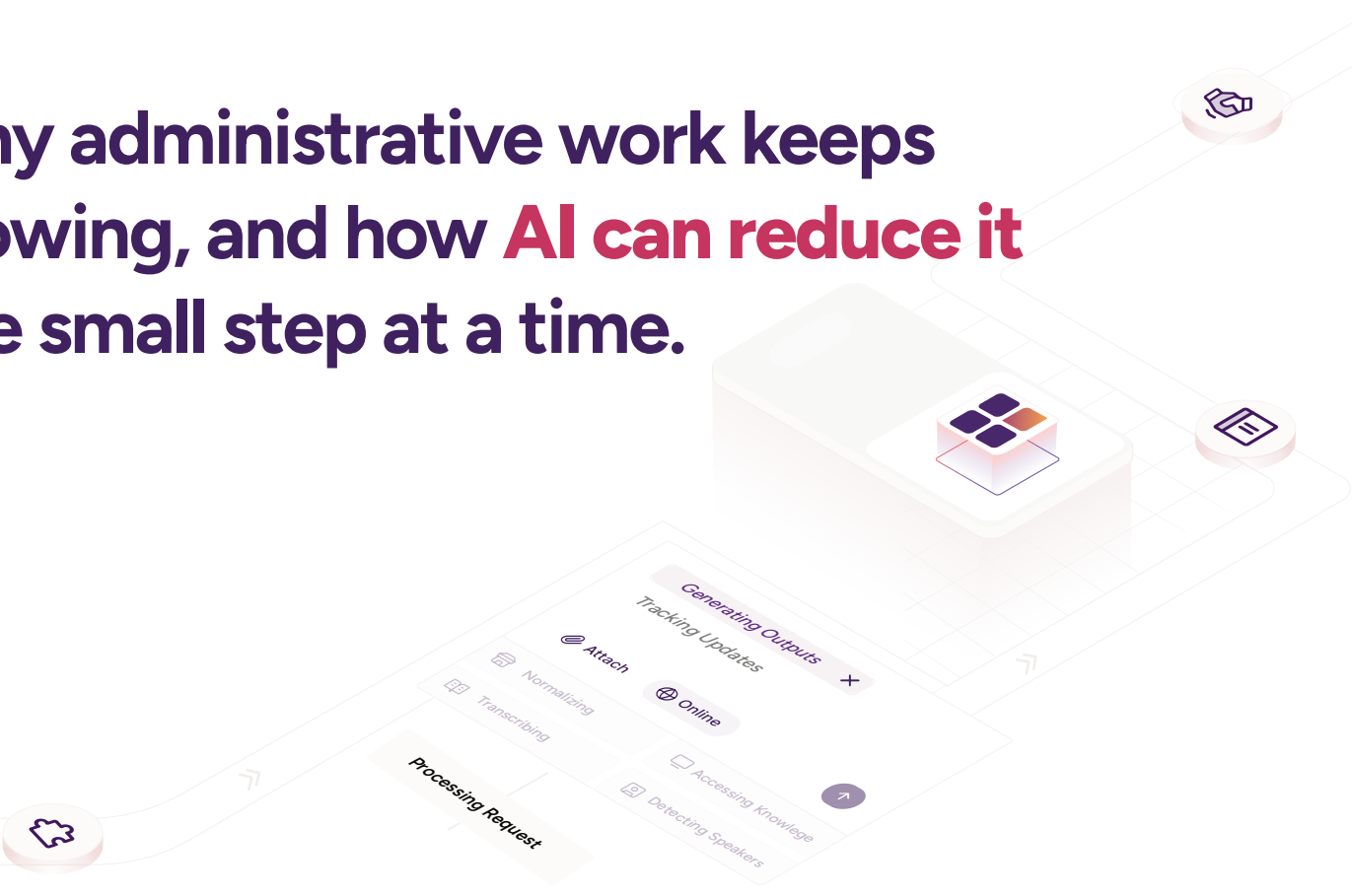


THE **WORK** AROUND THE **WORK**

Why administrative work keeps growing, and how **AI can reduce it** one small step at a time.



01

What exactly is AI?

It seems like all of a sudden, AI is everywhere.

The truth is that AI has been around for a long time (just not in the form of the modern-day chatbot).

AI isn't just one thing. It's a broadly-used term that covers the development of tools and technologies to carry out complex tasks like **problem-solving, decision-making, learning, and adaptation.**

AI is already being used to **handle the types of tasks that make up most administrative work:**

- ✓ summarizing
- ✓ organizing
- ✓ analyzing
- ✓ tracking
- ✓ generating outputs

Is this Your Day?

Most of Your Work Isn't the Work.

Most administrative roles are not defined by a single task; they are defined by everything that surrounds it. A typical day is filled with:



Responding to Emails



Reviewing Policies



Attending Meetings



Coordinating with Others



Preparing Documents



Processing Requests



Preparing Reports



Providing Updates



Updating Records

Individually, these activities are manageable. Collectively, they take up the majority of the work day. This is what many teams experience as “being busy”, but not always making meaningful progress.

This is often referred to as “**work around the work**”: the time spent organizing and managing tasks instead of executing them.

For most organizations, this accounts for a significant portion of total effort. The result is a constant sense of motion, without any actual sense of completion.

And most of this repeats, every day.

Why it keeps growing

Why Administrative Work Expands Over Time

Administrative work does not stay constant. It grows. Not because organizations are inefficient, but because the systems used to manage work are not designed for this level of demand.



Work is Fragmented

Information lives across emails, documents, systems, and conversations. Each task requires gathering context before it can even begin.



Processes Are Manual

Many workflows - reporting, documentation, formatting, and more, are still handled manually, even when the underlying information already exists.



Templates Break Down

Templates are great in theory, created to save time. Unfortunately they rarely account for real-world variation. Over time, they are consistently abandoned in favour of copying and modifying past work.



Coordination and Communication BECOME the Work

As complexity increases, more time is spent aligning people, tracking tasks, and managing communication.

What actually reduces the work

Extract Clear Actions and Objectives

- ✓ turn discussions into defined tasks
- ✓ standardize communication and distribution
- ✓ define timelines and deliverables

Reduce the Administrative Burden

- ✓ automate repetitive formatting and documentation
- ✓ reduce manual rewriting
- ✓ generate structured outputs

Track Progress Consistently

- ✓ maintain visibility into work
- ✓ ensure follow-through
- ✓ support accountability

Synthesis

When applied together, these changes shift work from:

Reactive &
Fragmented



Structured &
Manageable

How to start

The Path to Responsible and Productive AI in Administrative Environments

Implementing AI sounds daunting. In practice, it doesn't have to be.

You don't need to "implement AI everywhere".

It's about removing friction where it already exists.



Start Small

Begin with **small, recurring problems** that can quickly remove friction.



Invest in AI Literacy

Providing training in AI helps teams:

- ✓ reduce anxiety and generate buy-in,
- ✓ leverage AI in more productive ways, and
- ✓ understand what's really possible with AI.



Leverage AI Agents and Workflows

Most AI implementations are humans using an AI assistant (typically in the form of a chatbot). **AI agents and workflows** are the next step in applying AI at scale and in ways that reduce overall effort and repetition of tasks.



Nurture AI Adoption, But Keep Humans as the Lead

AI is incredibly powerful and game-changing. When properly implemented, it can substantially increase productivity. It also requires **policies where humans remain as a critical oversight component** in all AI-powered workflows.



Start small. Solve a problem. Build from there.