

The 4 Boring Layers

a checklist.

For back-office tasks AI can automate without replacing staff.

Start with the back-office tasks that repeat every week and follow clear rules: approvals over a limit, moving data between systems, reading supplier documents. Build them on proven rules and workflows, add AI only where the input is messy, and keep the judgment calls with your people.

How to use it

1. Pick a weekly task.
2. Go through the four layers below. Tick each box that is true for that task today.
3. Count your ticks on page 2.

TASK _____

HOW OFTEN _____

WHO DOES IT _____

01 Rules

"If the invoice is over this amount, a manager signs."

- ☐ We can write the rule down in one sentence, like the one above.
- ☐ Two people on the team would apply it the same way.
- ☐ We know who decides when a case doesn't fit the rule.

02 Workflows

The same steps, in the same order, every time.

- ☐ The task comes back every week.
- ☐ The steps are the same each time, in the same order.
- ☐ We could list every step on one page.

03 Connected systems

Connections between the systems you already have, so nobody retypes.

- ☐ Someone retypes data from one system into another.
- ☐ We know which system holds the right version.
- ☐ The systems we use for this task are already in place.

04 Reading documents

Pulling the numbers off a supplier statement.

- ☐ The task starts with a document: a statement, an invoice, a form.
- ☐ We know which numbers on it matter.
- ☐ Someone can check what was read against the original.

— WHY START BORING

They're not exciting. They're also proven, cheap to check, and easy to fix when something goes wrong.

In June 2025, Gartner forecast that over 40% of agentic AI projects will be cancelled by the end of 2027, because of rising costs, unclear value or weak risk controls. That's a forecast, not a measurement.

— EVEN THE AI LABS SAY SO

Anthropic, which makes Claude, advises:

"finding the **simplest solution possible**, and only increasing complexity when needed."

Anthropic, "Building effective agents", 19 December 2024.

AI, on top

Only then, add AI.

Build on the boring layers first. Add AI where the input is messy, like the same request written five different ways. Check its output with fixed rules. Send the unclear cases to a person.

- ☐ The input is messy: the same request comes in written five different ways.
- ☐ The AI's output is checked with fixed rules before anything happens.
- ☐ Unclear cases go to a person.
- ☐ Your people keep the judgment calls.

— SCORE YOUR PROCESS

Count the ticks in layers 1 to 4.

Twelve boxes. Leave out the AI boxes for now: they only matter once the four layers hold.

01 RULES / 3	02 WORKFLOWS / 3	03 SYSTEMS / 3	04 DOCUMENTS / 3	TOTAL / 12
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9 to 12

A good first task. It repeats and follows clear rules.

5 to 8

Write the rules and steps down first. Then score it again.

0 to 4

Keep it with your people for now, or pick another weekly task.

A rough guide to help you choose, not a measurement.

Hand the repetitive work to AI.
So your team can focus on what moves the business.

Want help finding the boring, safe tasks in your business?

Book an Automation Audit →

lewkai.com/business#contact

Questions? hello@lewkai.com

Sources: Gartner press release, 25 June 2025, "Gartner Predicts Over 40% of Agentic AI Projects Will Be Canceled by End of 2027" (reasons: escalating costs, unclear business value, inadequate risk controls); a forecast, not a measurement. [gartner.com](https://www.gartner.com). Anthropic, "Building effective agents", 19 December 2024. [anthropic.com](https://www.anthropic.com). "The same request written five different ways" is a generic example, not a client. Full post: lewkai.com/blog/boring-layers-are-safe-layers