

The AI Packaging Migration Nobody Planned For

Why 75% of SaaS Teams Are Flying Blind on AI Pricing—and What the Winners Are Doing Differently

75% of Agentic AI providers can't price their product



The Packaging Problem Is a Value Gap, Not a Feature Gap

94%

of tech companies
planning new AI solutions

Simon-Kucher

44%

of SaaS companies now
charge for AI features

Maxio

61%

run hybrid pricing
(subscription + usage)

SaaS Benchmark

The dominant pattern is cost-plus credit: teams mark up AI compute costs 30–50% and call it a pricing strategy. It's scaffolding, not architecture.

Even well-capitalized platforms are making reactive packaging moves under pressure, because no proven playbook exists for this transition.

The packaging decisions being made now will define competitive positions for the next 3–5 years.

Migration Friction Is Killing Adoption From the Inside

A Billing Fear

Customers refuse to use free AI credits out of fear of unpredictable expenses. Enterprise buyers reject AI line items without hard caps or flat-rate guarantees.

B Outcome Disputes

Vendors billing per resolution face pushback when incomplete interactions are counted as successful. The customer sees an unresolved issue; the billing system sees a closed ticket.

C Sales Margin Leak

Reps can't forecast credit burn, so they comp AI credits to close deals. Margin walks out the door every quarter, untracked and unrecoverable.

You're investing millions in AI capabilities and users refuse to engage because the billing model itself is the deterrent.

The Macro Reality and the NRR Upside

AI-Enhanced Is Underperforming



- 45-55% activate premium AI features
- 50%+ of Gen AI innovations miss financial goals
- 65-72% compute-adjusted gross margins (5pts below standard SaaS)

The NRR Upside

95-105%

Flat subscription



115-
130%+
Hybrid / usage

38% higher NRR for hybrid vs. pure subscription

Intercom's Fin agent: \$0.99 per successful resolution with strict criteria the customer can audit.

Define success metrics → Implement tiered caps → Align billing with consumption

The Path Forward Is a Pricing Architecture Decision

A

Willingness to Pay

Determine customer WTP before choosing a billing model. Without that baseline, every pricing decision is a guess.

B

Define the Value Metric

Credits, seats, and API calls are cost proxies, not value metrics. Start with the outcome the customer pays for and work backwards.

C

Instrument Outcomes

Outcome-based pricing without rigorous metering is a dispute generator. Distinguish real value delivery from system-generated activity.

D

Build Hybrid Structures

Base subscription anchors the relationship. Metered usage captures expansion. That is the architecture behind 115-130%+ NRR.

This is the architecture behind 115-130%+ NRR — a pricing design problem, not a product launch.

AC

ASHRAFI CONSULTING

Request a Diagnostic

ashraficonsulting.com

75% can't price what they're building. Can you?