who has tried learning AI before but stopped because it felt too technical, too expensive, or too disconnected from real life.

This book is not an academic textbook. It is not a guide to advanced neural network architectures. It does not offer get-rich-quick promises. It is a practical manual for applying AI to real business problems.

In Chapter 1, I will show the first moves I made with almost no capital.

How to Use This Book

Treat this as a practical reference. You do not need to read it sequentially from cover to cover; jump to the section that matches what you need now:

If you are starting from a real problem: start with Part 1.
If you want useful AI workflows and cost control: go to Part 2.
If you want to turn skills into offers: go to Part 3.
If you want to validate and develop products: go to Part 4.
If you want to find customers: go to Part 5.
If you want the hard limits and safety rules: go to Part 6.

Recommended Action Plan

- **Read with action in mind.** After each chapter, try at least one idea or experiment. Small action beats collecting information.
- **Don't aim for perfection.** Some chapters share real mistakes and imperfect results. The goal is progress, not a perfect system.
- **Come back when needed.** Revisit a chapter when you hit a specific problem, for example, sourcing products or finding customers.

- **Focus on what works for your situation.** Not every method will suit everyone. Take what is useful and ignore the rest.

This book is written for real-world use. The more you apply what you read, the more value you will get from it.

Part 1: Starting with a Real Problem

1.1 From US$300 to a New Beginning

After I hit bottom with less than US$300, my immediate goal was **survival:** money for daily expenses and enough to cover minimum credit card payments so compounding interest wouldn't crush me.

I had to act fast and manage time carefully. I ran two tracks at once: looking for a job and launching an online store.

Traditional hiring in Hong Kong takes time; even a security guard job needs mandatory training and a license.

A particularly disheartening job interview sealed it for me. The hiring manager spent most of our 15-minute slot on his personal phone calls, then kept cutting in to ask, "What did I just say?"

Realizing I couldn't afford to wait for a paycheck, I shifted my focus entirely to e-commerce.

With almost no capital, I needed products that had immediate market demand and people already wanted. I bypassed lengthy theoretical market research and went directly to wholesale markets and trade shows like the Hong Kong Electronics Fair and Global Sources. It was pure trial and error.

Once I had sample inventory, I did everything myself to keep costs near zero. Working late into the night, I built the online storefront, listed products on social media, and posted on free local platforms like Yahoo and Google. Setup took less than a week.

Results came fast. I received my first local order in two days. Overseas buyers followed shortly, including a client in Qatar, a relationship that eventually expanded into custom original design manufacturing (ODM) projects. At its peak, the store generated US$3,000 to US$10,000 a month. That income helped me stabilize the household and start paying down the credit card.

My top seller was a USB-powered heating vest. Hong Kong is rarely very cold, but demand still rose. Buyers wanted the vest for elderly relatives, cold-weather fishing, and winter travel.

Lean e-commerce runs on simple math.

Target Monthly Profit = Units Sold x Profit per Unit
For example: to earn a target profit of US$1,000 with a US$10 margin per item, you need 100 units a month (US$1000 ÷ US$10).

$$\text{Required Volume} = \frac{\$1{,}000}{\$10} = 100 \text{ units}$$

Moving 100 units of a single Stock-Keeping Unit (SKU) every month in a local market is hard.

Two ways out:

source higher-margin products or add complementary SKUs.

For example, USB-heated scarves and gloves next to the heated vests.

You have just read the Introduction and Chapter 1.1

The full edition also includes:

- Prompt writing and AI cost control
- Hong Kong Regional limits and practical workflows
- Low-cost sourcing, OEM / ODM
- Finding customers, instead of waiting for traffic
- And more...

Buy the full PDF version: HK$99

Thank you!