

Tests show +Collaborate saves time, cuts costs with ChatGPT

What happens when the same model receives the same business problem - but one version asks what the cost target is meant to accomplish before producing the plan?

42.5%

LOWER ESTIMATED API COST

\$0.0427 vs. \$0.0742

35.9%

LESS GENERATION TIME

43.3s vs. 67.6s

38.9%

FEWER OUTPUT TOKENS

1,972 vs. 3,230

The result

The baseline model immediately generated a generic 1,957-output-token plan. After learning that the company wanted to improve EBITDA before a sale, it generated a second, transaction-oriented plan. +Collaborate asked the purpose first, received the same answer, and produced one sale-oriented plan.

Both final answers were useful. The measured advantage was not that +Collaborate used fewer total tokens; it did not. The advantage was that it avoided generating an elaborate answer before the consequential objective was known.

Same model. Same initial prompt. Different sequence of work.

Run: September 13, 2026, 8:53 p.m. Eastern | Model: GPT-5.6 Sol | Reasoning: medium | Text verbosity: low

A matched two-turn comparison

The test used the production +Collaborate harness. The model, reasoning level, maximum output limit, verbosity, initial prompt, and disclosed business objective were held constant. The only systematic difference was the addition of the frozen +Collaborate protocol and the order in which the model acted.

Turn 1	Produces a complete generic cost-reduction plan.	Asks what is driving the 10% target.
Human reply	Discloses sale objective and requests revision.	Discloses the identical sale objective and selects Cut to the chase.
Turn 2	Produces a second, sale-oriented plan.	Produces the sale-oriented plan for the first time.

The initial prompt

We're a 200-person B2B SaaS company that provides project-management software to small and midsize businesses. We have \$30 million in annual recurring revenue, but our operating expenses have grown too quickly. Develop a plan to reduce operating costs by 10% over the next 12 months without reducing revenue or laying off employees.

The shared objective

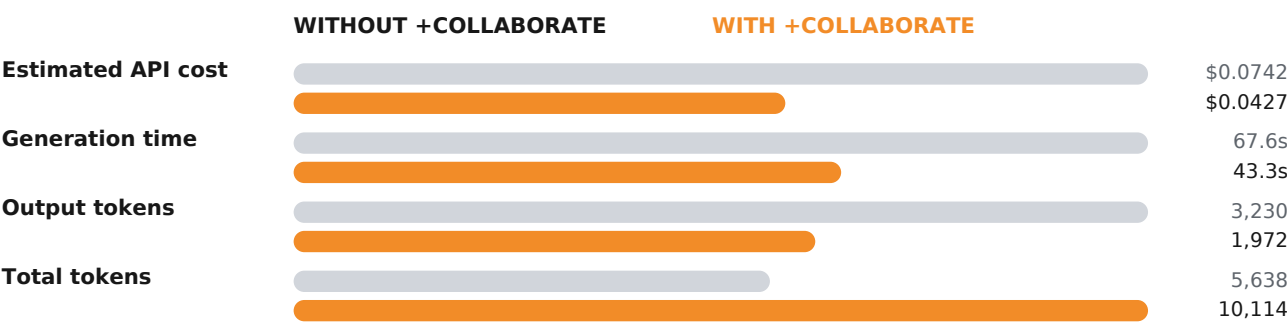
Our investors want us to improve EBITDA before exploring a sale of the company.

Why this is the fair comparison

The baseline's first plan was not treated as useless. It was treated as incomplete for the newly disclosed transaction objective, exactly as a real user would discover after reading it. Both branches ultimately received the same material fact. The comparison measures the resources required to reach a useful, purpose-specific result.

MEASURED RESULTS

Lower cost and latency; higher total tokens



Measure	Without +Collaborate	With +Collaborate	Change
Input tokens	2,408	8,142	+238.1%
Cached input tokens	0	8,136	Protocol reused
Output tokens	3,230	1,972	-38.9%
Total tokens	5,638	10,114	+79.4%
Generation time	67.6s	43.3s	-35.9%
Estimated API cost	\$0.0742	\$0.0427	-42.5%

Why cost fell while total tokens rose

The +Collaborate protocol added substantial input context, but 8,136 of its 8,142 input tokens were reported as cached. Cached input was priced at one-tenth of ordinary input in the production estimator. Output tokens carry the highest unit price, so avoiding the first generic plan more than offset the cached protocol overhead.

This test therefore supports a cost-and-latency claim, not a blanket total-token-reduction claim. Without effective prompt caching, the economic result could differ.

Useful answers on both sides

The experiment did not use a blinded expert panel, so it cannot prove that one final plan was objectively better. A transparent reading supports four narrower conclusions:

Question	Finding
Did both final plans satisfy the stated constraints?	Yes. Both preserved revenue, prohibited layoffs, targeted 10% savings over 12 months, and addressed EBITDA before a sale.
What did +Collaborate change?	It established the transaction objective before planning and avoided producing a generic plan that then required replacement.
Where was the baseline stronger?	Its revised answer included a more detailed diligence package and an explicit executive incentive scorecard.
Where was +Collaborate stronger?	Its final answer cleanly distinguished annualized run-rate savings, realized savings, buyer normalization risk, and a 12-13% contingency pipeline.
What can be claimed?	In this run, +Collaborate preserved practical usefulness while reducing estimated cost, latency, and output generation.

The business implication

The avoidable expense was not a bad answer. It was a polished answer delivered before the model understood what the number was for. In a single exchange the dollar amount is tiny. At enterprise scale, the pattern repeats across users, revisions, tools, and agentic actions.

+Collaborate changes the sequence: establish the consequential objective, then spend generation resources on the work most likely to survive contact with the user's real need.

The user shouldn't have to know how to prompt the AI. The AI should know how to prompt the user.

What this test proves - and what it does not

It shows	It does not show
One matched production run using GPT-5.6 Sol	A statistically generalizable average across tasks
42.5% lower estimated API cost in this run	A guaranteed percentage for every workload
35.9% less model generation time in this run	End-to-end user time, including reading and replying
38.9% fewer output tokens	Fewer total tokens; total tokens were 79.4% higher
Both final answers were practically useful	Blinded proof of superior answer quality

Reproduction record

Model	gpt-5.6-sol
Reasoning effort	medium
Maximum output tokens	12,000
Text verbosity	low
Protocol SHA-256	4f3d39a9830c10033b932179a1752185da65541de776c38302c499914982aca7
Run started	2026-09-14T00:53:01+00:00
Run finished	2026-09-14T00:54:52+00:00

Cost calculation

Estimated cost uses the rates embedded in the production demo on the test date: \$4 per million uncached input tokens, \$0.40 per million cached input tokens, and \$20 per million output tokens. Hosting, taxes, cache-write surcharges, and special service tiers are excluded.

Without +Collaborate

Assistant - first response

Objective

Reduce the month-12 operating-expense run rate by 10%, while maintaining ARR, retention, service quality, and employment.

Savings target = normalized annual operating expense × 10%.

Example: if annual OpEx is \$24M, target \$2.4M in annualized savings.

A 10% exit-rate reduction will generally produce only 6–8% cash savings during the first 12 months because actions phase in. Achieving a full 10% in-year reduction requires most changes within the first quarter.

Savings portfolio

Lever	Target savings (% of OpEx)	Actions
Workforce management	3.0%	Freeze net-new hiring; backfill only revenue-critical positions; eliminate vacant roles; redeploy staff; reduce contractors and agencies before employees
Software and vendors	2.0%	Remove unused licenses; consolidate overlapping tools; renegotiate major contracts; require procurement approval and annual prepayment discounts
Cloud infrastructure	1.2%	Rightsize compute and databases; delete idle resources; introduce storage lifecycle rules; purchase commitments only after optimization
Marketing efficiency	1.4%	Stop channels with poor CAC payback; reduce agency and event spending; preserve high-converting demand generation and customer marketing
Facilities and travel	0.8%	Consolidate office space where contracts permit; tighten travel rules; replace low-value events and internal meetings with virtual formats
Professional services and G&A	0.8%	Reduce outside legal, recruiting, consulting, and finance support; standardize recurring work internally
Support and operating efficiency	0.8%	Improve self-service onboarding, documentation, billing automation, and support routing; reduce overtime and outsourced volume
Total	10.0%	

Do not count productivity improvements as savings unless they remove an actual invoice, contractor, vacancy, or other budgeted expense.

Workforce approach without layoffs

- Freeze overall headcount immediately, while allowing exceptions for quota-carrying sales, customer retention, security, and critical engineering.
- Review every vacancy and backfill request through the CFO and relevant executive.
- Use normal attrition to reduce staffing costs; redeploy capable employees before recruiting externally.
- End or reduce contractors doing work that employees can absorb.
- Retrain employees from lower-priority projects for implementation, customer success, product adoption, and revenue operations.

- Cancel low-value projects rather than spreading employees across too many initiatives.
- Avoid across-the-board salary cuts. Maintain market-critical compensation and existing commission economics.

12-month execution plan

Days 1-30: Establish control

1. Normalize the expense baseline using the latest three months.
2. Assign every expense to an executive owner.
3. Freeze new vendors, contractors, nonessential hiring, and discretionary travel.
4. Inventory contracts, software licenses, cloud resources, vacancies, consultants, and marketing programs.
5. Rank product initiatives by revenue retention, expansion, and strategic necessity.
6. Create a savings register showing owner, timing, risk, and verified financial impact.

Target: identify opportunities equal to 13–15% of OpEx, providing a buffer against underdelivery.

Months 2-3: Capture immediate savings

- Cancel unused subscriptions and overlapping tools.
- Renegotiate the 20 largest vendor contracts.
- Eliminate idle cloud resources and impose budget alerts.
- Stop low-performing campaigns and events.
- Cancel noncritical vacancies and reduce agency recruiting.
- Pause projects without measurable customer or revenue impact.

Target: 3–4% annualized savings committed.

Months 4-6: Restructure work

- Consolidate vendors and standardize core platforms.
- Redeploy employees from paused projects.
- Automate onboarding, billing, renewals, and common support requests.
- Introduce cloud unit-cost targets per active customer.
- Renegotiate office and professional-service arrangements where possible.

Target: 6–7% annualized savings.

Months 7-9: Close gaps

- Audit whether savings reached the general ledger.
- Review attrition and selectively decline noncritical backfills.
- Rebid major contracts approaching renewal.
- Shift marketing budget toward channels with acceptable CAC payback.
- Address any department more than 5% above its revised budget.

Target: 8–9% annualized savings.

Months 10-12: Lock in the reduction

- Close remaining savings gaps from the 13–15% opportunity pipeline.
- Build lower vendor, cloud, contractor, and hiring levels into the next budget.
- Tie executive objectives to both savings and revenue guardrails.

Target: at least 10% lower monthly OpEx run rate.

Revenue and customer guardrails

Review these monthly alongside savings:

- ARR and new ARR at or above plan
- Gross and net revenue retention
- Qualified pipeline and win rate
- Customer churn and implementation time
- Support response time and customer satisfaction
- Product uptime, performance, and security incidents

- Sales capacity and quota attainment
- Employee regrettable attrition and engagement

Pause or reverse any cost action that causes material deterioration in retention, pipeline, uptime, or customer service.

Governance

The CFO should lead a weekly cost program with the CEO, CRO, CTO, and functional owners. Finance validates savings against actual invoices and payroll—not forecasts—and reports:

1. Annualized savings committed
2. Savings realized year to date
3. Remaining gap to 10%
4. Revenue and customer guardrails
5. Employee-impact risks

This approach avoids blunt departmental cuts and concentrates reductions on low-value spending, vacancies, contractors, infrastructure waste, and inefficient acquisition channels.

Outcome disclosed; plan revised

User

Our investors want us to improve EBITDA before exploring a sale of the company. Revise the plan so it is optimized for that outcome.

Assistant - revised response

Sale-Readiness Objective

Increase credible, sustainable adjusted EBITDA over the next 12 months while protecting ARR, retention, growth quality, and employees.

Set three board-approved targets:

1. Reduce normalized OpEx run rate by at least 10%
2. Improve adjusted EBITDA by the same dollar amount, excluding one-time costs
3. Maintain ARR and establish buyer-ready evidence that savings are repeatable

Avoid delaying necessary expenses, aggressive capitalization, or unusual add-backs. Buyers will challenge these during quality-of-earnings diligence.

EBITDA-Optimized Savings Portfolio

Lever	OpEx reduction	EBITDA/sale rationale
Hiring, vacancies, contractors	3.0%	Rapid, measurable run-rate savings without layoffs
Software and vendors	2.0%	Durable contracted savings visible in invoices
Marketing efficiency	1.5%	Removes low-return spend while preserving pipeline
Cloud and hosting	1.2%	Improves both EBITDA and gross margin
Professional services/G&A	0.9%	Reduces reliance on consultants and agencies
Facilities, travel, events	0.8%	Immediate savings with limited revenue risk
Support and operating automation	0.6%	Improves scalability and cost-to-serve
Total	10.0%	

Prioritize gross-margin improvements—cloud, support, implementation, and third-party service costs—because buyers often value both EBITDA and SaaS margin quality.

Actions by Priority

1. Establish a defensible baseline

Within 30 days:

- Reconcile ARR, revenue, gross margin, and EBITDA to the general ledger.
- Define adjusted EBITDA consistently with the board and likely buyer conventions.
- Separate recurring operations from genuine one-time sale-readiness costs.
- Create monthly department and customer-cohort profitability reporting.
- Calculate the exact savings required to reach the target.

Use realized savings rather than unfilled plans or estimated productivity gains.

2. Capture fast, durable savings

During the first 90 days:

- Freeze net-new headcount and require CEO/CFO approval for backfills.
- Eliminate vacant positions from the budget.
- Reduce contractors, recruiters, agencies, and consultants before employees.
- Cancel unused software and consolidate overlapping tools.
- Renegotiate major contracts and synchronize renewal dates.
- Stop discretionary travel, low-value events, and office spending.
- Rightsize cloud resources before purchasing longer-term commitments.
- End marketing programs that fail agreed CAC-payback and pipeline thresholds.

Aim to commit 4–5% of OpEx savings by day 90, maximizing the EBITDA benefit visible in trailing results.

3. Improve recurring economics

During months 3–6:

- Automate billing, renewals, onboarding, and routine support.
- Move customers toward standardized implementation packages.
- Reduce cloud cost per active account.
- Review discounts, service credits, and unprofitable custom work.
- Introduce approval thresholds for nonstandard contracts.
- Shift employees from low-priority product work to retention, adoption, implementation, and expansion.
- Simplify the product roadmap around features that influence retention or sales.

Target 7–8% annualized savings by month 6.

4. Produce a clean track record

During months 7–12:

- Reach the full 10% reduction by month 9, allowing several months of demonstrated performance before a sale process.
- Maintain stable accounting policies and adjustment definitions.
- Document each initiative with invoices, contracts, staffing records, and monthly general-ledger evidence.
- Build the savings into forecasts and the next annual budget.
- Prepare a bridge from historical EBITDA to current run-rate EBITDA.

No-Layoff Workforce Plan

- Use natural attrition and selective non-backfilling.
- Redeploy employees from paused initiatives into revenue retention and customer adoption.
- Replace contractors with available employees where practical.
- Preserve quota-carrying, customer-success, security, reliability, and critical product capacity.
- Avoid compensation cuts that could drive regrettable attrition before diligence.
- Track employee engagement, key-person dependency, and regrettable departures.

Do not present vacancy savings as permanent if the forecast assumes those roles will later be refilled.

Revenue and Valuation Guardrails

Review monthly:

- ARR, recurring-revenue growth, and bookings
- Gross and net revenue retention
- Logo and customer-cohort churn
- Gross margin and cloud cost per customer
- Pipeline coverage, win rate, and CAC payback
- Customer concentration and contract duration
- Support performance, uptime, and security
- Regrettable employee attrition
- Adjusted EBITDA and cash conversion

Require an executive risk review before cutting customer-facing, product-reliability, security, or high-performing demand-generation spending.

Buyer-Ready Reporting

Prepare a diligence package containing:

- Monthly financial statements and KPI definitions
- ARR-to-revenue reconciliation
- Customer-level ARR and retention cohorts
- EBITDA adjustment schedule
- Savings register tied to the general ledger
- Vendor contracts and renewal calendar
- Headcount, contractor, and compensation history
- Deferred revenue and commission accounting
- Cloud and gross-margin trends
- Board-approved forecast with assumptions

Classify EBITDA improvements as:

1. Realized: already visible in results
2. Contracted: supported by executed agreements
3. Planned: not yet completed

Lead valuation discussions with realized and contracted improvements only.

Governance and Incentives

The CFO should run a weekly transformation office and report monthly to the board. Tie executive incentives to a balanced scorecard:

- 40% adjusted EBITDA improvement
- 25% ARR and retention
- 15% gross margin
- 10% cash conversion
- 10% customer and employee health

This creates a cleaner, more credible earnings profile without sacrificing the recurring revenue and organizational stability buyers will underwrite.

With +Collaborate

Assistant - first response

What is driving the 10% cost-reduction target—improving profitability, extending cash runway, or freeing funds for growth?

User

Our investors want us to improve EBITDA before exploring a sale of the company. [Cut to the chase selected]

Assistant - final response

12-Month Operating-Cost Reduction Plan

Objective

Improve sale-ready EBITDA by reducing annualized operating-expense run rate by 10% by Month 12, while:

- Making no layoffs
- Protecting ARR, renewals, pipeline, and customer service
- Favoring recurring savings that will survive buyer diligence
- Avoiding deferred expenses that a buyer would normalize back into EBITDA

If current annual OpEx is \$X, the Month-12 run-rate target is \$0.10X. Build an approved savings pipeline of 12–13% to cover execution slippage.

Savings portfolio

Initiative	Target savings (% of OpEx)	Actions
Workforce and contractors	3.0–4.0%	Freeze noncritical hiring; require executive approval for backfills; use natural attrition; redeploy staff; eliminate low-value contractors and agency work
Software and vendors	2.0–2.5%	Consolidate overlapping tools; remove unused licenses; renegotiate major contracts; centralize purchasing and renewals
Cloud and infrastructure	1.0–1.5%	Rightsize compute and databases; remove idle resources; optimize storage and observability; purchase commitments only after usage stabilizes
Marketing efficiency	1.0–1.5%	Stop low-return events and channels; reduce agencies; retain programs that produce qualified pipeline and expansion
G&A, facilities, professional services	1.0–1.5%	Renegotiate insurance and leases; restrict travel; reduce external legal, recruiting, and consulting spend
Product and engineering efficiency	0.5–1.0%	Pause low-adoption initiatives; reduce duplicate tooling and test environments; focus capacity on retention, reliability, and monetization
Total identified	8.5–12.0%	Target at least 12% in approved opportunities to realize 10%

Workforce plan without layoffs

Because payroll is probably the largest expense, vendor cuts alone are unlikely to reach 10%.

1. Freeze net-new hiring immediately, except roles tied directly to renewals, committed delivery, security, or near-term revenue.
2. Review every vacancy and backfill against revenue risk.
3. Use expected voluntary attrition to reduce costs gradually.
4. Redeploy employees from paused projects into customer success, onboarding, implementation, reliability, and revenue operations.
5. Reduce contractors before employees.
6. Do not use across-the-board compensation cuts; they create retention risk and weaken sale diligence.
7. Track workload and service levels so attrition does not become an unmanaged layoff substitute.

Execution schedule

Days 1-30: Establish control

- CFO creates a normalized OpEx baseline by department, vendor, and cost type.
- Separate recurring expenses, one-time expenses, and COGS.
- Freeze discretionary hiring, new software, consultants, travel, and unapproved renewals.
- Assign an executive owner to every savings initiative.
- Create a savings ledger showing baseline, action, timing, one-time cost, run-rate benefit, and evidence.

Days 31-90: Capture fast savings

- Audit all software licenses and eliminate unused or duplicate products.
- Renegotiate the 20 largest vendor contracts.
- Remove idle cloud resources and establish cost ownership by engineering team.
- Rank marketing spend by sourced pipeline, conversion, CAC payback, and expansion impact.
- Cancel low-return events, sponsorships, agencies, and experiments.
- Review all contractors and open positions.

Target: Approve actions representing at least 6% of OpEx by Day 90.

Months 4-6: Restructure work

- Pause low-value product initiatives and redeploy teams.
- Consolidate procurement, recruiting, analytics, and operations tools.
- Automate repetitive finance, support, onboarding, and reporting workflows.
- Introduce quarterly workforce planning and zero-based departmental budgets.
- Implement cloud budgets, alerts, and unit-cost reporting.

Target: Achieve 5-6% realized run-rate savings by Month 6.

Months 7-12: Close the gap and institutionalize

- Rebid major contracts approaching renewal.
- Continue selective backfill restrictions without weakening revenue-critical teams.
- Validate that savings are recurring and not merely delayed spending.
- Document contracts, approvals, reconciliations, and normalized EBITDA adjustments for buyer diligence.
- Maintain a 2-3% contingency pipeline.

Target: Exit Month 12 at 10% lower annualized OpEx run rate.

Revenue-protection guardrails

Pause or reverse a cost action if it causes sustained deterioration in:

- Gross revenue retention
- Net revenue retention
- Renewal rate or churn
- Qualified pipeline coverage
- Sales conversion or cycle length
- Customer onboarding time

- Support response and resolution times
- Product uptime, security, or critical roadmap commitments

Do not cut customer-facing capacity solely by percentage. Base changes on account load, service requirements, renewal risk, and productivity.

Governance

- Executive sponsor: CEO
- Program owner: CFO
- Weekly: Savings review with initiative owners
- Monthly: Board-level EBITDA and revenue-risk dashboard
- Finance recognizes savings only when supported by payroll records, invoices, terminated contracts, or signed amendments.
- Report both realized savings and annualized run-rate savings; never combine them.

Board dashboard

Track:

1. OpEx versus normalized baseline
2. Verified savings and forecast savings
3. EBITDA and EBITDA margin
4. ARR, gross retention, and net retention
5. Pipeline coverage and bookings
6. Headcount, vacancies, attrition, and contractors
7. Cloud cost per active customer
8. Savings at risk and revenue guardrail breaches

The central strategy is to obtain roughly one-third of savings through controlled attrition and contractor reduction, one-third through vendor/cloud optimization, and one-third through lower-return discretionary spending—while protecting customer retention and pipeline.

+Collaborate

More value from the model you already have.

Interactive demonstration and strategic materials: collaborator.revenuemodel.ai/opportunity/

Contact: alan.jacobson@revenuemodel.ai