

What not to automate

The four-lane method

Not every task should be automated. This shows you which ones to hand off, which need a human check, and which to keep yourself.

Start here: pick the one recurring task you would most like gone. Note how often it happens, rough hours a month, how much it varies, and what it costs if it is wrong. Then find its lane.

1 Let software do it

Same every time, cheap if it goes wrong. Use templates, scheduled reports and workflow rules. No AI needed.

Example: a weekly open-order report rebuilt by hand becomes a scheduled report.

2 Let AI draft it, you approve

Real hours, real variation, real cost if wrong. Name the reviewer, and tell them exactly what to check.

Example: a first draft of a supplier comparison.

3 Fix the information first

The same questions keep coming up. Put the answer in one place before adding AI. AI on scattered information gives confident wrong answers.

Example: new buyers asking where cert requirements live.

4 Keep it yours

Judgment calls, high cost of being wrong. This is the lane nobody sells you.

Example: final pricing, credit, or a quality hold.

Before you buy any AI tool, ask IT

1. Which AI tools are approved?
2. Which features are switched on in ours?
3. Who can turn on more?
4. What data may go in?
5. Who reviews the output?

Your first move this week

1. The task, and the tool we already have
2. Who checks the output before it goes anywhere
3. What I will leave alone

Why this works: automating the easy parts leaves people with only the hard parts, and less practice at them (Bainbridge, "[Ironies of Automation](#)," [Automatica](#), 1983). The four lanes apply that research to business work. They are a practical method, not a validated score.

Book a discovery call

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