

A hand holding a smartphone is the central focus, set against a dark blue background. Overlaid on the scene are several futuristic digital elements: a glowing blue bar with a starburst icon, a code editor window with lines of text, and other abstract UI components. The overall aesthetic is high-tech and digital.

SIMPRO®

THE TRADE BUSINESS OWNER'S GUIDE TO AI

10 PREDICTIONS FOR THE NEXT DECADE

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Two Numbers. One Decade. A Single Critical Decision.

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**One More Thing:
What Getting the Economics Right Looks Like**

Two Numbers. One Decade. A Single Critical Decision.

6%

and

24%

Those are the two profit margins that define the trade industry right now.

On one side: the average commercial trade business, running at 6% net profit. On the other: the best operators, running at 24%. The distance between them is not luck, effort, or the quality of the craft. It is execution capacity — the ability to run, simultaneously, the 27 things a profitable trade business has to do well.

Most businesses do 7 of those 27 things. The other 20 are full-time roles they cannot afford to hire for, at margins that will not support the headcount. So they do not get done, get done badly, or get done by the owner at midnight. That equation is about to change. Not gradually — decisively, and for the businesses that move first.

Fred Voccola Chairman and CEO of Simpro Group, has seen every major technology disruption of the last 30 years from the inside. He built Kaseya from a struggling startup into a \$15 billion company. He spent months researching and writing a book on AI before taking the helm at Simpro. What he found — and what Simpro is building in response — is the basis of the predictions in this guide.

These are not optimistic projections. They are the clearest reading we have of where the next decade of the trades is going, what it means for your business, and what Cooper — or COOP — Simpro's AI, the brain on top of your FSM — the heart of your business — is doing about each one right now.

Why the Next Decade Moves Faster Than Any Before It

Every major technological transformation in history — coinage, the printing press, electricity, the personal computer — took generations to fully play out. Electricity took over 125 years to reach 92% of the world's population. The personal computer improved human productivity by approximately 4% per year, and it took 25 years of that compounding before the impact was fully felt.

AI is not playing by those rules.

The difference is speed. With electricity, you had to build power plants, run lines, wire buildings. With AI, you and I can make ourselves 100% more productive within the next three days, right now, with no additional infrastructure required. The same technology that is reshaping law firms, accounting practices, and software companies is available to every trade business owner today — not in five years, not after some distant platform upgrade.

What that means for the trades is specific, and it is the entire premise of what follows. The businesses that deploy AI against their operational problems first will build advantages that compound. The businesses that wait will face competitors who can charge 25% less and still make more money. That is not a hypothetical — it is the arithmetic of a 9-month head start.

”

Artificial intelligence is the most powerful technological innovation in the history of humanity. And that includes things like the written word, fire, the wheel, coinage, electricity. They don't hold a candle to the productivity increases that this provides humanity.

FRED VOCCOLA
Chairman & CEO, Simpro Group

”

If you and I are in competitive industries and you adopt AI in an AI-first fashion and I do not — if you have a nine-month head start, I will not catch up to you. I simply can't. You can go to all of my customers and say: I'm going to charge you 25% less. And you'll still make more money. How do I compete with that?

FRED VOCCOLA
Chairman & CEO, Simpro Group
Titans of the Trades Podcast

The 10 Predictions

01

The Most Profitable Trades Businesses are Adopting AI Right Now

The profit gap between the best-run and average trade business has always existed. What changes in the next decade is that it becomes permanent and uncrossable. When AI-first operators can produce the same output at dramatically lower cost — right worker, right job, right time, right parts, right instructions, every time — the unit economics of competing against them become impossible to match through effort alone. The gap stops being a gap and starts being a wall. The businesses that are building operational capacity right now are not just improving their margins. They are removing themselves from the competitive set of businesses that haven't.



Simpro Lightning solves this: The first four launch agents — FieldReady, JobReady, JobScribe, JobBrief — plus JustAsk, the conversational interface to your entire FSM data lake, represent \$200,000+ of operational capacity for roughly \$2,000 a year. That is not a software pricing argument. That is a headcount argument. Every future agent ships under your existing Lightning upgrade at no additional cost.

02

The 22 Disconnected Processes That Kill Your Margin Get Closed — One by One

The average trade business runs approximately 22 separate business processes. Most of them are done manually, and most of them are not connected to each other. Scheduling does not know what is in inventory. Invoicing does not know when the job closed. Payroll does not know how many of those hours were actually billable. Each disconnection is a place where money leaks. Not in one dramatic failure — in 22 small ones, compounding daily, invisible until the margin number comes in at 6% and nobody can quite explain why. Over the next decade, the businesses that systematically close those gaps will find their margin profile transformed. Those that do not will continue to have the same conversation at the end of every quarter.



Simpro Lightning solves this: Simpro is the operational heart. Simpro Lightning is the brain that sits on top, reading all of that data, acting on it, and plugging the leaks — from unbilled time and forgotten change orders to parts not reconciled against jobs. The more connected the data, the smarter the brain, COOP, becomes.

03

The Night Shift Ends

18.5 hours. That is the average number of hours per week a trade business owner spends on administration — after the field work is done, at the kitchen table, after the kids are in bed. Invoicing. Payroll. Reordering. Chasing payments. Scheduling tomorrow. It is the second job nobody signed up for, and it is where burnout starts and businesses shrink rather than grow. The next decade closes this. Not by working less — by having the systems do the routine work as a byproduct of the field work being completed. The job closes in the field. The invoice generates. The payroll populates. The customer gets a summary. The owner gets their evenings back.



Simpro Lightning solves this: JobScribe turns field notes and form data into documentation automatically. GPS Time Tracking flows directly to payroll prep. Two-Way Messaging handles customer communication without anyone in the office composing it. The back office runs because the field work happened — not because someone stayed up until midnight.

04

Technicians Will Become Tenured in their Trade Faster

One of the most consequential constraints in the trades is the experience gap. An experienced electrician who has diagnosed 500 panels over a decade does not need to think about most of what a newer technician is still working through. That accumulated knowledge does not transfer easily — it lives in the heads of your best people, and when they leave, it walks out with them. Wearable AI, in active development, will change this fundamentally. Fred is direct about what Simpro is already building: a wearable device with all the sensory systems and all the history of every one of the 100,000 jobs a week that Simpro customers do — AI telling the electrician what to do because it can see the panel they are looking at, diagnosing the system with them in real time. The result: work that previously required 20 years of experience can be done by someone with six months, and done 25% faster. The experience gap — which drives wage inequality, scheduling bottlenecks, and callback rates — begins to close.



Simpro Lightning solves this: FieldReady at launch handles onboarding and ensures every technician arrives prepared. JobReady delivers full customer and site history, prior job context, and known issues before every job — giving newer technicians the institutional knowledge they do not yet have from experience alone. Wearable AI integration is on the Lightning roadmap.

05

The Chaos Variable Gets Addressed in Seconds, Not Hours

The trucks will still break down. Technicians will still call in sick. Parts will still be missing from trucks on the morning they are needed. Weather will still wreck the schedule. Chaos variables are not a solvable problem — they are a permanent feature of the trades. What changes is the response time and the quality of the response. Today, a dispatcher working across multiple disconnected tools might spend 20 to 30 minutes working out the best reshuffling when a truck goes down. An AI system with full operational context — who is available, who has the right skills, who has the right parts, what each rerouting option costs, who needs to be communicated with — resolves it in seconds. The scale of what is coming is not speculative. In Fred's words: by the end of 2027, half of what trades people do will be heavily AI augmented — meaning they can do four extra jobs a day. That is not a productivity improvement. That is a restructuring of the economics of every job in the business.



Simpro Lightning solves this: Smart Dispatch Agent is in delivery for the back half of 2026. JustAsk can answer operational queries in natural language today — 'which technician closest to this postcode has the right certification and the compressor unit on their truck?' — from the live data in your FSM.

06

Your Best Employees Stay Because Their Work Gets Better, Not Just Their Pay

The conventional wisdom is that tradespeople leave for more money. The reality is more specific: they leave because of boring, repetitive work, poor communication, and the feeling that nobody in the organisation actually sees them. Fred puts it directly — technicians do not want to do work they do not want to do, they do not want to be burdened with boring stuff, and they do not want the risk of working for a company that might not make their last paycheck. AI addresses all three. It eliminates the repetitive admin burden. It enables better communication — from automated job prep to two-way field messaging to AI-generated summaries that mean the office is never chasing the technician for paperwork. And it makes the business profitable enough to invest in the people who stay.



Simpro Lightning solves this: The scheduling algorithm is designed to factor in job-type preferences — what work each technician enjoys and is best at — alongside skills, certifications, and availability. The goal is not just optimised dispatch. It is a workforce that arrives at jobs they are good at and engaged by, which is the foundation of every retention programme worth running.

07

AI-First Companies Will Bid 30% Lower and Still Double Their Margins



This is the prediction that makes the urgency concrete. Fred puts it without qualification: if a trade business is fully AI-first and operating 40% more efficiently, they can bid on the same work at 30% less than the competitor and still double the profit margins that competitor is making. They will win 99 out of 100 times. From the outside, this looks like aggressive, unsustainable pricing. From the inside, it is the arithmetic of removing the inefficiency tax that every non-AI-first business is still paying. The businesses that get there first do not just take market share from the ones that have not. They make it structurally impossible for those businesses to respond — because the response requires a margin they no longer have.



Simpro Lightning solves this: This is the compound effect of Simpro Lightning running across your entire operation — not one agent in one function, but all of them, simultaneously, removing cost and leakage at every point in the job lifecycle. Fred's framing of the economics: the 15 to 30 person trade company now has the equivalent of two PhDs in mathematics working their scheduling and operations — for \$2,000 a year. That is the cost structure that enables the 30% lower bid. The more agents, the smarter the system. The smarter the system, the wider the margin advantage.

08

Speed of Quoting Becomes as Important as Quality of Work

In residential services, reputation and referral still drive a large share of new business. In commercial construction and facilities management, the game is different. Response time — how fast you can get a credible, accurate quote in front of a decision-maker — is often more decisive than the quality of the number. A business that can quote a \$250,000 commercial job in under an hour, because it has invested 12 to 18 months getting pre-builds and templates right in Simpro, wins work that a better-resourced competitor with a slower process never gets a chance to price. As AI makes fast, accurate quoting standard practice among the leading operators, the businesses that still quote from spreadsheets and gut feel will find themselves competing for the jobs the fast operators have already won.



Simpro Lightning solves this: JustAsk for live pricing queries against your own historical data, and supplier catalog integration for current materials pricing. The combination means a lean team can quote at speeds that were previously only possible with a large estimating department.

09

The Customer Who Never Heard From You Between Jobs Has Already Called Someone Else

60% to 70% of customers who leave a service provider do so because of perceived indifference — not because of price, not because of a bad job, but because nobody called. They did not hear from you between service visits. They did not get a seasonal reminder. They did not receive a follow-up after the last job. When they needed work done next time, they went looking. AI-powered customer engagement — triggered by service history, equipment age, seasonal patterns, and geographic clustering — means the right customer gets the right outreach at exactly the right time, without anyone in your office manually managing the process. The businesses deploying this are seeing 20% more jobs in month one and a 15% increase in sales within six weeks.

Delight



Simpro Lightning solves this: Delight, the customer growth agent, reads directly from your Simpro operational data — no separate CRM required, no manual list management. It identifies which customers need service before they know it themselves, and reaches them with relevant, timely communication that looks and reads like it came from a person who knows their history.

10

The Trades Become the Most Attractive Career for the Generation That Grew Up With a Controller in Their Hands

As AI accelerates white-collar job displacement — Fred's view is 25% to 60% of white-collar roles permanently affected within a decade — the trades become comparatively more attractive to a generation that grew up with technology and is watching their initially-planned career paths contract. The trades cannot be automated at the field level. They offer genuine economic security, the satisfaction of building and fixing physical things, and — for the businesses that get the economics right — real income and real opportunities for advancement. The operators investing in modern technology, apprenticeship programs, and AI-powered field tools right now will be the employers that tech-native young workers actively choose. The ones that are not will compete for the same small pool everyone else is fishing from.



Simpro Lightning solves this: The platform itself is a talent signal. 'We run Lightning' tells a prospective hire something about the kind of business you are — one that invests in its people's tools and takes operational excellence seriously. FieldReady handles the onboarding end. The rest of the platform keeps the work interesting and the team informed.

WHAT TO DO RIGHT NOW

The 4-Step Sequence

The predictions above describe where the decade is going. This section is about what to do this week. The sequence matters. Businesses that skip straight to the AI and bypass the foundational work do not get the results. The ones that do the unsexy work first — and then turn on COOP — are the ones running at 24%.

STEP 1 Audit

Do the honest inventory of every tool your business is paying for. Which ones talk to each other? Which ones require a human to carry data between them? How many are you subscribed to that you have forgotten about? This exercise almost always surfaces both savings and surprises. It is also the prerequisite for everything that follows — you cannot connect what you cannot see.

STEP 2 Map

Design your ideal workflow — not just the perfect day, but the chaos-variable day. The day a technician calls in sick, the truck breaks down, and two customers need to reschedule. What does a good response look like? What would need to be true for your system to respond that way automatically, without you in the loop? Map it out. The gaps between the workflow you have and the workflow you want are exactly where Simpro Lightning's agents go to work.

STEP 3 Connect

The FSM is the operational heart. If it is not unified with your accounting system, your scheduling, your inventory, and your customer history in a single source of truth, that is the first thing to fix. Simpro Lightning cannot work intelligently from disconnected data. No AI can. The platform connection is not the nice-to-have stage before the AI stage — it is the prerequisite for the AI to function at all

STEP 4 Turn on the Brain

Simpro Lightning ships in days. It is already connected to your FSM, already trained on your operational data, and already running the four agents that represent the first \$200,000 of capability. FieldReady, JobReady, JobScribe, and JobBrief are the floor, not the ceiling. Every future agent — smart dispatch, AR automation, preventive maintenance, customer marketing — ships under your existing Simpro Lightning upgrade at no additional cost. Annual price increases are capped at 3% plus local CPI for life. The brain gets smarter every month. The price stays predictable every year.

ONE MORE THING:

What Getting the Economics Right Looks Like

There is a number that does not appear on a profit and loss statement, but it tells you everything about whether a trade business is getting the economics right.

It is the number of homes the business has helped its team members buy.

Sally Higgs runs Alykan Electrical in Melbourne — nine field staff, two admin, and the ability to quote a \$250,000 commercial job in under an hour. Her business has funded the purchase of at least half a dozen homes for team members.

James Ewart runs Aotea Group across 26 operating companies in New Zealand, and he is building a data lake that will give him real-time benchmarking across every one of them — because the platform rationalisation work of the last three years makes that possible.

Dawn Lawrie, working across trade businesses in the UK, saw a gap in the market that nobody else was closing and built the integration herself.

These businesses are not outliers. They are the leading edge of what the decade produces for operators who do the work.

” One of the things that personally, and we at the company, feel very strongly about — these trades people are society’s second responders. Something bad happens. The police, the military, the healthcare workers go in right away. But right afterwards come the people who bring the lights back on, that get the water flowing again. Those are our customers. They keep modern society modern. Yet as an aggregate, they’re making 6% profit margins. That hurts not only the business owners — it hurts the employees because there’s no room to pay people, no room to do fun things.

FRED VOCCOLA
Chairman & CEO, Simpro Group

That is the problem Simpro Lightning was built to fix. Not abstractly, not eventually — now. The margin that makes the homes possible, the training possible, the investment in people possible, is available to any trade business willing to do the audit, map the workflows, connect the platform, and turn on the brain.



The decade ahead belongs
to the **operators who start**
that work today

WATCH THE WEBINAR



The Next Decade of the Trades

45 minutes on where the industry is heading and the steps to get ahead of it.



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