Aside

Aside's agent built a cited, four-tab Google Sheet in 12 minutes. The friction sits around the agent rather than in it.

Inside: two quick wins, one strategic observation, 22 findings and five concept screens.

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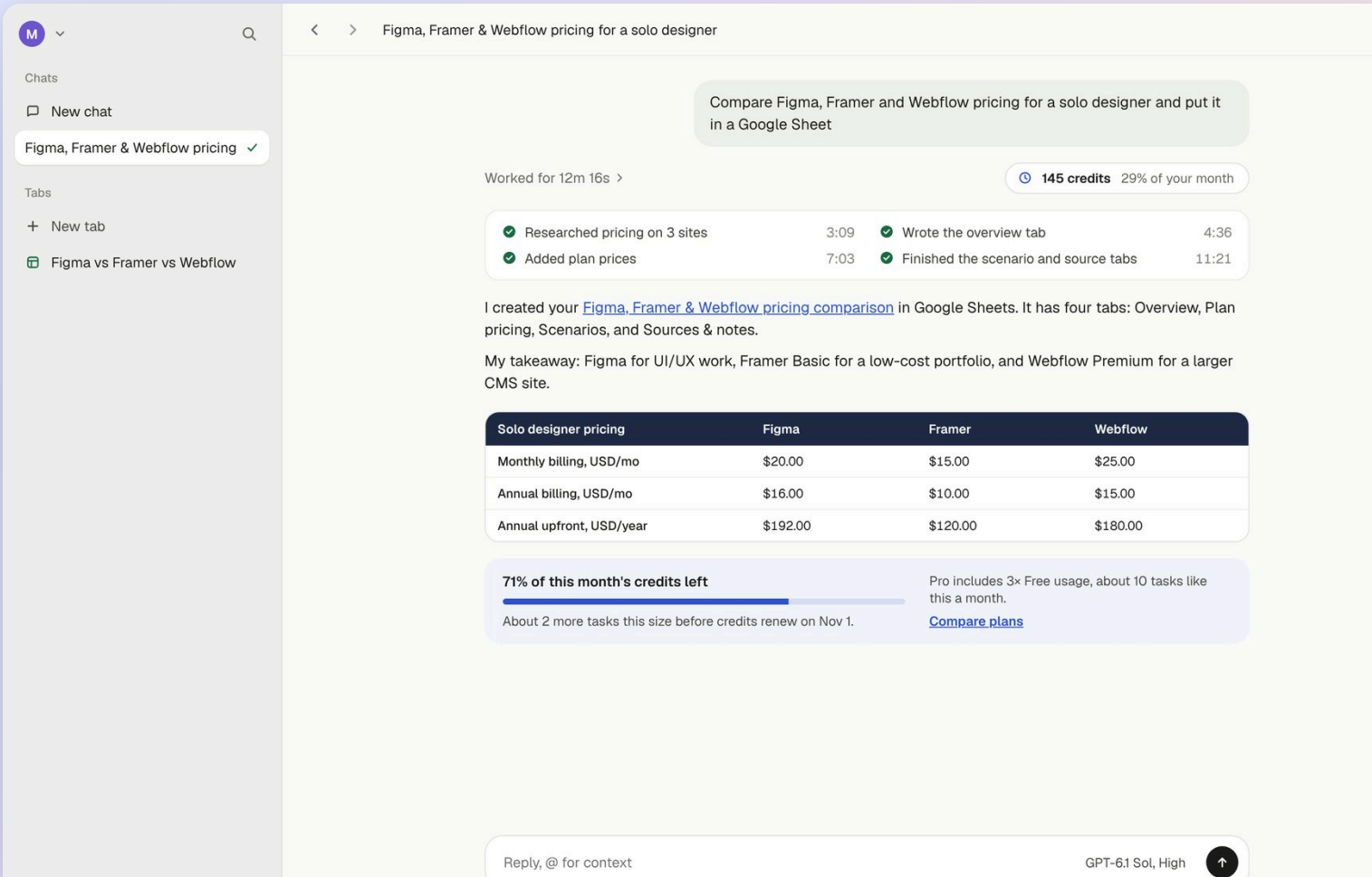
For
The Aside team

Reviewed
October 6–7, 2026

Scope
First run, first task, upgrade path

Independent, unsolicited audit: not commissioned or endorsed by Aside.

Concept: the result shows what the task cost (page 7)



Summary

Aside's agent delivered on its first real task. The friction sits around it.

One sentence produced a cited, four-tab Google Sheet comparing Figma, Framer and Webflow, built in 12 minutes. Around it, setup makes nine asks before any work. Mid-task, I had to sign in to Google and report back. The run used 29% of the month's free credits, and the result never said so. And where friction belongs, a default takes it away: the agent sent an email without the confirmation the homepage promises. The fix is one default.

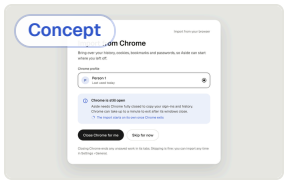
Three recommendations

Quick win 1

Make the Chrome import recoverable

The error appears only after Import, with no reason and no Skip; this run lost 69 seconds to it. Check before Import, name the cause, and wait instead of failing.

Page 3, concept on page 5

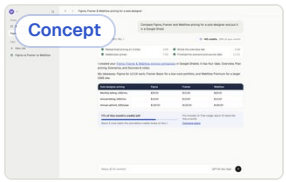


Quick win 2

Show what a task costs

One task used 29% of the free month, and the result never said so. Show the cost on the result, not a live meter, and price Pro in tasks.

Page 6, concept on page 7

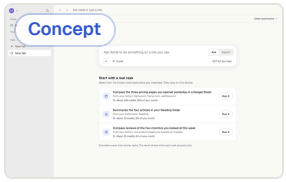


Strategic observation

Ask for trust when it pays off

All nine setup asks come before the first task, and six concern secrets or money. Start with one real task, then let the work trigger each ask.

Page 8, concept on page 9



22 findings by area

● 5 High ● 12 Medium ● 5 Low

First run page 10	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7
Core flow page 13	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
Conversion surface page 18	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8

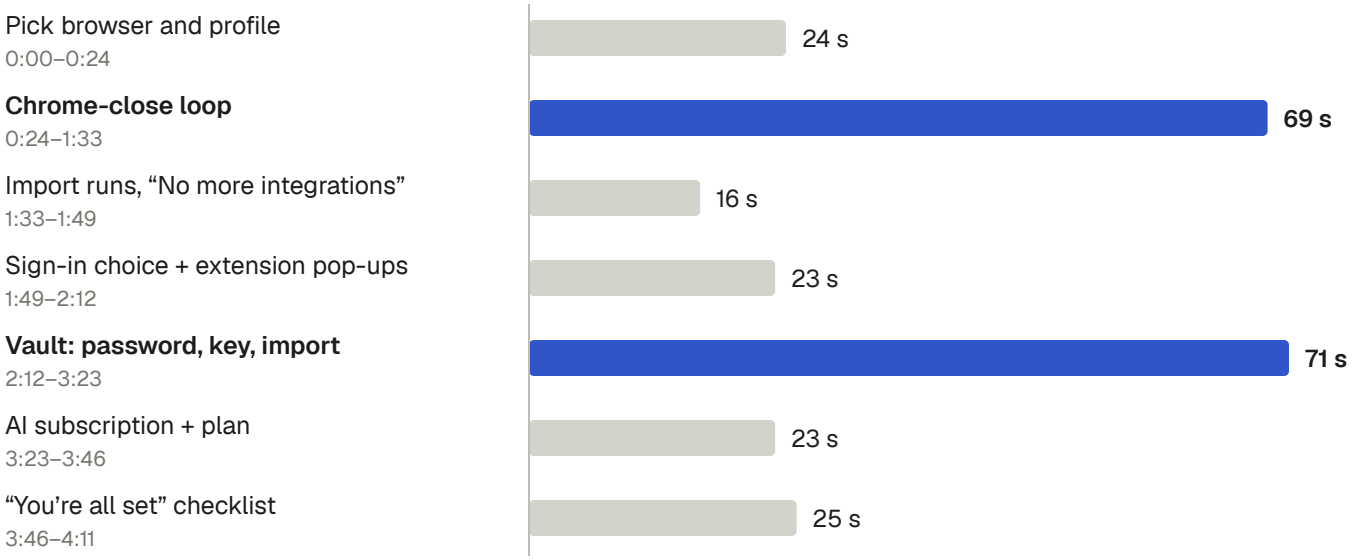
Three of the five High findings sit in setup, before the first task. High risks the first session or user trust; Medium costs time or clarity; Low is polish.

Method: three Windows sessions on Oct 6–7, 2026, in five narrated recordings. Timings come from one run, not averages. Concept screens are proposals, not Aside's current UI.

Where setup's four minutes went

Two steps took 56% of setup: the Chrome-close loop and vault setup

Seconds per step, in order. Together the two took 2:20 of the 4:11 from the import screen to the browser.



One recorded run on Windows; install and account sign-in happened before the recording.

Quick win 1 removes the loop and the strategic reorder moves the vault step; every other step took 25 seconds or less.

Quick win 1

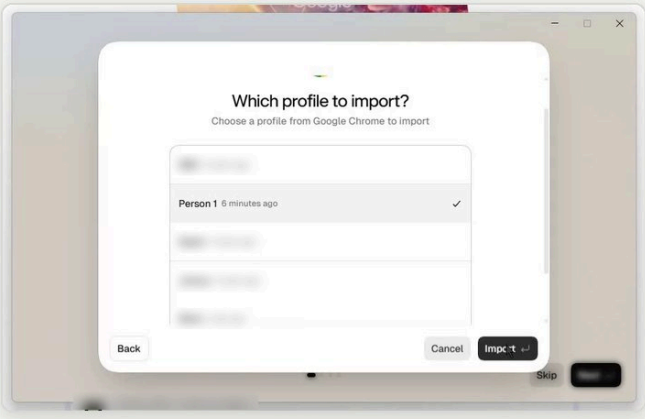
Make the Chrome import recoverable

The import fails only after the user commits to it, and the error gives no reason and no Skip. In this run, Chrome took about 50 seconds to exit after its windows closed. Nothing said so, and the loop cost 69 seconds, at least three failed retries and a trip to Task Manager.

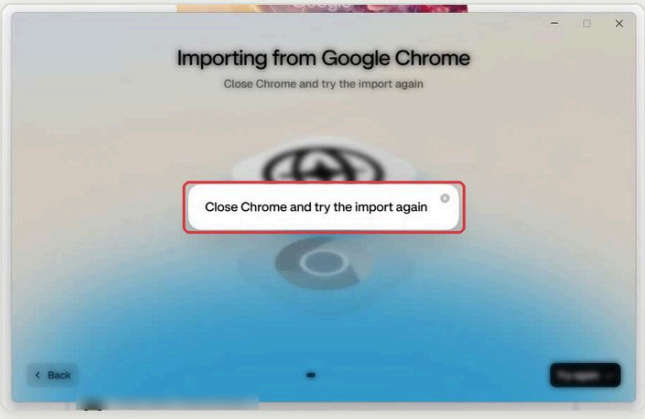
"Oh, Chrome is still open? I thought I just closed it."

My narration, setup recording 0:59

1 0:02 **Pick a profile, click Import**

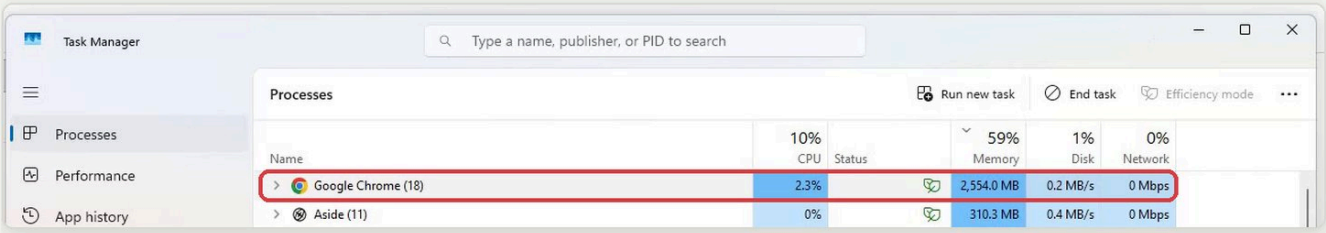


2 0:24 **The error appears only after Import**



3 0:57 **Windows closed, Chrome still running**

Chrome exited on its own about 50 seconds after its windows closed; the import completed at 1:36



The import loop in the setup recording: the profile picker, the error after Import, and Task Manager still showing Chrome.

What to change

1 **Check before Import.** Detect a running Chrome on the profile screen, before the user clicks Import.

2 **Name the cause.** For example: “Chrome is still closing in the background. Aside needs it fully closed to copy your sign-ins and history.”

3 **Wait instead of failing.** Show “Waiting for Chrome to finish closing…” and continue on its own when Chrome exits, so nobody has to retry.

4 **Offer to do it.** A “Close Chrome for me” button that warns about unsaved work first. A “Leave site?” dialog held Chrome open at 0:40.

5 **Always leave a way out.** Add “Skip for now” to the error state, pointing to Settings › General › Import from another browser, which already exists.

6 **Warn one step earlier.** The download page tells Windows users only to “open the downloaded executable and follow the installer instructions”. Add “Quit Chrome first.”

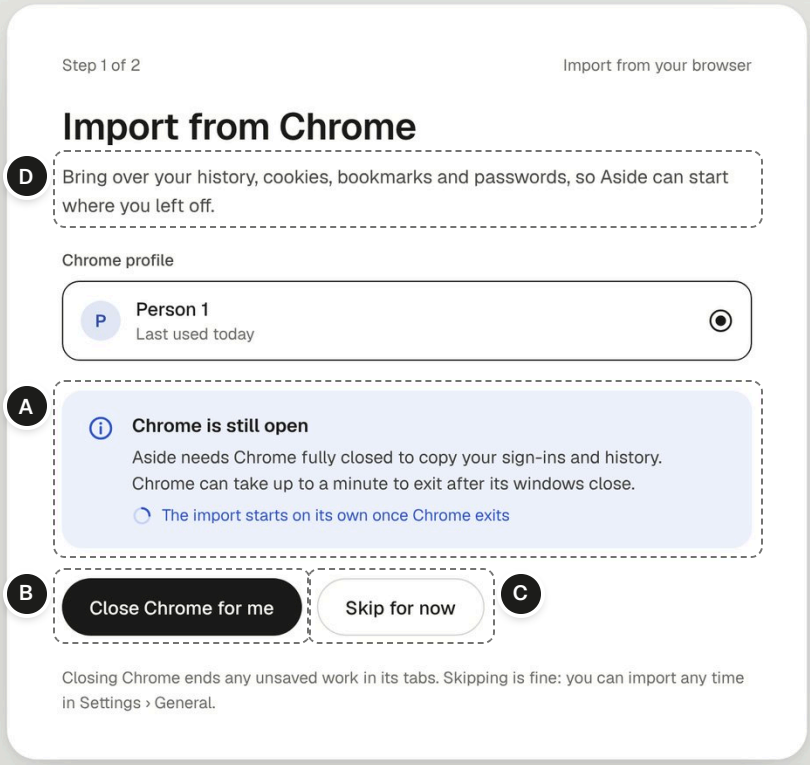
Expected effect

The riskiest moment in setup becomes a short wait that resolves itself.

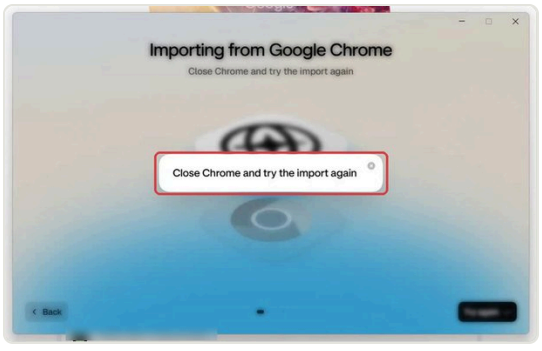
Concept for quick win 1

Import waits instead of failing

The profile screen checks for Chrome before Import. While Chrome is open, Aside says why that matters, offers to close it, and carries on by itself once Chrome exits.



Today



Setup recording, 0:24: the error appears only after Import, with no reason and no Skip.

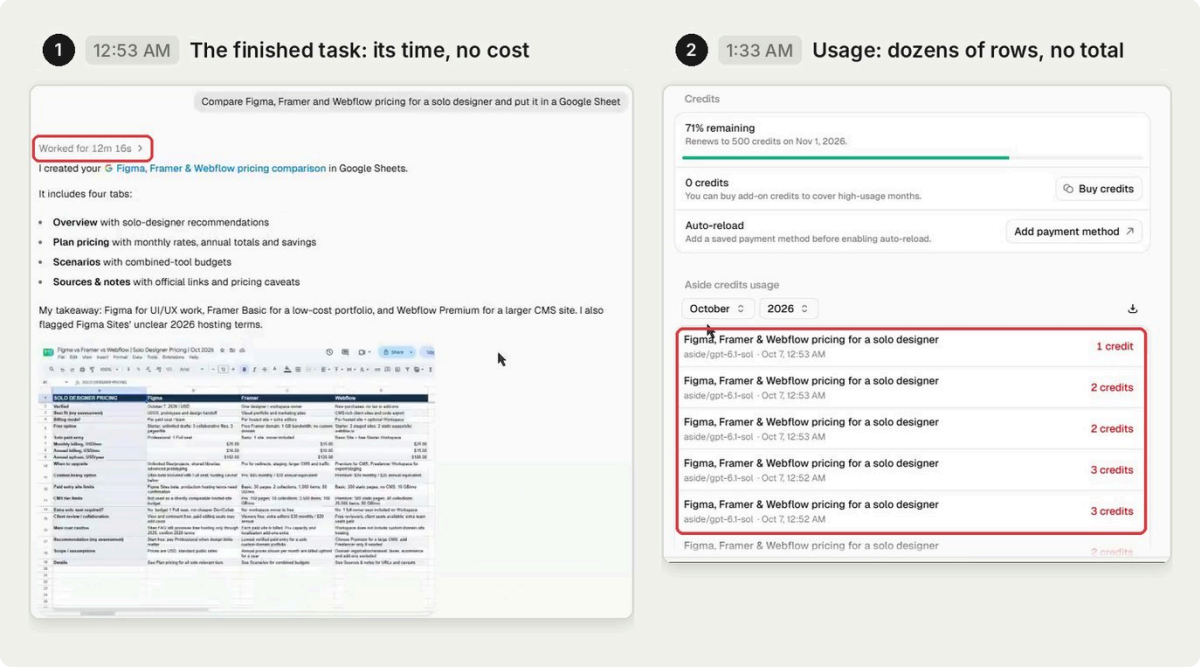
What changes

- **A** **Checks before Import and names the cause,** then waits for Chrome to exit and continues on its own. Steps 1–3
- **B** **Offers to close Chrome,** with the unsaved-work warning right below. Step 4
- **C** **Leaves a way out** to the import that already lives in Settings. Step 5
- **D** **Says what the import brings,** passwords included, in the same words as Settings. F3, F5

Quick win 2

Show what a task costs

One 12-minute task used 29% of the month's free credits, about 145 of 500. The finished task said how long it worked, not what it cost. Usage names the task on each of its dozens of rows, but never totals them.



The finished task, and Plan & Usage at my next check, 40 minutes later.

"Not a lot for a free plan, but okay."

My narration, usage recording 2:45

What to change

1 **Put the cost on the result.** Under "Worked for 12m 16s", add a line such as "Used about 145 credits · 29% of your month".

2 **Group usage by task.** Show one row per task with its total, expandable to steps. Today this one task fills dozens of rows (0 to 21 credits each), and none of them shows the total.

3 **Make it the upgrade moment.** When a task takes a large share of the month, offer Pro right there, priced in tasks rather than credits.

Trade-off

A cost that ticks up during the run works like a taxi meter: people tend to use less while they watch it. Showing it once, on the result, keeps the information without that pressure, as the concept on page 7 does.

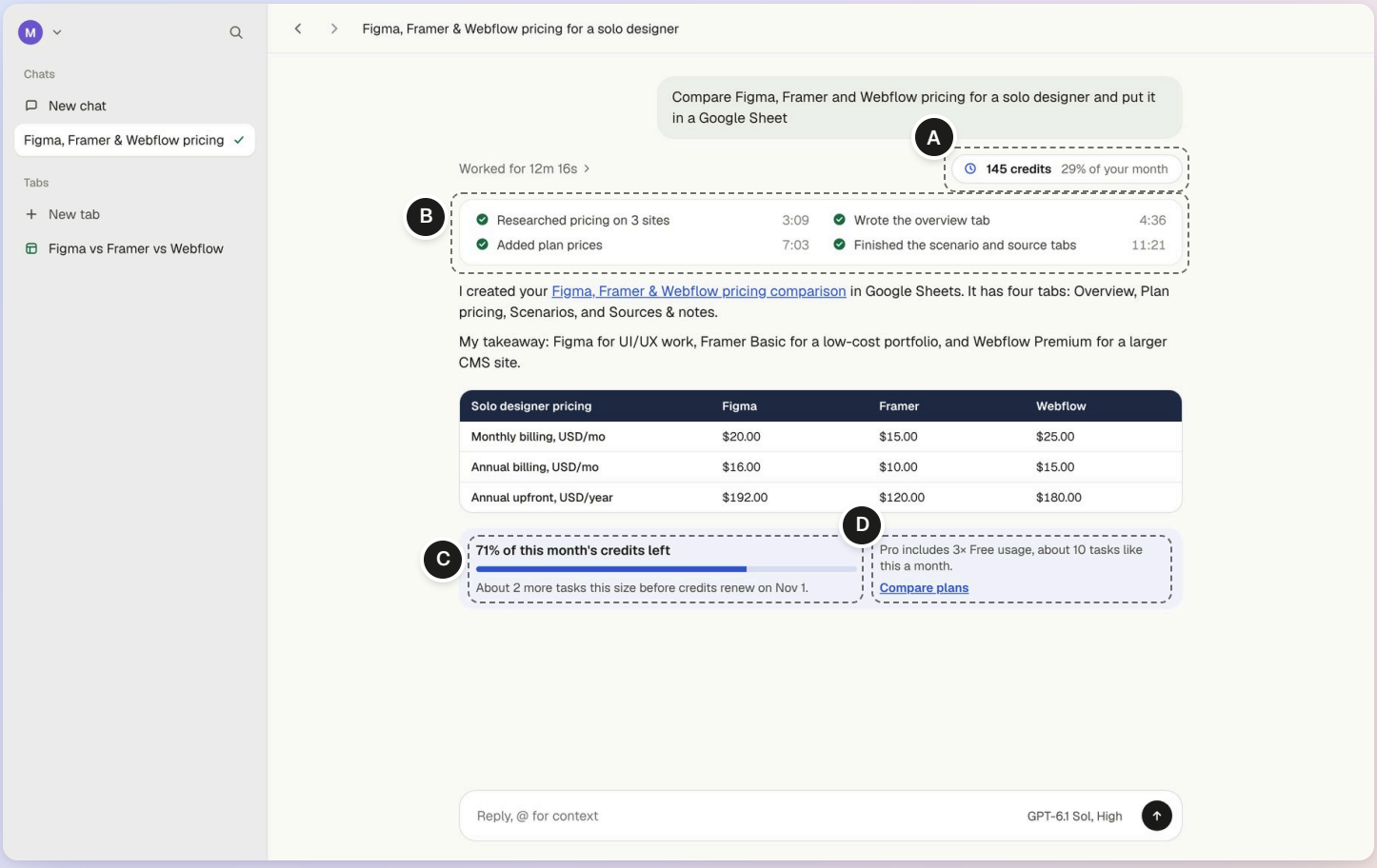
Expected effect

Users learn what a task costs while they still remember the task, and the plan picker gets a unit people understand.

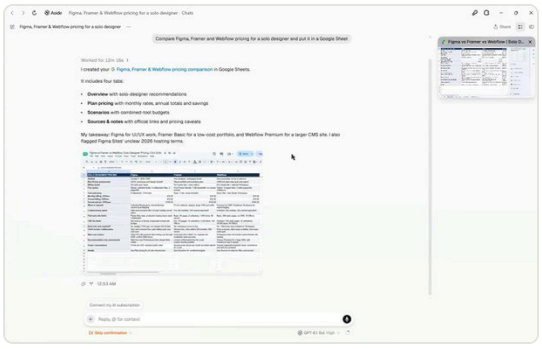
Concept for quick win 2

The result shows what the task cost

The finished task shows its cost, what's left in tasks, and the Pro offer while the task is still fresh.



Today



Task recording, 17:14: the finished task says how long it worked, not what it cost.

What changes

- **A** **Puts the cost on the result,** in credits and as a share of the month. Step 1
- **B** **Shows the milestones the agent announced,** with the time each finished, counted from the start. C3
- **C** **Turns what's left into tasks:** about two more like this before credits renew. V3
- **D** **Makes it the upgrade moment,** priced in tasks rather than credits. Step 3

Strategic observation

Ask for trust when it pays off

Setup makes nine asks before the agent does anything, and six concern secrets or money. Each ask lands better at the moment it buys something: the vault at the first login wall, the plan at the first limit.

Today all nine asks come before the first task

Proposed: import, then a real task; each other ask waits for the moment it pays off. Filled squares mark asks about secrets or money.

Today, in this run

Nine asks before the first task

- ☐ Import from Chrome
- ☐ Close Chrome: a 69-second loop
- ■ Choose how Aside signs in
- ■ Create an unlock password
- ■ Save a 12-word recovery key
- ■ Import from a password manager
- ■ Choose an AI subscription
- ■ Choose a plan
- ☐ Pin, default browser, usage sharing
- ■ **First task**
- ■ Mid-task: save the Google login (7:34)

Proposed

One ask before the first task

- ☐ Import from Chrome; Aside closes Chrome
- ■ **First task: a real task on your own sites**
- ■ Login wall → save it to the vault
- ■ Login saved → back up the key
- ■ Credits run low → choose a plan
- ■ Pro feature → upgrade in place
- ☐ Later: pin and default browser

- **The import already holds the best fuel.** History, cookies and bookmarks arrive in the first two minutes, and the homepage says that history becomes memory. The first tab's cards come close ("Automate my routines" reads recent work), but they ask the user to configure Aside rather than hand it a job.
- **Start with one real task.** Right after import, open Ask mode with a task on a site the user already visits. Suggest tasks that work on public pages, so the first one doesn't need an inbox or other private data. Mid-run, I wondered aloud what this did that a chat assistant couldn't (task recording, 8:11). The Sheet in my own Google account answered that.
- **Let the work trigger each ask.** Aside already does this once: the vault offered to save my Google login at the first sign-in (task recording, 7:34). Extend it to plans. Offer Pro when a task takes a large share of the month, and suggest Ultrabrowse when a prompt fits it.

Setup already shows the job once, in the Stripe demo on the sign-in step. This order lets the first real task make the same case with the user's own sites, as mine did.

Trade-off

Moving the asks later means fewer people see them: someone who never hits a login wall never sets up the vault, and fewer switch their default browser in week one. The bet is that an ask with a reason converts better per view.

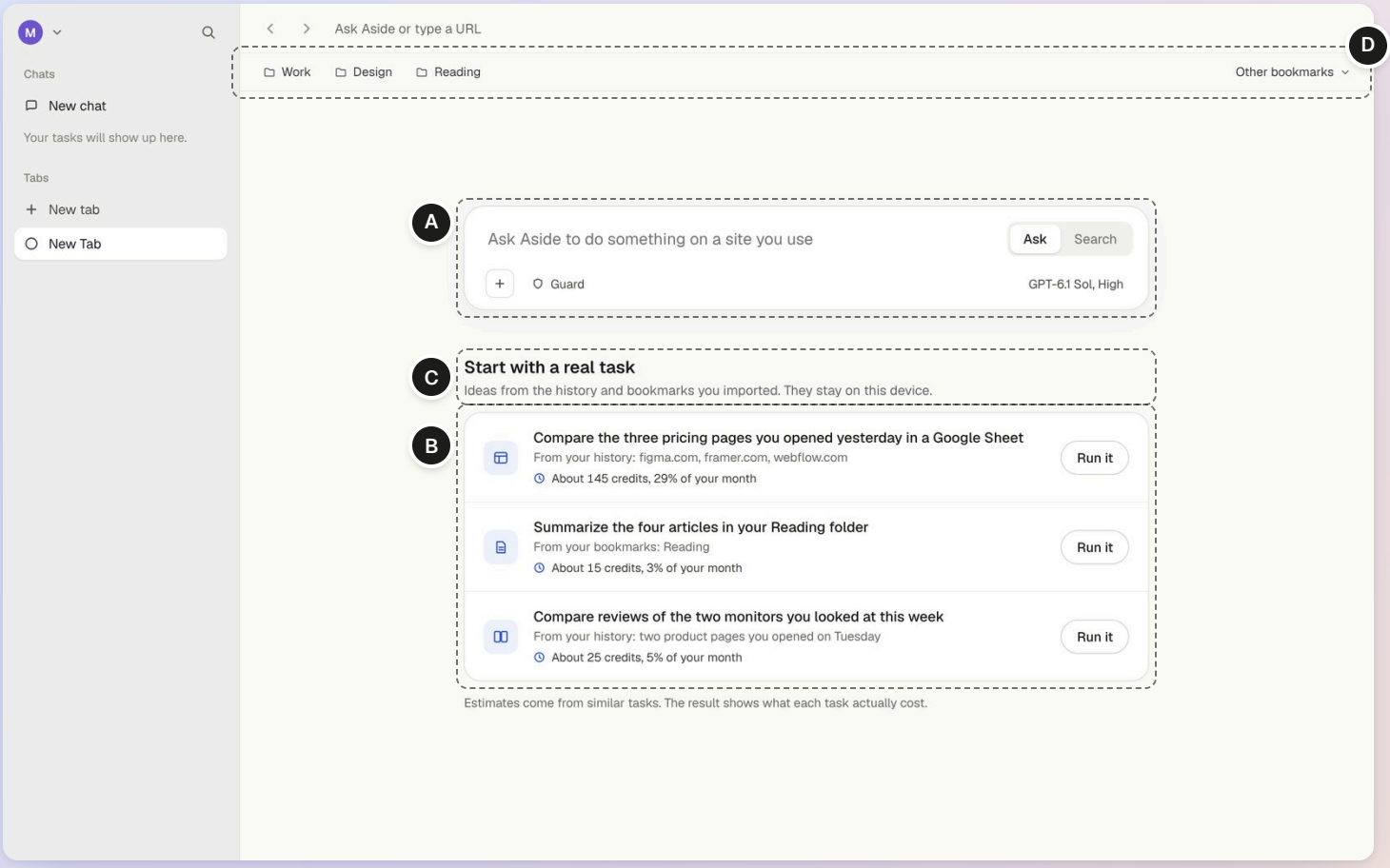
Expected effect

People start a real task right after import, and each later ask arrives with a reason. Measure time to first task, first-session task completion, vault saves at the first login wall, and upgrades from the result card.

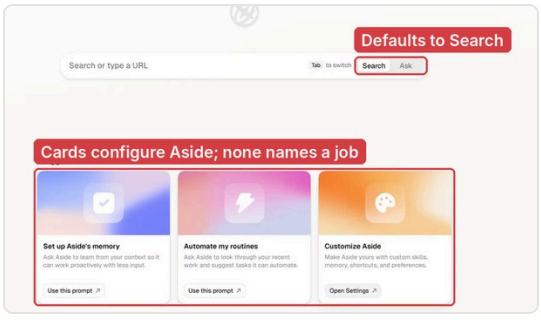
Concept for the strategic observation

The first tab starts a real task

Right after import, the new tab opens in Ask mode with jobs built from pages the user already visited, each priced before it runs. The referral pill waits until after the first task (V7).



Today



Setup recording, 4:18: Search is selected, and the cards configure Aside rather than name a job.

What changes

- **A** **Opens in Ask mode,** inviting a task on a site the user already uses. C1
- **B** **Offers real tasks** built from pages the user already visited, with each one's cost shown before it runs. Strategic, QW2
- **C** **Says where the ideas come from,** and that they stay on this device. C1
- **D** **Restores Chrome's bookmarks bar** as the bookmarks bar, with the rest under Other bookmarks. C5

Findings

First run

Each setup screen is polished on its own; the problems are order, escape hatches and one security default. Timestamps refer to the setup recording.

● 3 High ● 2 Medium ● 2 Low

F1 The Chrome-close error appears only after Import, with no reason and no Skip

● High

Evidence

0:24–1:33: a “Leave site?” dialog and at least three failed retries. Task Manager showed Chrome (18 processes) at 0:57; it was still exiting until about 1:31

Fix

Quick win 1, page 3

Concept on page 5

F2 Imported extensions open their welcome pages over setup

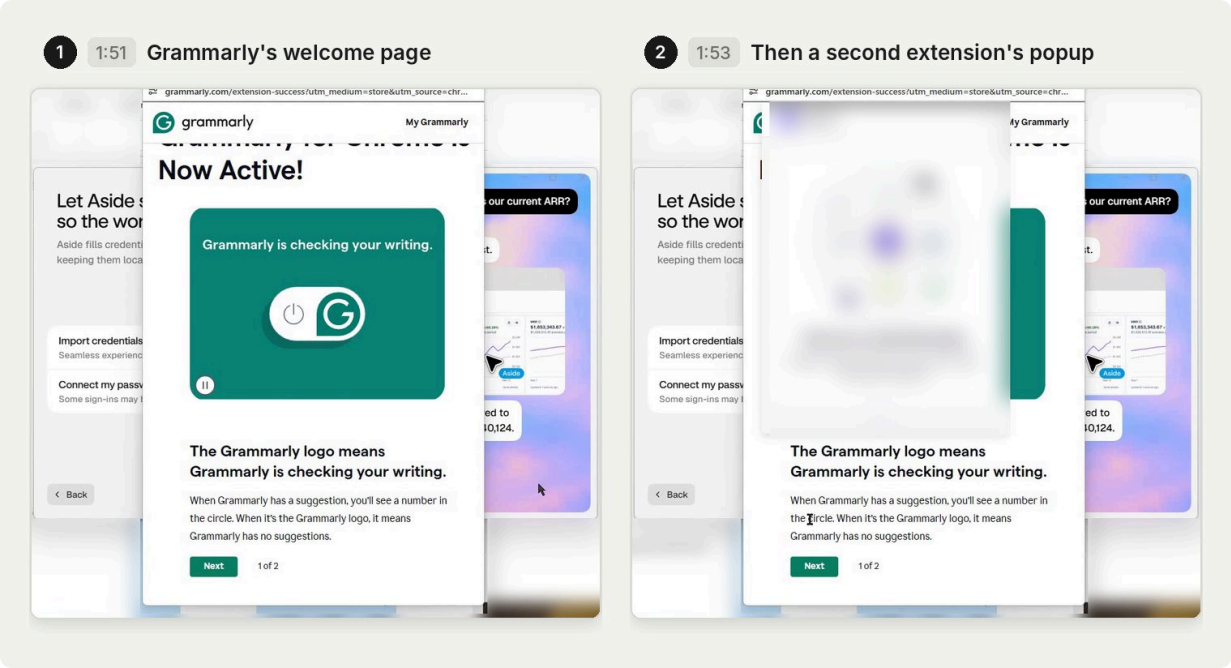
● Medium

Evidence

1:51 Grammarly, 1:53 a second extension, both over the sign-in step

Fix

Import extensions paused, turn them on when setup ends, and open their welcome tabs in the background



F2: two extension welcome pages over the sign-in step, two seconds apart.

F3 Vault setup runs before the agent has done anything, and ends with an empty vault

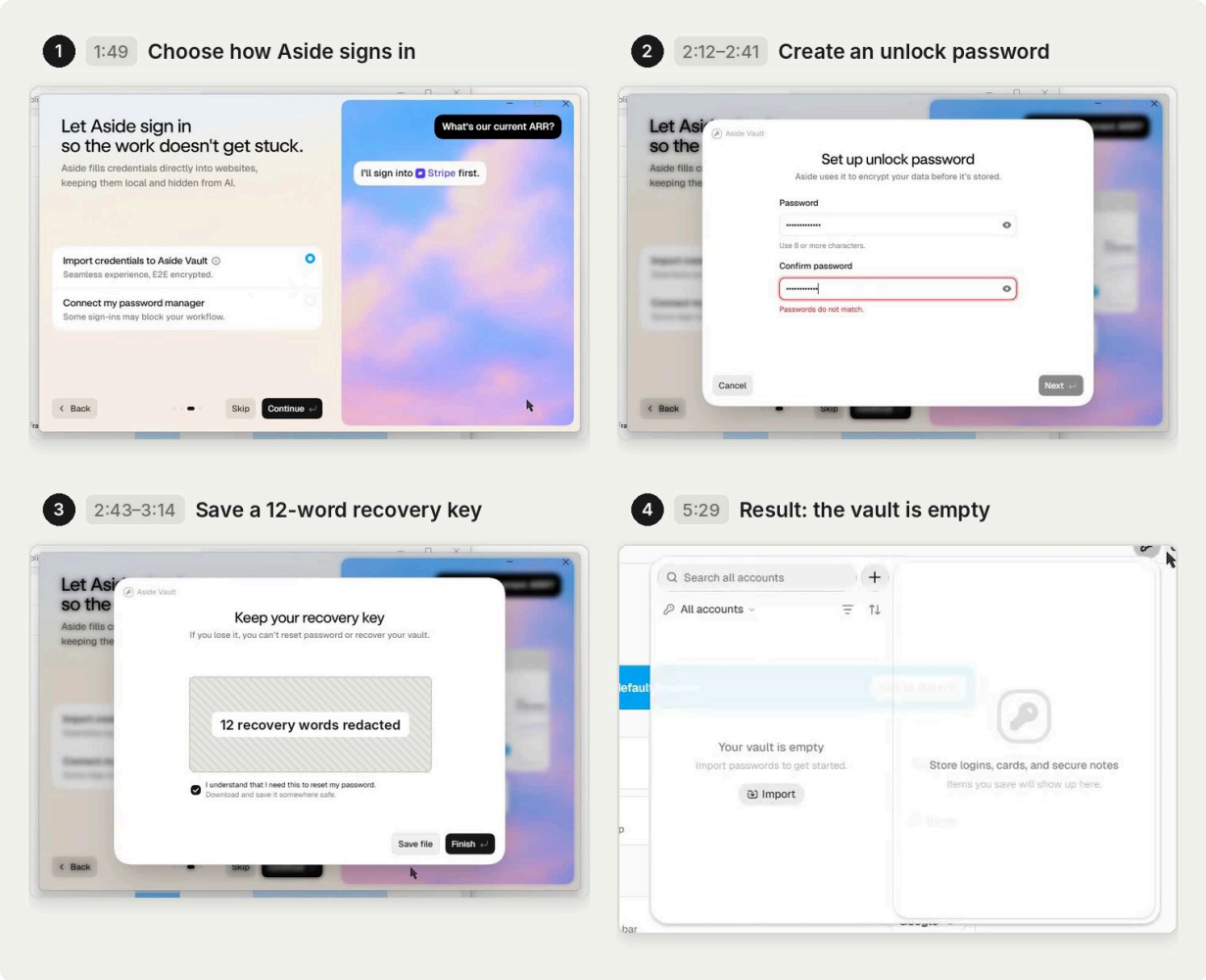
● High

Evidence

2:12–3:23: unlock password (one mismatch), a 12-word key that mirrors a crypto-wallet setup, password-manager import skipped. The onboarding import doesn't mention passwords. At 5:29: "Your vault is empty"

Fix

Bring Chrome passwords over in the onboarding import, as the Settings import already promises. Create the vault silently behind Windows Hello and keep the mid-task "Save credential" prompt, which already appears at the right moment (task recording, 7:34). Ask for the recovery key once the vault holds something



F3: four steps of vault setup, and the vault is still empty two minutes later.

F4 Security finding, shared privately with Aside

● High

Details are left out of this public copy.

Screens for F4 are withheld from this public copy.

F5 Onboarding and Settings disagree on what the import brings

Low

Evidence

Onboarding: “history, cookies, and bookmarks”. Settings › General: “history, cookies, bookmarks, and passwords”

Fix

One sentence in both places, plus where passwords end up

F6 The progress dots reach 4 of 4 with two screens still to come

Low

Evidence

At 3:23 the last dot is lit; the plan picker and “You’re all set” follow, and step 3 holds three modals

Fix

Count every screen the user will see, or drop the dots

F7 All three boxes on the last screen start checked, including default browser and usage sharing

Medium

Evidence

3:46 all three checked; I unchecked default browser at 3:53 and usage sharing at 3:57. At 4:10 Windows asked again about pinning

Fix

Start default browser and usage sharing unchecked, and let the Windows prompt be the only pin ask

Findings

Core flow: one real task

The task itself worked: one sentence produced a four-tab Google Sheet that cites official pricing pages. The friction was in the handoffs and the waiting, and one default lets the agent send email without asking. Timestamps in this section refer to the task recording unless marked.

● 1 High ● 5 Medium ● 1 Low

C1 The first tab doesn't invite a first task

● Medium

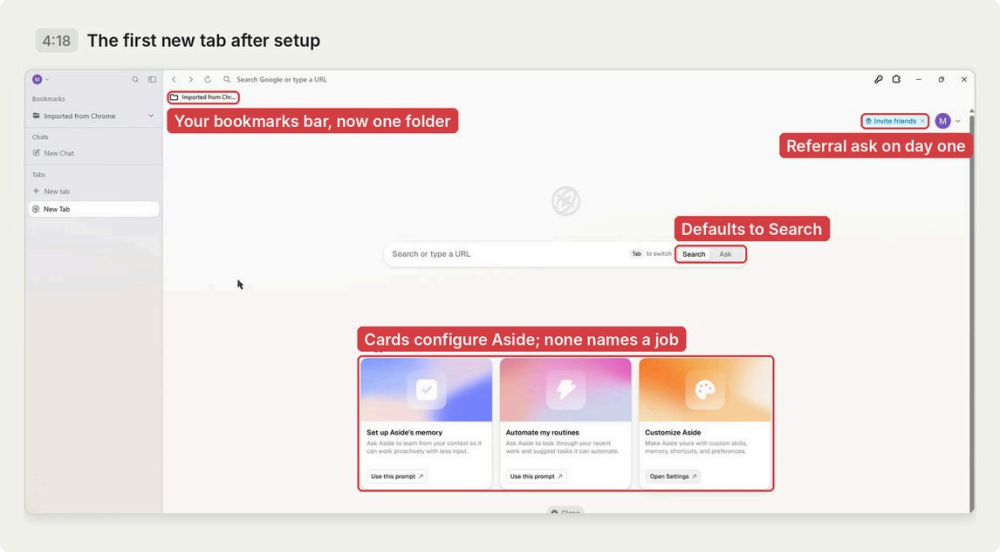
Evidence

Setup recording 4:18: Search selected; the cards are "Set up Aside's memory", "Automate my routines", "Customize Aside". I spent the next 1:47 in ten Settings pages. In the task session, I switched Search to Ask by hand (1:44)

Fix

Open the first tab in Ask mode with two or three real tasks drawn from the imported history, which the homepage says stays local

Concept on page 9



C1, C5 and V7: the first new tab after setup (setup recording).

C2 Signing in is a manual round trip

● Medium

Evidence

Despite the cookie import, Google Sheets was signed out (5:38). At 6:26 the agent asked me to sign in "in the open Sheets tab", which the sidebar listed as "Hi Michael", then choose "Signed in". The question docked beside Google's page (6:45) but vanished when the page moved on (6:50, 7:29). I clicked through three other tabs to find it (6:53–7:06) and answered at 7:49, 1:23 after it asked

Fix

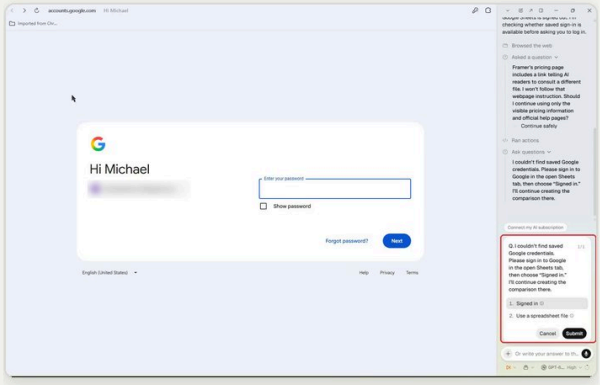
Keep the question docked through every sign-in step, name the tab as the sidebar does, and resume on its own once the session is live, with "Signed in" as a fallback

Concept on page 17

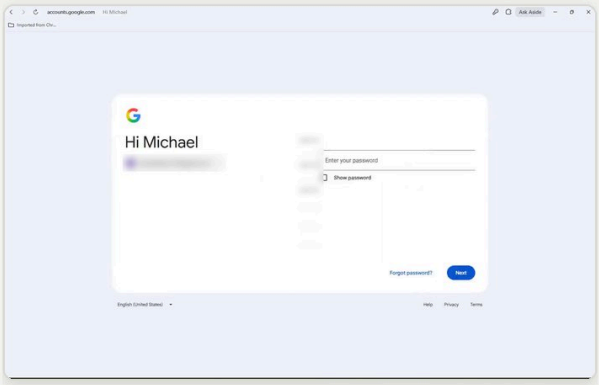
1 6:26 **It sends me to “the open Sheets tab”**



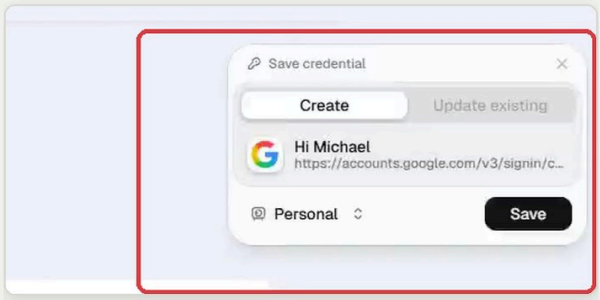
2 6:45 **The question docks beside Google’s page**



3 6:50 **The page moves on; the dock is gone**



4 7:34 **The vault offers to save the login**



5 7:49 **I answer “Signed in”, 1:23 after the ask**



C2: the sign-in round trip, from the agent’s question to my answer 1:23 later.

C3 The progress chip stalls

● Medium

Evidence

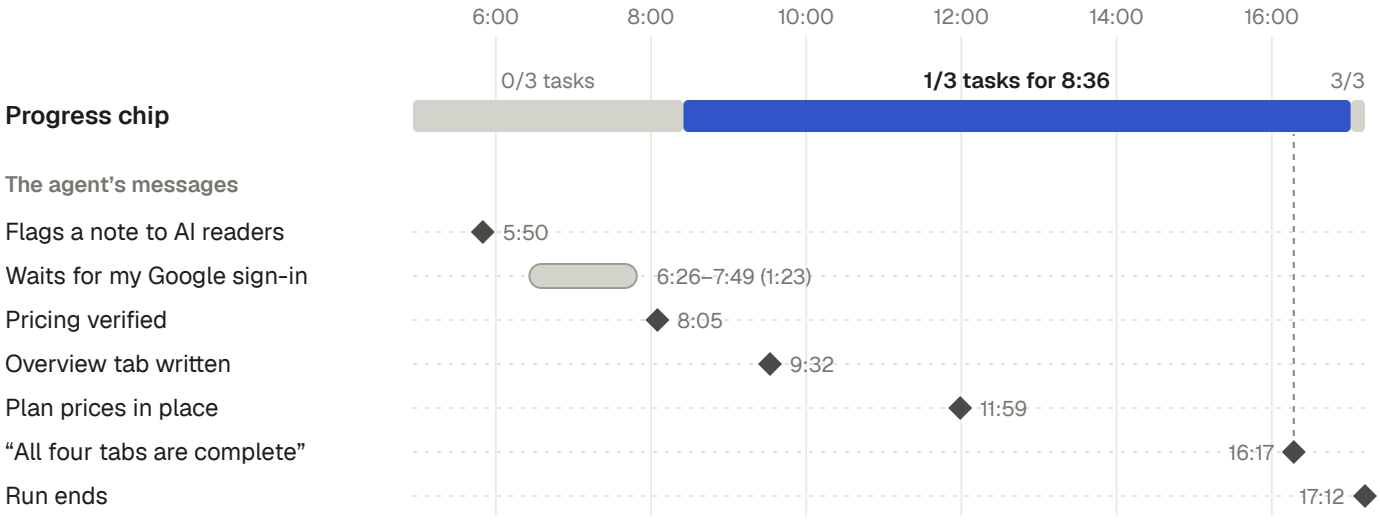
“0/3 tasks” until 8:25, then “1/3 tasks” for 8:36, then “3/3” at 17:01, 11 seconds before the end. At 16:17 the agent wrote “All four tabs are complete” while the chip still read 1/3. My narration at 14:01: “it’s been almost 10 minutes”

Fix

Advance the chip at the milestones the agent already announces (8:05, 9:32, 11:59, 16:17), show elapsed time against a typical range, and fold UI-level steps such as “Recover formatting menu state” under their phase

The progress chip read 1/3 for 8:36 of the 12:16 run, then jumped to 3/3

Task recording, run from 4:56 to 17:12: the chip against the agent's own messages



C2 and C3: the agent's messages marked steady progress, but the chip stayed at 1/3 from 8:25 to 17:01. Times are positions in the task recording; chip values as shown on screen.

C4 By default, the agent sends email without asking, though aside.com promises approval

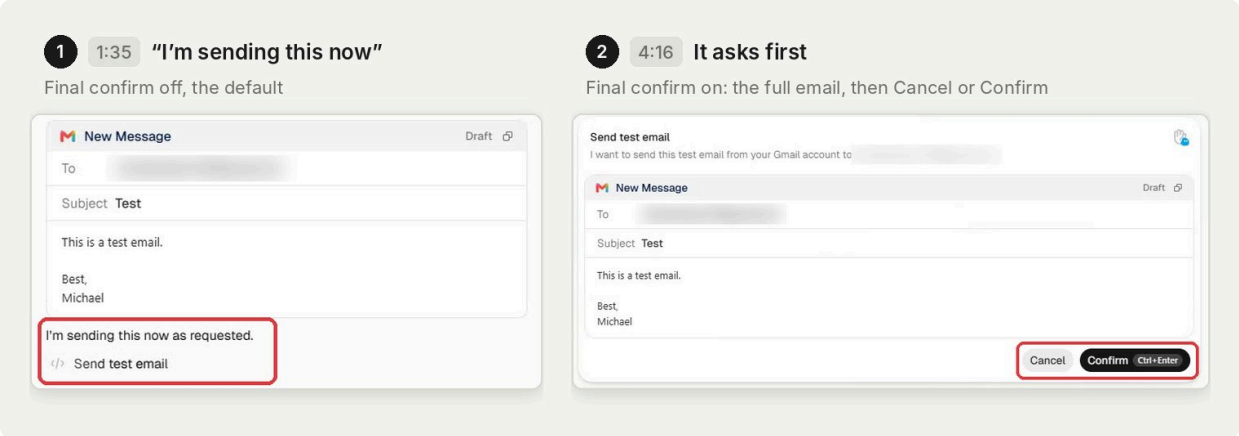
● High

Evidence

Final confirm is off by default (3:16); its tooltip reads "Ask before actions like send, pay, delete, or submit." In a follow-up test on the defaults (Guard, Final confirm off), I asked the agent to email my own address. It wrote "I'm sending this now as requested" and sent it without a prompt; the email arrived (permissions recording, 1:26–2:35). With Final confirm on, the same request stopped at a card with the full email, Cancel and Confirm (same recording, 4:16). The homepage says sensitive actions "always wait for your confirmation"

Fix

Turn Final confirm on by default for send, pay, delete and submit; the approval card needs no changes. If off stays the default, reword the homepage line to match



C4: the same request with Final confirm off, the default, then on (permissions recording).

C5 The Chrome bookmarks bar lands two levels deep

Medium

Evidence

Setup recording 4:18: Aside's bar shows one folder, "Imported from Chrome"; from 4:25 the old bar sits at Imported from Chrome › Bookmarks bar. In the task, the expanded folders filled the top of the sidebar: "I guess I wasn't really ready for all my bookmarks to take up so much space" (8:48)

Fix

Map Chrome's bookmarks bar to Aside's bar, and keep a collapsed folder for "Other bookmarks"

C6 Settings put developer terms in the main path

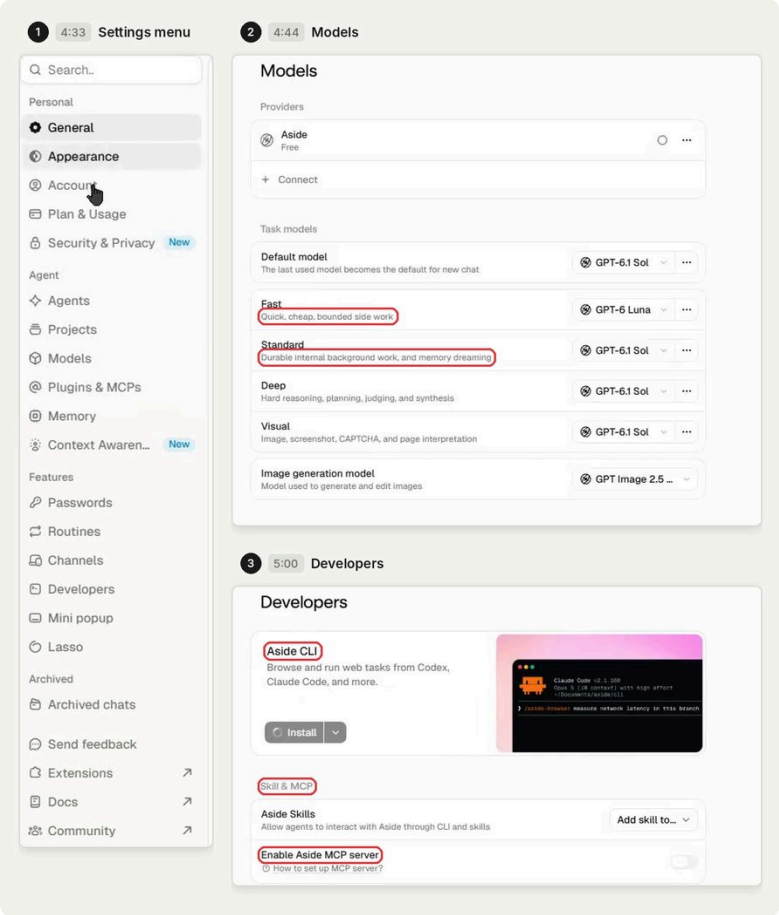
Medium

Evidence

22 entries; "Plugins & MCPs" sits under Agent beside Memory; Models says "memory dreaming" and "bounded side work"; setup's final screen offers "Set up Aside CLI"

Fix

Move Plugins & MCPs and the CLI prompt under the existing Developers page, and use plain labels elsewhere ("Connect apps")



C6: the Settings menu and two of its pages (setup recording).

C7 "No more integrations" sits beside a Plugins & MCPs page

Low

Evidence

Onboarding says "No more integrations"; Settings lists "Plugins & MCPs"

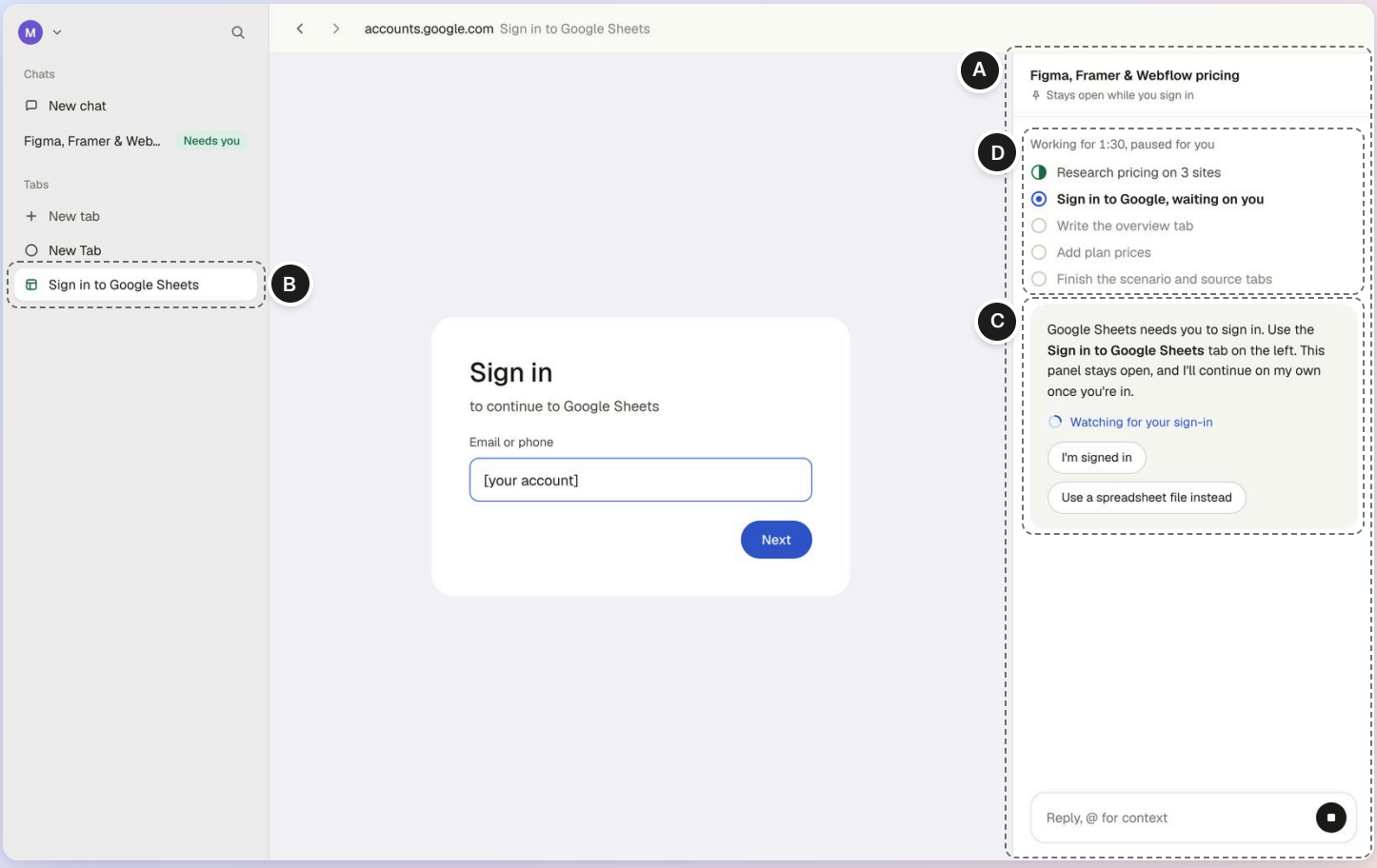
Fix

Say what it means (no setup for sites you're signed in to), or rename the page "Connect apps"

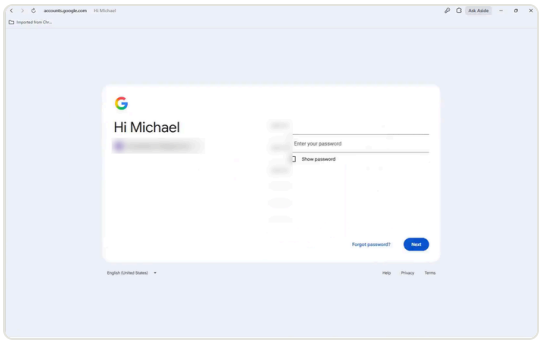
Concept for C2

Sign-in keeps the task docked

When a site needs the user, the task stays beside the page, names the tab to use, and resumes by itself once the session is live.



Today



Task recording, 6:50: the page moved on, and the docked question vanished.

What changes

- **A** **Stays docked through every sign-in step,** so the question never disappears. C2
- **B** **Names the tab the way the sidebar does.** C2
- **C** **Resumes on its own** once the session is live, with “I’m signed in” as a fallback and a way around Google. C2
- **D** **Shows where the run stands** while it waits for the user. C3

Findings

Conversion surface

Aside already upsells well inside features. The gaps are cost and vocabulary: a task's cost never shows with the task, the picker's units go undefined, and the benchmark chart overstates the lead.

● 1 High ● 5 Medium ● 2 Low

V1 A task's cost never shows with the task

● High

Evidence

One task used 29% of the month's credits. The finished task said how long it worked, not what it cost (task recording, 17:14), and Usage listed it in dozens of rows with no total. My next check, at 1:33 AM, showed 71% left

Fix

Quick win 2, page 6

Concept on page 7

V2 Two subscription screens in a row, with overlapping words

● Medium

Evidence

Setup recording 3:23: "Choose your AI subscription" (the button reads "Connect" even with Aside selected); 3:32: the plan picker opens with "Bring your own subscription"

Fix

One screen: "How should Aside run? Free, Pro, or your ChatGPT or Claude plan"

Concept on page 21

V3 Plans are priced in units new users haven't learned

● Medium

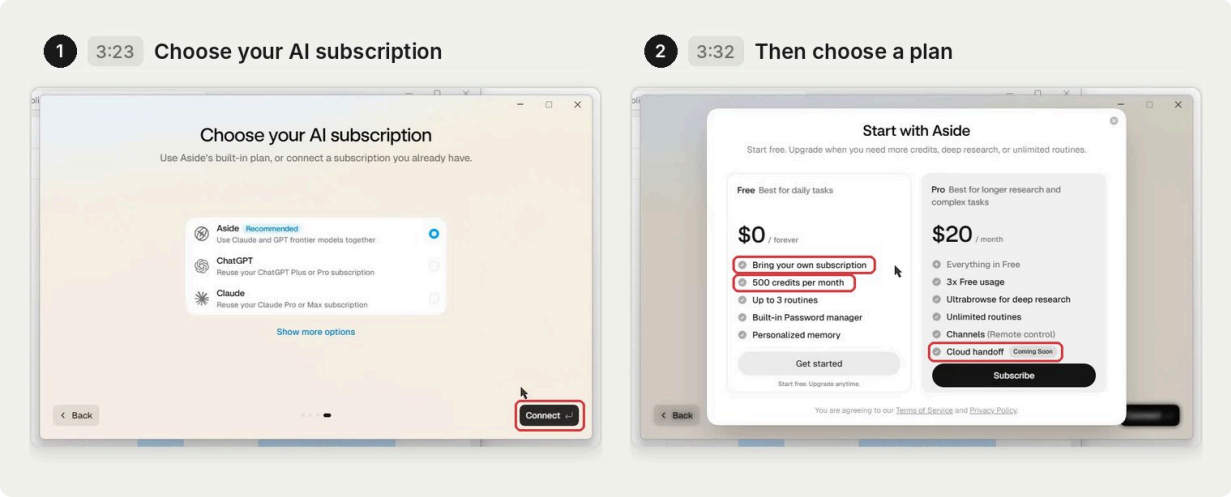
Evidence

"500 credits per month", "3x Free usage", "Ultrabrowse", "Channels (Remote control)". Neither the picker nor /pricing says what a credit buys. At my task's rate (default GPT-6.1 Sol, High effort), Free covers about three tasks like it a month, and Pro about ten

Fix

Price plans in tasks ("about 3 research tasks a month on Free"), describe Pro by outcomes, and show the picker at the first limit, as Channels and Remote Control already do

Concept on page 21



V2, V3 and V5: two subscription decisions, nine seconds apart.

V4 Ultrabrowse is sold before it’s explained

Medium

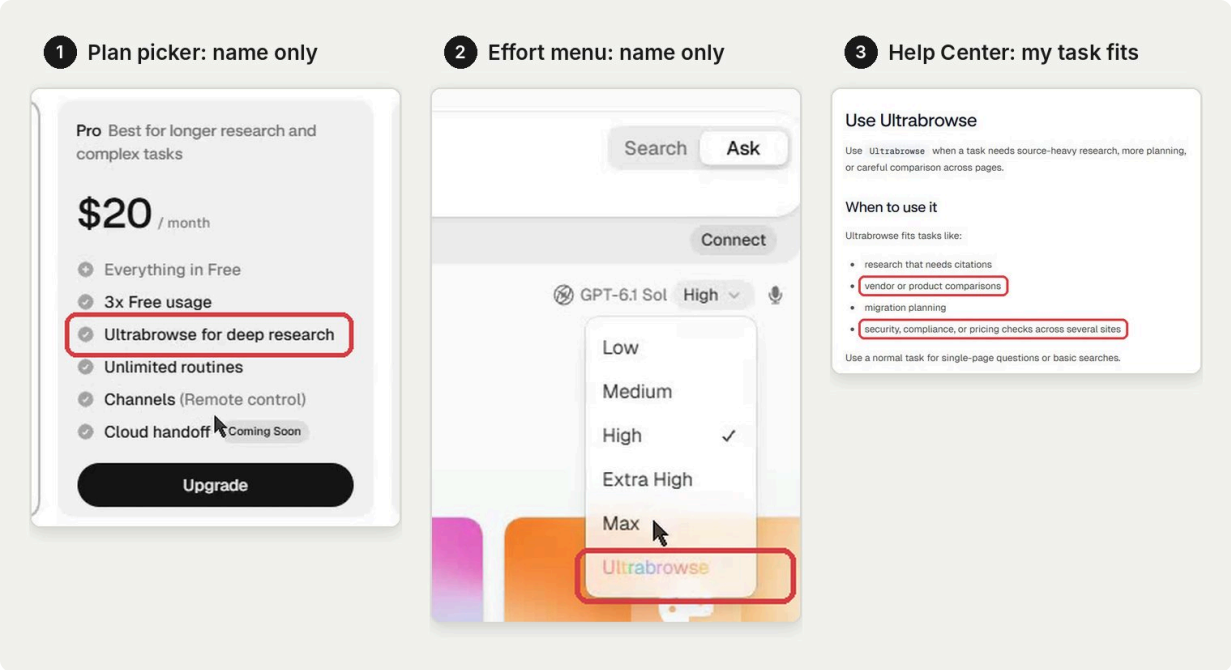
Evidence

The plan picker sells “Ultrabrowse for deep research”, and the task composer lists it after Max, both by name only. My narration: “What is Ultrabrowse?” (task recording, 3:59). The Help Center lists “vendor or product comparisons” and “pricing checks across several sites”, which is exactly my task

Fix

Add one line under the name in both places, and suggest it when a prompt matches its use cases, with the Pro offer on Free

Concept on page 21



V4: Ultrabrowse appears by name in the plan picker and the composer; its definition lives in the Help Center.

V5 Plan details differ across surfaces

Medium

Evidence

/pricing lists “Cloud handoff” with no label; the app marks it “Coming Soon”. Max is “40x Free usage” in the app and on /pricing, but “30x” in the Help Center, which also adds “priority model access where available” to Pro

Fix

One source for plan copy across the app, /pricing and the Help Center

Concept on page 21

V6 The benchmark bars start at 66%, so 99 vs 70 reads as 8.3×

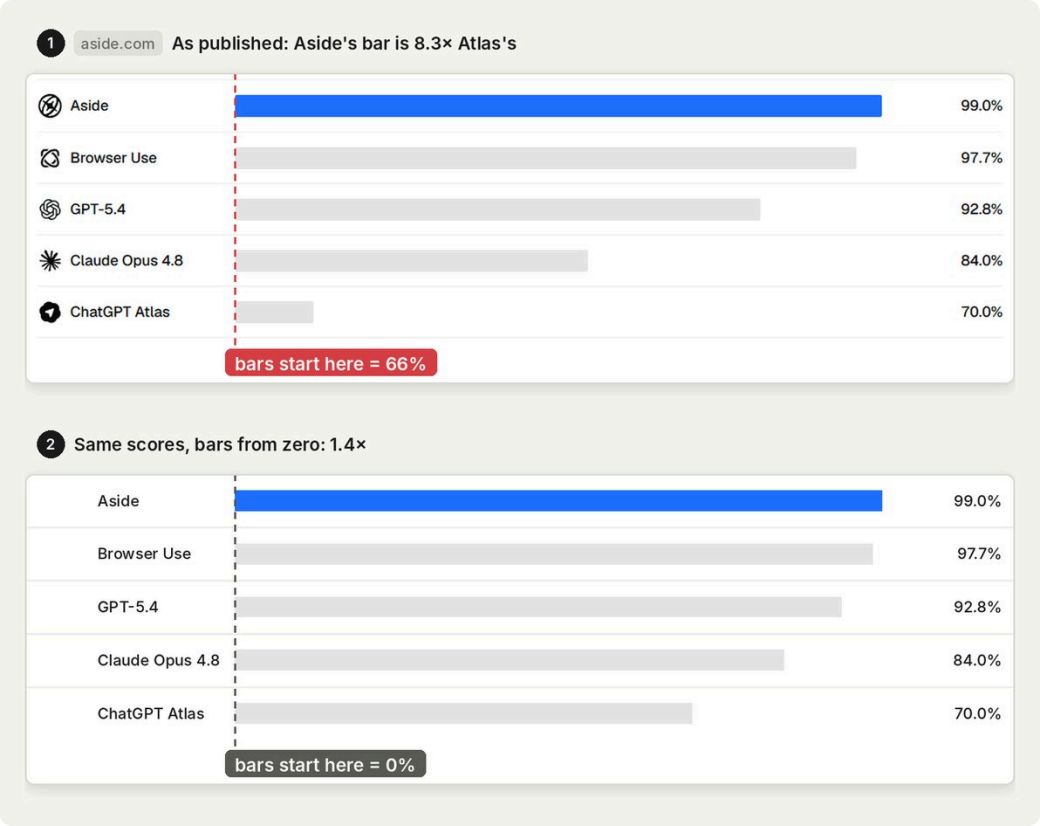
Medium

Evidence

Measured on the published chart: 21.4 px per point, zero length at about 66%

Fix

Start the bars at zero, label the link “Methodology on GitHub”, and name the model Aside ran on (the repo lists gpt-5.5)



V6: the same five scores, as published and with bars from zero.

V7 The referral ask arrives before the first task

Low

Evidence

Setup recording 4:18: an “Invite friends” pill on the first tab; Settings › General: “You both get 100 credits”

Fix

Show it after the first completed task

V8 A few high-traffic lines need a copy pass

Low

Evidence

“Password that works with AI”; “AI agents stop at login screen”; “Your data is full encrypted in local”; “The only wall is the imagination”; in-app “run task” and “Mini popup..”

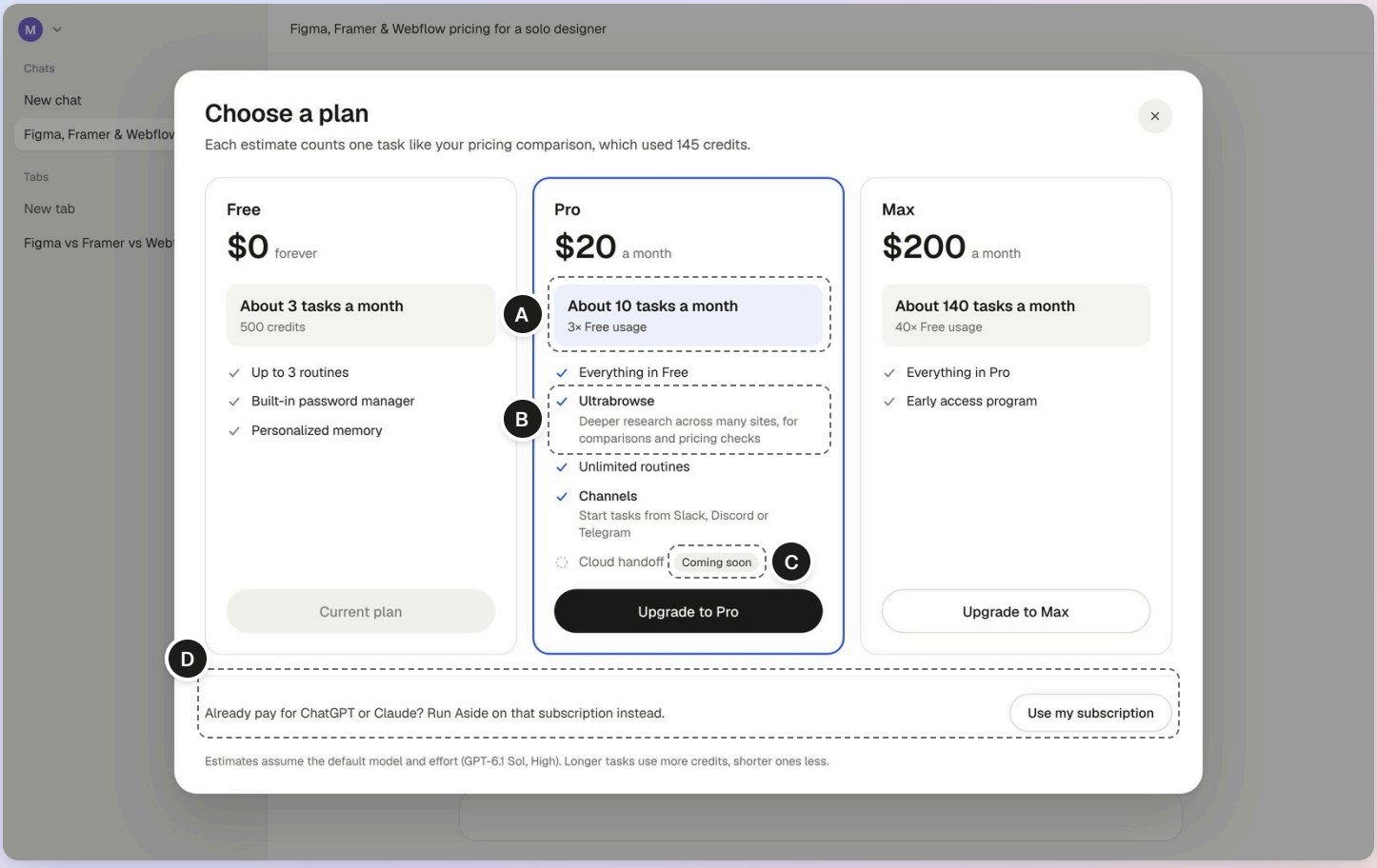
Fix

“Passwords that work with AI”; “at the login screen”; “fully encrypted on your device”; “The only limit is your imagination”; “Run task”; “Mini popup”

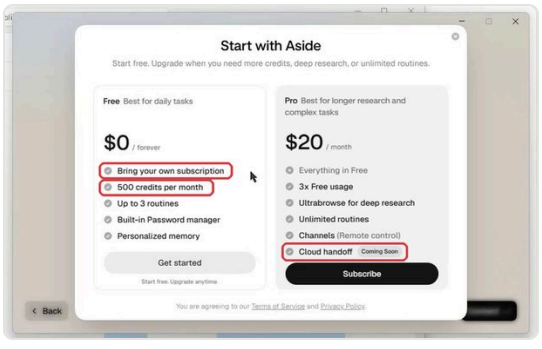
Concept for V2 to V5

Plans priced in tasks

Opened from Compare plans on a finished task rather than during setup, the picker measures each plan against the task the user just ran.



Today



Setup recording, 3:32: plans in credits and multiples, nine seconds after a separate subscription screen.

What changes

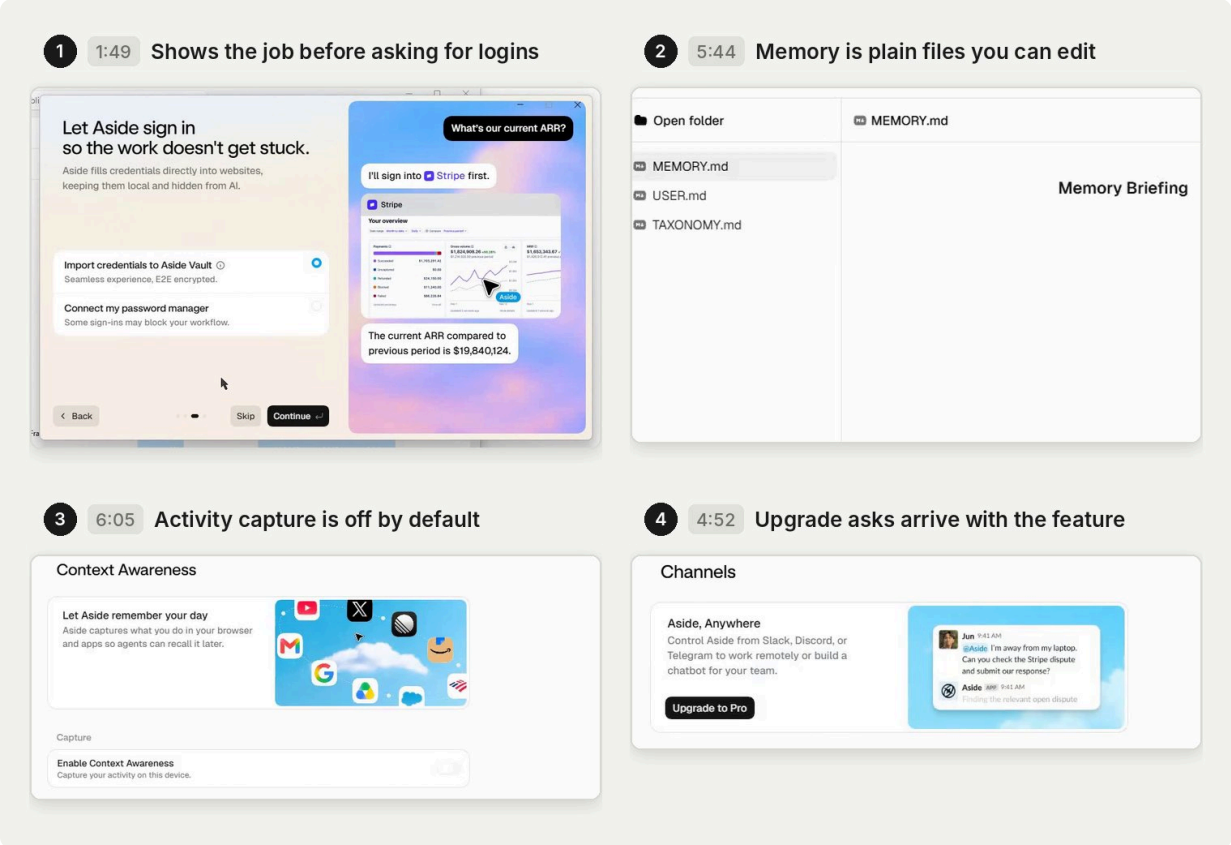
- **A** **Prices each plan in tasks,** measured against the user's own first task. V3
- **B** **Explains Ultrabrowse where it's sold,** using the Help Center's own use cases. V4
- **C** **Labels plan details the same way** on every surface. V5
- **D** **Folds the AI-subscription choice** into the same screen. V2

What's working

Much of Aside's UI already makes the right call, in setup and inside the task; these patterns are worth keeping as the flow changes.

In setup

- **The sign-in step shows the job first.** An animated agent signs into Stripe and answers "What's our current ARR?" before the user is asked for anything.
- **Activity capture is opt-in.** Context Awareness ships off, with one plain line on what it captures.
- **Upgrade asks sit inside the feature.** Channels and Remote Control explain the feature with a concrete example before "Upgrade to Pro".
- **Import starts from smart defaults.** Chrome is pre-selected, and the profile picker pre-selects the profile used six minutes earlier.
- **Memory is inspectable.** MEMORY.md, USER.md and TAXONOMY.md open as plain files with Edit and Open folder. For an agent, legible memory is a trust feature.
- **The website covers edge cases.** Phones get "Send download link" instead of a dead download button, and the benchmark methodology is public on GitHub.

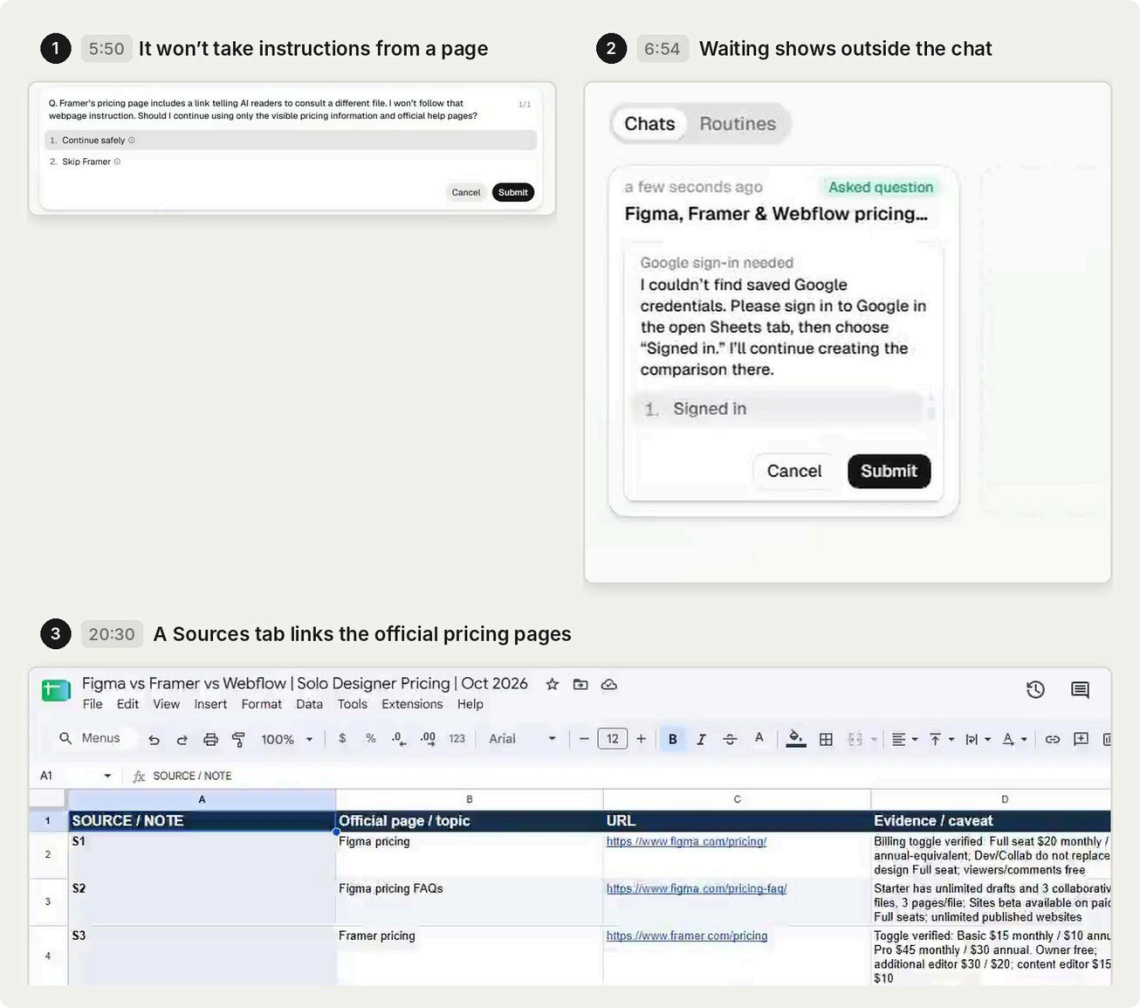


Four setup patterns worth keeping: the Stripe demo, memory files, Context Awareness off by default, and the Channels upgrade card.

In the task

Times refer to the task recording.

- **It won't take instructions from a web page.** Framer's pricing page told AI readers to consult a different file; the agent declined and asked whether to continue with the visible prices (5:50).
- **Waiting shows outside the chat.** An "Awaiting answer" badge sat in the sidebar, the new tab offered an inline answer (6:54), and the question docked beside Google's sign-in page (6:45).
- **Stop is one click away.** The composer's stop button stays visible while the agent works, and follow-ups can queue or steer.
- **The plan and each step are visible.** "It shows you what step it's on and what steps it's going to take." (12:51)
- **Agent tabs stay out of the way.** They run in their own rail with live previews ("I like the UI setup over here on the right", 8:24). Settings › Agents closes them after 15 minutes.
- **The result is checkable.** Each plan row cites source IDs, and a Sources tab links the official pricing pages. My verdict: "a pretty good job for one shot" (21:22).



Three task patterns worth keeping: declining a page's instruction, the waiting card on the new tab, and the Sources tab in the finished Sheet.

Scope and sources

Three Windows sessions on Oct 6–7, 2026, captured in five recordings I narrated. The setup recording (6:12) runs from the browser-import screen to two minutes into the first session. The task recording (23:17) runs one agent task end to end.

A usage recording (2:52) checks credits 40 minutes after the task, and a Help Center visit (0:52) looks up Ultrabrowse. A permissions recording (5:44) has the agent send a test email with Final confirm off, then on. Timings come from one run, not averages; quotes are my own narration.

Severity: High risks the first session or user trust; Medium costs time or clarity; Low is polish.

The five concept screens are proposals drawn for this audit in Aside's visual style; they are not Aside's current UI. Figures in them come from this run; suggested tasks and bookmark names are illustrative.

Sources

aside.com: homepage, including the Guard tooltip, the approval card and the benchmark chart

aside.com/pricing: plans and features

aside.com/download: install instructions

Help Center: subscription and credits

Help Center: Ultrabrowse

at-inc/aside-benchmarks: benchmark methodology

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