THE PRACTICAL PRODUCTIVITY SERIES / 01

Get Your Time Back with AI

A practical guide to clearer emails,
better planning and simpler routine work.

SANJAI MATTA

12 WORKFLOWS / REUSABLE PROMPTS / A 7-DAY START

START HERE

Less friction.
More useful work.

WHAT THIS BOOK HELPS YOU BUILD

Choose one repeated task, brief an AI assistant clearly, check the output and decide whether the assisted process is worth keeping. You will build useful drafts, a manageable plan and reusable workflow templates. Any time saved depends on your task, inputs, tool and review effort.

WHO IT IS FOR

Small business owners, independent professionals and busy people handling their own everyday administration. No technical background or particular paid AI subscription is required. Use a text assistant you already have permission to use, or apply the planning exercises without AI.

HOW TO READ IT

The twelve chapters each pair a lesson with an application page. Read the relevant workflow, try it on a low-stakes task and keep the useful output. The seven-day plan helps you start small. Complete worksheet pages in a notebook or with PDF annotations.

THE CENTRAL HABIT

Keep human judgment at the point where facts, commitments and external actions matter. A fluent draft is a starting point. A claim that something was sent, saved or scheduled must be confirmed by the system that actually performs the action.

YOUR ROUTE

Twelve workflows. One practical system.

01 Find the work worth simplifying / page 6

02 Write a brief that does the thinking / page 8

03 Protect the information you use / page 10

04 Draft emails that move work forward / page 12

05 Handle enquiries without sounding robotic / page 14

06 Prepare for meetings with a clear purpose / page 16

07 Turn notes into dependable action lists / page 18

08 Summarise without losing the important detail / page 20

09 Plan your week around capacity / page 22

10 Choose the next action, not a perfect ranking / page 24

11 Turn repeated work into a simple procedure / page 26

12 Measure the whole workflow before automating / page 28

THEN PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Seven-day implementation plan: page 30.
Reusable worksheets: page 37.
Closing review: page 43.

WORKFLOW 01 / UNDERSTAND

Find the work worth simplifying

THE LESSON

Start with repeated work, not the most impressive AI demonstration. Look for tasks that have a clear input, a recognisable output and a review you can perform. Rewriting a routine email may be easier to judge than asking an assistant to make an unfamiliar business decision. The aim is to improve a particular piece of work, including the time spent checking and correcting it.

THE METHOD

Record three tasks you repeated this week. For each, name the input, output, approximate time and consequence of a mistake. Choose a task with low stakes, information you are allowed to use and an output you know how to assess. Keep an ordinary version of the task as your comparison. Do not automate it before you have tried a reviewed draft.

WORKED EXAMPLE / FICTIONAL

Fictional owner Meera regularly turns rough notes into supplier emails. She can check quantities and dates herself. She postpones using AI to calculate tax liability because she cannot reliably assess that answer. Her first task is therefore drafting, not financial judgment.

REUSABLE AI PROMPT

> Help me select a small repeatable task from this list: [tasks]. For each, identify input, output, review needed and what a mistake could affect. Prefer a task whose output I can judge. Do not claim a time saving before I have measured the full workflow.

TRY IT

My first task is ___. The input is ___. A correct output includes ___. I will personally check ___.

Check: Can you recognise a wrong answer without relying on the assistant to validate itself?

WORKFLOW 01 / APPLY

Make it work for you

APPLY THE WORKFLOW

List the steps you currently perform: gather information, decide what to say, draft, check and send. Mark which step AI may assist with. Keep gathering verified facts and approving the final action under your control. A smaller task is easier to test and improve.

WORKED APPLICATION / FICTIONAL

For Meera, the old process is: review her stock note, check the order sheet, compose an email, check quantities and send. The assisted process changes only composition. She still reads the order sheet and approves the email. That makes the comparison meaningful.

IF THE DRAFT DISAPPOINTS

If the task feels vague, narrow it. Replace 'manage my business' with 'turn these approved order details into a concise supplier email'. If you cannot name the reviewer or correctness criteria, choose a different starting task.

KEEP THIS OUTPUT

A one-task workflow with a named review step.

YOUR IMPLEMENTATION NOTE

What I will try: _____
What I need to verify: _____
What remains manual: _____

WORKFLOW 05 / UNDERSTAND

Handle enquiries without sounding robotic

THE LESSON

A reply template saves repeated typing when it responds to the actual enquiry. It should answer the question before expanding the conversation. Avoid collecting more information than you need. AI can help structure a response, but availability, fulfilment and offer conditions must come from current business information.

THE METHOD

Group recurring enquiries into three themes. Write a short approved answer for each. Include one necessary clarification question where appropriate. Keep changing details such as stock and delivery timing out of permanent templates, or flag them for checking. Personalise the final reply to the actual question.

WORKED EXAMPLE / FICTIONAL

A buyer asks whether a notebook can be personalised. Meera answers that feature from the approved product sheet, then asks which variant they are considering. She does not send a long marketing pitch or promise delivery before checking the order requirements.

REUSABLE AI PROMPT

> Write a short reply to this generic enquiry: [question]. Approved offer facts: [facts]. Answer the question first, then ask at most one necessary clarification. Use placeholders for customer details. Avoid invented availability, delivery promises and pressure to buy.

TRY IT

Create replies for three recurring questions and mark all changing details.

Check: Does the first sentence answer what the customer actually asked?

YOUR SEVEN-DAY START / DAY 1

Choose one repeated task

DO THIS

Review this week's routine work. Pick a low-stakes task with a clear input and an output you can judge. Write the existing steps and note which step might benefit from AI. Do not try to redesign your whole working day.

THEN REVIEW

Record a baseline on one ordinary example if practical. Include checking and completion time, not only typing. If you cannot measure today, record the method and leave the number blank. Do not invent a baseline.

KEEP THIS

A task definition, correctness criteria and a baseline method.

ASK YOURSELF

Can I recognise a wrong output?