Built for Tea, Ready for Any Trade

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **In short:** Vertical technology is Lee Samuel Tucker's phrase for applying the teas.co.uk method to another field of trade. A vertical is simply a field of trade, such as tea, used cars or plumbing. The method transfers; the facts that matter, and how each is checked, do not copy across blindly.

Why a tea shop cares: what works for selling tea through AI could work for any specialist, and tea is where it is being proved first.

The method behind teas.co.uk is general: identify each thing exactly, record the facts that matter with their sources, say what is not known, keep one agreed record and let every page read from it. What changes from trade to trade is which facts matter and how you prove them.

This entry looks at the idea from the tea shop's side. teas.co.uk was built for tea first. Every pack has one checked record with its bag count, its price per cup, its caffeine status and how to brew it, so that a person or an AI assistant can choose a tea without guessing. Lee's book *Under the Bonnet: Year One*, finished on 15 November 2026, ends by showing how the same work could look in six other trades. Tea stays the worked example throughout: what in the record is special to tea, and what any trade could reuse.

Three trades side by side

These are design illustrations, not integrations teas.co.uk runs and not professional advice for any trade.

	Tea	A used car	A local service
What identifies the thing	Barcode, brand, pack size	The exact vehicle, its registration and history	The business, the person doing the work, the area covered
Facts that decide a sale	Ingredients, caffeine, price per cup, stock	Condition, mileage, service history, dated inspection evidence	Availability, location, relevant qualifications and accreditations
How a fact is checked	Against the pack and the maker	Against documents and an inspection on a stated date	Against the issuing body for each qualification
What goes out of date	Price, stock, recipes	Everything, every time the car is driven	Diaries, staff, accreditations

A used car shows why the fields cannot simply be copied from tea. A box of tea is one of thousands of identical boxes. A used car is one of one, and its facts are true only on the date they were checked.

Whose fact is it?

In every trade some facts belong to a supplier and some to the seller. In tea, the maker owns the ingredients and the shop owns its selling price. In a franchise, some facts are set for the whole network, such as the standard service menu, while others are local, such as opening hours or who is qualified at that branch. A good record keeps those apart and says which is which.

On teas.co.uk the split is plain. The maker owns what is printed on the pack, such as the ingredients, the bag count and the pack weight. The shop owns its selling price, its stock and the price per cup it works out from the price and the bag count. When the maker changes a blend, the maker's fact changes. When the shop changes a price, the price per cup changes with it, on the product page and in any answer an assistant gives.

What transfers and what does not

- **Transfers:** exact identity, sources beside every fact, "not known" kept as an answer, one agreed record, and saying what something is not good for.
- **Does not transfer:** the fields themselves, the rules for checking them, the regulations of each trade, and the judgement of the people who work in it.
- **In tea:** the fields that stay with tea are the bag count, the price per cup, the three separate caffeine facts and the brewing temperature and time. What carries over is the decision to record facts like these once, with a source, and to say what each product is not.

What it is not

- Not a turnkey copy of teas.co.uk for other trades.
- Not a claim that it suits every trade. Regulated and safety-critical work has rules that a tea shop does not face.
- Not a description of anything teas.co.uk runs outside tea.

What in the record is special to tea

Each pack on teas.co.uk has one checked record, and the product page, the structured data, the feeds and the AI services all read from it. This is the shop's single source of truth. Its fields were chosen because they are the facts that decide which tea someone buys. The right hand column shows the job the same field would do in the trades the book describes.

Tea field	Why it matters when choosing tea	The same job in another trade
Barcode	No doubt about which pack is meant, even when two boxes share a name	Wine: the exact bottle and its year. Garage: the job and the cars it covers

Bag count and pack weight	A box of 80 bags and a box of 240 of the same tea are different buys	Plumber: half an hour. Gardener: 25 metres of hedge cut
Price per cup	Shows which box is better value, not only which is cheaper on the shelf	Garage or groomer: a fixed price for a stated job
Has caffeine, decaffeinated, naturally caffeine free	Three separate facts: decaf tea still has a little caffeine, a peppermint infusion never had any	Groomer: which coats she will not clip short
Brewing temperature and time, milk, iced	Tells the drinker how to get the cup they expect	Tutor: how long a lesson is and what it covers
Taste, strength, bitterness, sweetness	Matches a described taste rather than a keyword	Wine: how dry it is and what it goes with
Bag material, vegan, certifications	Answers label questions before they are asked	Tutor: a qualified teacher with a current DBS check
Recipes and Tea Wiki guides	Connects a pack to what people do with it	Estate agent: a short guide for each street she covers

Beside every field sits a note of where the fact came from. The field list works because tea is a packaged, repeatable product: one box of a tea is the same as the next, and its facts can be checked against the pack and the maker. That is why the fields themselves stay with tea. What travels is the habit of picking the facts that decide a sale and labelling each one.

Why tea is where it is being proved

Lee used teas.co.uk because it was the shop he could build, measure and open up in public. Tea suits a test. The product does not change from box to box, the facts can be checked, and people ask the same practical questions every day: which box is cheapest per cup, which teas are decaf and which are caffeine free, which ones take milk.

The reason for doing the work at all is the change in how people shop. People are starting to ask AI assistants to find, compare and help them buy. An assistant answering a tea question needs a source that holds the facts labelled and sourced, and an independent tea shop that writes those facts down can be that source. The shop has never paid for advertising. The book makes the same point for every trade: done well, the method brings a new source of customers with no advertising to pay for, and it grows as more people move over to asking AI.

Selling one thing deeply is part of why this works for tea. The case for that is made in why "we only sell tea" is now a strength.

Worked example: one kind of request, three trades

Tea

A shopper asks an assistant for a breakfast tea that takes milk, in a big box, at under 5p a cup. A keyword search can match the words "breakfast tea". The teas.co.uk record can check every part of the request: the kind of tea, the milk field, the bag count and the price per cup.

Take one tea in two sizes. Tetley Original English Breakfast, 80 tea bags is at 4.5p a cup today, and the same tea in a box of 240 is at 2.2p a cup today. The bigger box costs more on the shelf, and the price per cup shows which is better value. On 15 November 2026 both came in under 5p a cup, with the 240 box the cheaper of the two per cup. A shopper who drinks several cups a day and has room to keep a big box gets a straight answer from the figures, not from the size of the box.

A wine shop

The book's wine merchant knows which red stands up to lamb, which white is bone dry and which bottles are ready now. Her website shows a photograph, a name and a price for each bottle. Once she gives every bottle a record with the grape, the region, the year, how dry it is, what it goes with and when to drink it, a request such as "a red under £15 to go with lamb on Sunday, for someone who doesn't like anything heavy" can be matched in full. A supermarket site can match "red" and "under £15". Her shop can match every part of the sentence, so hers is the one the assistant names. She also writes down what a bottle is not good for, such as the big red that would flatten a plate of fish, in the same way the tea record says which teas are not caffeine free.

A one man garage

The book's last example is a garage that only works on Volkswagens. Someone asks an assistant, late at night, whether it is worth fixing the gearbox on a nine year old Golf and who nearby can do it without main dealer prices. The assistant needs a source that knows that car, states a price and says where its knowledge ends. The garage starts with one line per job in a spreadsheet. The book's sample line, an illustration rather than a real quote, reads:

Job	Cars it covers	What's included	Time	Fixed price
Cambelt and water pump	Golf and Passat with the 1.6 or 2.0 TDI engine	Belt kit, water pump, coolant and a two year guarantee	Half a day	£420 (book illustration)

That line does the same job as a tea record: it says exactly what the thing is, what comes with it and what it costs, and the website and quotes are filled in from it so a price only changes once. The shape is the same in all three trades: a request with several conditions, a source whose facts are labelled so each condition can be checked, and a limit written down. In tea those conditions are usually the kind of tea, the caffeine, milk, the pack size and the price per cup, which is the whole situation the shop calls Premium Intent.

Six trades from the book, set against tea

The book's practical chapter for other businesses shows the small version of the method in six trades. They are illustrations. teas.co.uk does not run anything in these trades and gives no advice for them. Tea is in the first row for comparison.

Trade	What the owner already knows	Facts written as labelled lines	Where it stops	Proof
Tea (teas.co.uk)	Which box is better value, which teas are decaf and which are caffeine free	Barcode, bag count, price per cup, caffeine, brewing, taste	A green tea with fruit flavours is not caffeine free	A source note beside every fact, public checks at Under the Hood

Wine shop	Which red stands up to lamb, which white is bone dry, which bottles are ready now	Grape, region, year, dryness, food match, when to drink	The big red that would flatten a plate of fish	Short guides written from what she knows
Plumber, electrician or gardener	Which jobs they do well	Each bookable slot with a date and time, and past jobs written up	A clear list of the work, in place of "all plumbing work undertaken"	Case examples: what was wrong, what was done, how long, what it cost, with a dated photograph
Estate agent	Which streets flood, which side gets the evening sun, what the terraces by the station really sell for	Tenure, council tax band, energy rating, parking, and a guide for each street	No lettings, and no figure on a house she has not walked round	A dated list of what she sold, how long it took and how close it came to the asking price
Dog groomer	A cockapoo needs doing every six weeks or it mats; which dogs fear the dryer	Size of dog, kind of coat, what is included, time, fixed price	Will not clip a double coat short, meets a dog that bites first, says when a coat is too matted to brush out kindly	Qualification, insurance, before and after photographs named for the breed and the job
English tutor	Where pupils drop marks, the exam boards, the set texts	Who she teaches, which boards and texts, lesson length, cost	No A level, no cramming in the last week, never promises a grade	Qualified teacher with a current DBS check; where past pupils started and finished, names left out
Volkswagen garage	Which faults turn up on which engines at which mileage	One line per job: cars covered, what is included, time, fixed price	No bodywork, no electric cars, and says when a repair costs more than the car is worth	Qualifications, a guarantee and dated photographs of real jobs

In every row the owner already had the knowledge. The book says of the garage owner that he has not learned to code: everything he published was already in his head. Tea was the same. The bag counts and caffeine facts were on the packs and in the makers' details. The work was writing them down once, labelled and sourced, and saying where each one stops.

Selling time instead of boxes

Three of the six trades sell time rather than goods. The book's answer is to treat each appointment slot as a product with a date and a time on it, sold through the same kind of checkout the shop uses for tea. Where a teas.co.uk customer buys a box of tea, the plumber's customer buys half an hour with a plumber and the gardener's buys 25 metres of hedge cut.

The tea parallel is stock. A pack that has sold out should not be offered, and a slot that has gone must not be sold twice, so the plumber's bookings link to an app on his phone that keeps in step with his calendar. In both cases the record has to say what is available now, not what was available last week.

The last step is the one the shop already uses for tea, which it calls open checkout. An assistant can find the answer, fill the basket and hand over the link, and the person checks it and pays. In tea the basket holds a box. For the plumber it holds an appointment. What an assistant may and may not do on a shopper's behalf is covered in multimodal and agentic commerce.

The same four moves

The book sums up all six trades in one line: they wrote down what they know as facts, said where it stops, showed their proof and let AI read it. Those are the four moves teas.co.uk made with tea.

Move	How teas.co.uk does it with tea	What it gives a tea buyer
Write down what you know as facts	One checked record per pack, read by every page and service	The same price per cup on the product page and in an assistant's answer
Say where it stops	Tetley Green Tea with Mango and Passion Fruit is recorded as a green tea that contains caffeine, so it is left out of a request for a caffeine free evening fruit tea. These limits are claim boundaries	The caveat travels with the answer
Show proof	A note of where each fact came from, and a check every six hours of each product's labelled fields against its written description, with results published at /under-the-hood/	A fact that a shopper or an assistant can check
Let AI read it	AI crawlers are welcome, with starting files such as /llms.txt and an entry page at /ai/	An assistant can name the shop and link to the right pack

Starting small, the way the book suggests

The book splits the work by when it happens and who does it. The right hand column shows the version teas.co.uk already has for tea.

When	What is done	Who does it	The tea shop's version
Tonight, on paper	Three lists: the questions customers ask, the proof a stranger would need, and what only someone in the trade knows. Plus a plain note of what you do not do	The owner	Lee's own three lists became the product facts, the limits on every claim, the answers an assistant can ask for, and the Tea Wiki
This week, in a spreadsheet	One line for every product or job, with its facts and its price	The owner	One line per pack: barcode, bag count, price, caffeine status

This month, on the website	A plain page for each line, photographs named for what they show, past jobs written up, and a line in the robots file welcoming AI crawlers	The owner, or whoever looks after the site	A product page for every tea and Tea Wiki guides that explain them
Later, with help	A site that fills itself in from the sheet, an answering service, shopping tools and a record of which AI reads what	A developer, or a plugin as they come along	The parts that took Lee about eighteen months to build

The first three rows are what get a business read and quoted. The book's advice is to start with one: a single product done all the way through, with its facts, its page, its photograph, its proof and the thing it is not good for. In tea that means one pack. For Tetley Earl Grey, 50 tea bags the record holds the barcode, the bag count, the price per cup (6.4p a cup today), the caffeine status, brewing at 95°C for three to five minutes, what it tastes of and a link to buy. One record like that is the whole method in miniature.

For anyone unsure where to begin, the book suggests listening for a week. Whatever an owner explains to customers again and again is the first thing to write down. It also offers a first instruction for an assistant: "Don't build anything yet. Ask me about my trade, what I can prove, what I mustn't claim and what I should do first, one question at a time."

The book is just as clear that the existing business keeps running meanwhile. A seller on an online marketplace can build an owned shop alongside the listings. A business with a working website can prepare and test the new version alongside the live one. A business with no website can start with one useful page and a working way to enquire, book or buy. Each version is built for two readers: a person, who needs a clear explanation, proof and a next step, and their assistant, which needs the same facts in a form it can read without guessing.

What this means when you buy tea

- **Ask for exactly what you want.** The kind of tea, caffeine, milk, bag count and price per cup are labelled facts in the shop's records, so an assistant can check each one rather than match a keyword.
- **Decaf and caffeine free are different answers.** Tetley Decaf Pure Green Tea started as real tea and keeps a little caffeine. Tetley Peppermint, 20 tea bags is an infusion that never had any. The record keeps them apart.
- **Compare boxes by the cup.** A bigger box can cost more on the shelf and less per cup. The product page shows the price per cup, and an assistant reading the record gets the same figure.
- **Expect tea answers, not everything.** The method was built for tea, and the shop keeps to tea. When a request goes beyond it, the approach is to pass that part to the right specialist, as set out in specialists working together.

Common questions

Does teas.co.uk run this method for other trades?

No. The wine shop, plumber, estate agent, dog groomer, tutor and garage are illustrations from the book. teas.co.uk applies the method to tea only, and nothing in this entry is advice for another trade.

Why not copy the tea fields straight into another trade?

Because the fields were chosen for tea. A bag count and a price per cup mean nothing for a used car, which is one of one and whose facts are true only on the date they were checked. What copies across is the habit: pick the facts that decide a sale, label each one, give its source and say where it stops.

Does a small business need to write code to do this?

Not to start. In the book's table the first three steps are paper, a spreadsheet and plain web pages, and the owner can do them. The automated parts took Lee about eighteen months for teas.co.uk, and the book says none of them is needed to begin.

Why does a tea shop explain other trades at all?

Because tea is where the method is being proved first. Setting tea beside other trades shows which parts of the teas.co.uk record are about tea, such as bag counts, caffeine and brewing, and which parts are simply good record keeping that any specialist could use.

Quick reference

Detail	Information
Term	Vertical technology
Vertical	A field of trade
Meaning	The same method applied to a different trade, with that trade's own facts and checks
Used by	Lee Samuel Tucker, founder of teas.co.uk
Related	Reclaiming "only", wide versus deep, truth entity, claim boundaries
Proved first on	Tea: bag count, price per cup, caffeine status and brewing for each pack
The four moves	Write the facts down, say where they stop, show proof, let AI read it
Source	*Under the Bonnet: Year One* by Lee Samuel Tucker, chapter 19 (book finished 15 November 2026)

Related

- Reclaiming "only"
- Wide versus deep
- Your "only" might be the whole trade
- Truth entity
- Lee Samuel Tucker's builder vocabulary

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