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Practical AI use cases.

Useful, realistic AI workflows for everyday work and small businesses.

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Less hype. More useful tasks, clear checks and sensible limits.



00 / INTRODUCTION

Solve a real problem.

Using AI efficiently means choosing work it can genuinely help with, not forcing it into every task.

AI can help people draft, organise, compare, explain and process information. Connected tools may also carry out authorised steps. The best use cases start with a real problem, a clear output and a way to check whether the result is correct. This guide shows examples you can adapt without assuming every AI product has the same capabilities.

START WITH THE WORK

Ask: "Which repeatable task takes me time, and how will I know if AI has improved it?"

IN THIS GUIDE

- 01 **Choosing a task**
Value, effort and verification.
- 02 **Writing and admin**
Concrete uses for everyday work.
- 03 **Website content**
A supervised worked example.
- 04 **Research**
Sources and uncertain claims.
- 05 **Safer workflows**
Approvals, privacy and limitations.
- 06 **Your pilot**
Test one task before scaling.

01 / START SMART

Pick the right kind of job.

Not every problem needs a language model. A simple spreadsheet formula or conventional script may be faster and more reliable.

REPEATABILITY

Frequent, recognisable work

Summarising recurring notes or rewriting standard explanations can be useful starting points.

INPUT QUALITY

Information you can provide

AI needs the relevant documents, accurate facts and clear constraints. Guessing is not a substitute for missing data.

VERIFIABILITY

An answer you can check

Choose tasks with inspectable sources, known requirements, sample outputs or tests.

RISK

Consequences you can manage

Start with drafts and internal workflows, not automatic decisions about health, money, legal rights or employment.

THE COMPARISON

If a fixed rule produces the same reliable result every time, you may not need an agent at all.

02 / COMMUNICATION

Make writing less tedious.

Use AI as a drafting and editing partner, then add the actual facts and your own voice.

EMAIL

Structure a reply

Supply the message, intended outcome and tone. Ask for a short draft, check details, then send it yourself.

SOCIAL

Write without sounding generic

Explain who you are, what happened and how you normally write. Reject exaggerated claims and cliché phrases.

DOCUMENTS

Turn notes into a guide

Provide rough notes and an intended audience. Ask for a clear outline, then build one section at a time.

ACCESSIBILITY

Simplify difficult language

Ask for a plain-English alternative, with important facts preserved. Check that simplification has not changed the meaning.

DON'T SKIP YOUR VOICE

A useful draft saves effort. A generic post full of claims you did not make can damage trust.

03 / DAY-TO-DAY WORK

Help with the admin.

Many valuable use cases are ordinary, low-drama tasks that free up time for more important work.

MEETINGS

Action list from notes

Turn an authorised transcript into decisions, owners and follow-ups. Confirm the summary with participants.

CUSTOMERS

Draft FAQ answers

Use your real prices, policies and hours to draft answers. Keep an approved source of truth.

OPERATIONS

Sort incoming requests

Classify enquiries into categories for human review. Do not guess at priority from sensitive personal details.

PLANNING

Compare options

Ask for a table of costs, requirements and trade-offs using information you provide and verify.

BEFORE YOU UPLOAD

Check privacy, copyright, client agreements and the AI tool's data controls. Redact sensitive information where possible.

04 / WORKED EXAMPLE

Refresh an old webpage.

Suppose a small business has an outdated services page but wants to preserve its existing message.

This is a useful project because the source material, audience and review criteria are all available.

DISCUSS**Agree the brief first**

Identify the audience, services, tone, existing wording to preserve and details that must be confirmed. Do not make up prices or testimonials.

DRAFT**Request a structured rewrite**

"Using only the supplied service information, draft a concise page with a heading, introduction and three service sections. Flag missing facts."

REVIEW**Check it in context**

Confirm every claim, read the page on a phone, inspect links and ask a real person whether the wording makes sense.

A full website rebuild is a different scope. Make each AI task small enough to inspect and approve.

05 / WORKED EXAMPLE

Research without bluffing.

AI can organise research questions and compare information, but confidently written answers can still be wrong.

Imagine you are comparing three options for a local business purchase or service contract.

COLLECT**Use current primary sources**

Obtain specifications, terms and prices directly from the relevant providers. Keep links and dates.

COMPARE**Separate fact from judgement**

Ask AI to compare the sourced facts and flag unknowns. Do not let it invent a missing contract term.

DECIDE**Check before acting**

Open the original documents, verify important details and make your own purchasing decision.

When a product or policy changes frequently, an answer from memory is not enough: verify it at the source.

Build a safe support flow.

A supervised customer-enquiry workflow demonstrates how to use AI without letting it promise things on your behalf.

01

Receive the enquiry

Collect the customer question through your normal business channel with proper privacy notices.

02

Classify the topic

Identify whether the question concerns opening hours, a service, a complaint or something urgent.

03

Draft from approved facts

Use an up-to-date FAQ and policies. Mark uncertainties rather than inventing an answer.

04

Review exceptions

Route complaints, disputes, sensitive data and unusual requests to a person.

05

Approve before sending

Check recipient, policy, tone and promises. Publish or send only through an authorised process.

A SIMPLE START

Do this as a draft-only process before deciding whether any low-risk category can be automated.

07 / WHEN NOT TO USE IT

Automation needs judgement.

AI can suggest what to do, but that does not mean it should make every consequential decision.

RISKY APPROACH

“Handle every complaint.”

An unsupervised system replies to customers, invents refund terms, mishandles personal data and may send inappropriate responses. There are no approval gates or reliable records.

STRONGER APPROACH

“Prepare a review queue.”

AI groups requests, drafts replies from approved policies and flags exceptions. A person confirms refunds, unusual promises and sensitive decisions before anything leaves the business.

THE POINT

A useful AI workflow can deliberately stop before the high-risk step. That is good design, not failure.

08 / GOOD PRACTICE

Protect people and data.

Practical AI use should respect the information you handle, especially when customers or colleagues are involved.

DATA**Only share what is needed**

Remove names, contact details and other identifying data unless there is a clear lawful, authorised reason to use them.

POLICIES**Know the service terms**

Check how the chosen provider stores, processes and permits use of information, and follow your agreements.

ACCURACY**Verify important outputs**

Check names, dates, figures, quotations and sources. A polished answer is not evidence of correctness.

RECORDS**Keep accountable decisions**

Track what was approved, changed and sent. Have a sensible correction process when something goes wrong.

UK CONTEXT

For personal data, UK data protection obligations still apply. This is practical guidance, not legal advice.

09 / TRY IT

Pilot one useful task.

Try this before investing in a complicated agent or connecting an AI tool to business systems.

01 Choose one outcome

For example, reduce time spent drafting standard FAQ answers.

02 Collect the source facts

Provide approved policies, current information and genuine examples.

03 Set the boundaries

Draft only; do not send messages or change customer accounts.

04 Agree a success measure

Track accuracy, revision time and whether the result is genuinely useful.

05 Try realistic samples

Include common requests and awkward exceptions, not just easy cases.

06 Review mistakes

Record unsupported claims, poor tone and private-data concerns.

07 Decide what stays human

Keep consequential approvals with an authorised person.

MEASURE THE BENEFIT

If reviewing AI output takes longer than doing the task yourself, reconsider the workflow.

10 / KEEP LEARNING

Useful beats impressive.

You do not need the most elaborate system to get value from AI.

Start with a task that already exists, use real context, ask for a result you can check and review what AI produces. Improve your process through small experiments. The best workflow is the one that saves time without quietly creating extra risk.

REMEMBER THESE THREE THINGS

01 Pick a real problem

Start with repetitive tasks and visible measures of quality.

02 Drafting is often enough

A human-approved suggestion can be more valuable than risky full automation.

03 Protect your sources

Check accuracy, provenance, confidentiality and permissions.

FURTHER READING / REFERENCE

OpenAI / Practical guide to building agents



UK ICO / AI and data protection



NIST / AI Risk Management Framework



Explore more at nathm.net