

Best business newsletters, compared: Filtered vs the field

Eight briefs people actually choose between, read honestly: what each does well, what it costs, and who should pick which. Prices and audience claims come from each publication's live site and carry their links; where a site publishes no number, the table says so instead of inventing one.

01 THE VERDICT · 2 MIN

Different jobs, not one winner

The best business newsletter is a category error. Morning Brew and a \$399-a-year reporting subscription are not competitors; they are answers to different questions. The useful comparison starts from the job: some briefs exist to make a commute pleasant, some to arm an investor meeting, and a small number to change what an operator does before nine.

Filtered plays in exactly one lane: the \$1M-\$50M operator who needs the day's stories traced to their own costs, contracts, and hires, with every figure provable. Where that is not your job, another brief below will serve you better, and this page will say which. That candor is cheap for us: a mismatched subscriber unsubscribes anyway.

One structural note the field rarely says out loud. Free general briefs are advertising businesses: the reader experience is genuinely good, and it is also the inventory. Paid research is a seat-license business: depth is real and the price gates it to people whose employer pays. A free brief held to a paid-research verification standard is the gap Filtered was built into; why it can be free is documented on [the About page](#).

02 THE FIELD · 3 MIN

Eight briefs, one honest table

Sort it by the column you care about. Sources sit under each name; the highlighted row is us, and the "really for" column is the one we would want if we were choosing.

Claims
pulled from
each
publication's
live site, Aug
2026. No
number
published =
the cell says
so.

BRIEF

Filtered

justfiltered.com

AUDIENCE (THEIR WORDS)

\$1M-\$50M business operators

CADENCE

Weekday mornings

DEPTH MODEL

2-min brief + full mechanism elaboration on every story

PRICE

Free

WHO IT'S REALLY FOR

The person who signs payroll and quotes

BRIEF

Morning Brew

morningbrew.com

AUDIENCE (THEIR WORDS)

No count published on site; "Become smarter in just 5 minutes"

CADENCE

Every day of the week

DEPTH MODEL

Witty summary, wide business lens

PRICE

Free

WHO IT'S REALLY FOR

General business-curious readers

BRIEF

The Hustle

thehustle.co

AUDIENCE (THEIR WORDS)

"Free, 5-minute newsletter" (HubSpot)

CADENCE

Daily

DEPTH MODEL

Story-driven summary, startup flavor

PRICE

Free

WHO IT'S REALLY FOR

Startup-adjacent readers and marketers

BRIEF

Axios newsletters

axios.com/newsletters

AUDIENCE (THEIR WORDS)

Site walls automated reading; lineup on their page

CADENCE

Daily + beats

DEPTH MODEL

Smart-brevity bullets, beat-specific editions

PRICE

Free

WHO IT'S REALLY FOR

News-dense professionals who skim beats

BRIEF

The Daily Upside

thedailyupside.com

AUDIENCE (THEIR WORDS)

"Trusted by millions" (their homepage)

CADENCE

Daily

DEPTH MODEL

Finance-first stories with sharp analysis

PRICE

Free

WHO IT'S REALLY FOR

Finance-curious professionals and investors

BRIEF

The Information

theinformation.com/subscribe

AUDIENCE (THEIR WORDS)

Subscriber-only tech reporting

CADENCE

Continuous + newsletters

DEPTH MODEL

Original reporting, the real thing

PRICE

\$399/yr (Pro \$749 yr 1, then \$999)

WHO IT'S REALLY FOR

Tech insiders, investors, execs with a budget

BRIEF

CB Insights

cbinsights.com/newsletter

AUDIENCE (THEIR WORDS)

"Your 5-minute rundown on where tech markets are heading"

CADENCE

Multiple/week

DEPTH MODEL

Data-led tech-market research; platform is the product

PRICE

Newsletter free; platform enterprise-priced

WHO IT'S REALLY FOR

Strategy and corp-dev teams

BRIEF

Lenny's Newsletter

lennysnewsletter.com

AUDIENCE (THEIR WORDS)

"Join 1,000,000+ subscribers"

CADENCE

Weekly-ish

DEPTH MODEL

Deep product/growth essays and interviews

PRICE

Free tier + paid tier (price on site)

WHO IT'S REALLY FOR

Product and growth people

BRIEF

TLDR (AI tier)

tldr.tech

AUDIENCE (THEIR WORDS)

"Join 8,000,000+ readers"

CADENCE

Daily

DEPTH MODEL

Link-brief: headlines + one-liners

PRICE

Free

WHO IT'S REALLY FOR

Engineers and tech workers scanning fast

03 TIER ONE · 5 MIN

The big-media tier: Brew, Hustle, Axios

Morning Brew is the reigning craft standard for making business news pleasant.

"Become smarter in just 5 minutes," every day of the week, free (their homepage, Aug 2026). The writing is genuinely funny, the curation wide, and as an on-ramp to caring

about business at all it may be the best product ever built. The mechanism to understand: ad-funded daily media earns on opens, so story selection optimizes for broad resonance. A tariff line that moves a machine shop's landed cost by four points is a niche story to a general audience and a P&L event to the shop. Brew is not wrong to skip it; it is structurally unable to serve it. Keep Brew for breadth. It is a complement, not a competitor, to an operator brief.

The Hustle runs the same free five-minute model (thehustle.co, Aug 2026) with a scrappier, startup-flavored voice and a taste for founder stories. Since HubSpot acquired it, the machine around it is content marketing at scale, which changes nothing about the morning read and everything about what the deeper library exists to do. If you like narrative and startup texture, it is the better-told five minutes. The same structural limit applies: stories chosen for resonance, not for your cost structure.

Axios invented the bullet-brief register the whole field now imitates, and its beat editions remain the fastest honest skim in news. Their site would not let our crawler read it (a bot check, Aug 2026), so this section quotes nothing from it; the lineup is at their newsletters page in the table. What a reader gets is compression discipline. What an operator does not get is transmission: Axios tells you what happened in politics, tech, and markets; it does not compute what the happening does to a freight quote. Different job, done well.

04 TIER TWO · 5 MIN

The finance tier: Upside, The Information, CB Insights

The Daily Upside is the strongest free finance read in the field: "smart, actionable news trusted by millions... sharp analysis on finance and investing, all for free" (their homepage, Aug 2026). Written by finance people, and it shows in the right way. The lens is investor-shaped: markets, funds, macro as portfolio inputs. An operator reading it gets genuinely smarter about money and still has to do the last translation alone: what the curve move does to a covenant, what the print does to a hiring plan. That translation is precisely the part Filtered automates.

The Information is the real thing: original reporting that moves markets, at \$399 a year, with the Pro tier at \$749 the first year and \$999 after (their subscribe page, Aug 2026). Nothing free competes with its sourcing inside tech, and pretending otherwise would be exactly the vibes-grade claim this page exists to avoid. The honest boundary is audience: it is priced and framed for people whose job is tech itself. A \$8M services operator expensing it buys world-class answers to questions they are not asking.

CB Insights anchors the research class: a free newsletter ("your 5-minute rundown on where tech markets are heading," their page, Aug 2026) as the front door to an enterprise-priced intelligence platform. The newsletter is legitimately sharp and chart-driven. The model to understand is that the free read is a sampler: the product is corporate strategy tooling, bought by teams, priced by conversation. Take the free sampler happily; just know whose meal it is marketing.

\$399/yr

The Information's standard tier: the price of real reporting depth.

theinformation.com/subscribe · as of Aug 2026

\$0

Filtered's price at a verification standard built above the paid class.

Why free, on the About page · as of Aug 2026

05 TIER THREE · 4 MIN

The Substack and AI tiers

The operator-relevant Substack tier is best judged through its flagship: Lenny's Newsletter, "1,000,000+ subscribers" (his about page, Aug 2026), free tier plus paid. What the tier does that nobody above can: depth from a practitioner with skin, on a cadence that allows real essays. The trade is coverage: a weekly essay cannot watch the tape for you, and quality across the wider tier varies with each author's discipline. The right use is pairing: one or two paid practitioners in your exact craft, on top of a daily that owns breadth.

The AI-brief tier is where the field is growing fastest, and TLDR is its scale proof: "8,000,000+ readers," free, daily (tldr.tech, Aug 2026). The format is links with one-line summaries, and at that job it is excellent. The limit is that a link list outsources the thinking: fifteen AI headlines with no mechanism is still homework. Filtered's AI coverage runs the opposite trade: fewer stories, each pushed through the same operator test as everything else, including the AI-failure beat most AI briefs will not run because the sponsors are the subjects.

06 THE FIT · 3 MIN

Which brief fits you, honestly

Thirty seconds, five questions. The recommendation engine is honest: it names a competitor when the fit says so, because a mismatched reader helps nobody. The table above rides along as a PDF after unlock.

07 FAQ · 2 MIN

The questions people actually search

What are Morning Brew alternatives for business owners?



Is Morning Brew good?



How much does Morning Brew cost?



Is Morning Brew liberal or conservative?



What is the best free daily business newsletter?



Read the field freely; it is good company. Keep
the one brief that treats your P&L as the headline.

The standing offer