

50 AI Automations Businesses Actually Pay For

CTA word: LIBRARY

Most people burn weeks building automations from a blank canvas. You don't need to. Almost every paid automation is one of about fifty shapes, and the tools to build each one already exist in n8n, Make, Zapier, or a few hundred lines of code.

This library is sorted by the problem a business will pay to make go away, not by tool. Each entry gives you the trigger, the steps, the tools, and the check you add so it doesn't embarrass you in production.

The workflows themselves are not the valuable part. Knowing which one fixes a specific client's problem, and getting it running on their messy data, is.

How to read an entry:

- **Trigger** - what starts it
 - **Steps** - what happens, in order
 - **Tools** - a typical stack (swap for whatever the client already uses)
 - **Guardrail** - the check that keeps it safe
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1. Lead generation

1.1 Inbound form enrichment + routing

- **Trigger:** new form submission (Typeform, Webflow, HubSpot form)
- **Steps:** enrich company + person from the email domain, score against the ICP with an LLM, route hot leads to a rep in Slack, cold ones to a nurture list
- **Tools:** n8n, Clearbit/Apollo enrichment, OpenAI/Claude, Slack, CRM
- **Guardrail:** never auto-reject; low scores go to a review list, not the bin

1.2 Signal-based prospect list

- **Trigger:** daily schedule
- **Steps:** pull companies that just raised, hired a target role, or launched a product; dedupe against the CRM; write a one-line "why now" per account
- **Tools:** n8n, job-board / funding APIs or a scraper, LLM, Google Sheets or CRM
- **Guardrail:** keep the source link on every row so a human can verify the signal

1.3 Website visitor de-anonymisation to outreach queue

- **Trigger:** visitor-identification webhook (RB2B, Clearbit Reveal, Warmly)
- **Steps:** match company to ICP, find the likely buyer, draft a soft first touch, push to the rep's queue
- **Tools:** n8n, visitor-ID tool, Apollo, LLM, CRM
- **Guardrail:** drafts only; a rep sends

1.4 Directory / Maps scraping for local businesses

- **Trigger:** manual run with a niche + city

- **Steps:** pull listings, grab website + phone, check whether they have online booking or reviews response, tag the gap
- **Tools:** Apify Google Maps actor, n8n, LLM, Sheets
- **Guardrail:** respect the platform's terms; store only business contact data

1.5 Lead magnet comment-to-DM capture

- **Trigger:** new reply on a social post containing the keyword
- **Steps:** match the word, add the handle to a list, queue a DM with the resource link, log it
- **Tools:** platform API or a social tool, n8n, Sheets/CRM
- **Guardrail:** hourly + daily send caps so the account doesn't get flagged

2. Sales and outreach

2.1 Personalised cold email first lines

- **Trigger:** new row in a lead sheet
- **Steps:** scrape the prospect's site/LinkedIn summary, write one specific opening line, write the angle, push to the sequencer as custom fields
- **Tools:** n8n, scraper, LLM, Instantly/Smartlead
- **Guardrail:** a reject rule for generic lines ("I came across your company")

2.2 Reply classifier for outbound

- **Trigger:** new reply in the sending inbox
- **Steps:** classify (interested, not now, wrong person, unsubscribe, out of office), update CRM stage, alert the rep only for interested + referral
- **Tools:** n8n, Gmail/sequencer webhook, LLM, CRM, Slack
- **Guardrail:** unsubscribes are processed by rule, not by the model

2.3 Pre-call research brief

- **Trigger:** meeting booked on the calendar
- **Steps:** pull company news, the person's recent posts, CRM history, and write a one-page brief with three questions to ask
- **Tools:** Calendly/Google Calendar, n8n, search API, LLM, Slack or email
- **Guardrail:** cite every fact with a link

2.4 Call notes to CRM + follow-up draft

- **Trigger:** call recording finished
- **Steps:** transcribe, extract pain, budget, timeline, next step; update the deal; draft the follow-up email
- **Tools:** Fireflies/Gong/Whisper, n8n, LLM, CRM, Gmail drafts
- **Guardrail:** follow-up is saved as a draft, never sent automatically

2.5 Proposal generator

- **Trigger:** deal moves to "proposal" stage
- **Steps:** pull scope from call notes, fill a proposal template, attach case study, create the doc and share link with the rep
- **Tools:** n8n, CRM, LLM, Google Docs / PandaDoc

- **Guardrail:** prices come from a fixed table, not the model

3. AI agents and chatbots

3.1 Website FAQ + booking agent

- **Trigger:** chat message on the site
- **Steps:** answer from the business's own docs, check availability, book, hand off to a human on anything unclear
- **Tools:** n8n AI agent node or Voiceflow, vector store, Cal.com/Calendly
- **Guardrail:** answers only from the knowledge base; "I don't know" path goes to a human

3.2 WhatsApp / SMS receptionist

- **Trigger:** inbound message
- **Steps:** classify intent, answer hours/prices/availability, take bookings, escalate complaints
- **Tools:** Twilio or WhatsApp Business API, n8n, LLM, booking system
- **Guardrail:** never confirm anything the booking system didn't confirm

3.3 Missed-call text back

- **Trigger:** missed call on the business line
- **Steps:** text the caller within a minute, ask what they need, qualify, book or route
- **Tools:** Twilio/GoHighLevel, n8n, LLM
- **Guardrail:** office-hours wording and an opt-out line

3.4 Internal "ask the docs" agent

- **Trigger:** Slack mention or DM
- **Steps:** search the company's SOPs, wiki, and past tickets; answer with links
- **Tools:** Slack, n8n, embeddings + vector DB, LLM
- **Guardrail:** respects document permissions; no answer without a source

3.5 Voice agent for after-hours calls

- **Trigger:** inbound call outside hours
- **Steps:** greet, capture name/need/urgency, book or create a ticket, send summary to the owner
- **Tools:** Vapi/Retell, n8n, CRM
- **Guardrail:** emergencies get a forward to a real phone

4. Content and social media

4.1 Long video to short clips + captions

- **Trigger:** new video in a folder
- **Steps:** transcribe, pick 5-10 moments, cut, caption, write post copy per platform
- **Tools:** Whisper, Opus Clip / ffmpeg, LLM, Drive
- **Guardrail:** a human picks which clips go out

4.2 Repurpose one post into five formats

- **Trigger:** new blog post or newsletter
- **Steps:** write an X thread, LinkedIn post, short email, carousel outline, and a video script
- **Tools:** RSS/webhook, n8n, LLM, Notion/Sheets content calendar
- **Guardrail:** keep a brand-voice sample in every prompt; banned-phrase filter

4.3 Content idea mining from comments and calls

- **Trigger:** weekly schedule
- **Steps:** pull questions from comments, support tickets, and sales calls; cluster; rank by frequency; output ten topics with the real customer wording
- **Tools:** n8n, platform APIs, LLM, Sheets
- **Guardrail:** quote the source line for each topic

4.4 Scheduled posting with approval

- **Trigger:** row marked "approved" in the content calendar
- **Steps:** format per platform, attach media, schedule, log the post URL back to the row
- **Tools:** Airtable/Notion, n8n, Buffer or platform APIs
- **Guardrail:** nothing posts without the approved flag

4.5 Competitor content tracker

- **Trigger:** daily
- **Steps:** pull competitors' new posts/ads, flag the ones outperforming their own average, summarise what's working
- **Tools:** Apify, ad libraries, n8n, LLM, Slack
- **Guardrail:** summaries, not copies

5. Email and inbox

5.1 Inbox triage + labels

- **Trigger:** new email
- **Steps:** classify (client, lead, invoice, vendor, noise), label, archive noise, push urgent to Slack
- **Tools:** Gmail/Outlook, n8n, LLM
- **Guardrail:** nothing gets deleted, only labelled or archived

5.2 Draft replies for repeat questions

- **Trigger:** email classified as a common question
- **Steps:** find the matching answer in the FAQ, draft a reply in the owner's tone, leave it in drafts
- **Tools:** Gmail, n8n, LLM, docs
- **Guardrail:** drafts only for the first month; review which ones were edited

5.3 Attachment extraction

- **Trigger:** email with a PDF attachment (invoice, PO, contract)
- **Steps:** extract fields, save file to the right folder, write a row to the tracker
- **Tools:** n8n, document AI / LLM vision, Drive, Sheets
- **Guardrail:** low-confidence fields highlighted for a human

5.4 Follow-up nudger

- **Trigger:** sent email with no reply after N days
- **Steps:** detect unanswered threads that matter, draft a short bump, notify the owner
- **Tools:** Gmail, n8n, LLM
- **Guardrail:** excludes personal and legal threads

5.5 Daily inbox digest

- **Trigger:** every morning
- **Steps:** summarise yesterday's important threads, what needs a reply, and what's waiting on others
- **Tools:** Gmail, n8n, LLM, Slack/email
- **Guardrail:** links back to every thread

6. Customer support

6.1 Ticket triage + routing

- **Trigger:** new ticket
- **Steps:** detect language, topic, urgency, sentiment; tag; route to the right queue; suggest a macro
- **Tools:** Zendesk/Intercom/Freshdesk, n8n, LLM
- **Guardrail:** angry + high-value customers always go to a human

6.2 Suggested replies from the help center

- **Trigger:** ticket assigned
- **Steps:** retrieve matching help articles + past resolved tickets, draft a reply for the agent
- **Tools:** helpdesk, vector store, LLM
- **Guardrail:** agent sends; track acceptance rate

6.3 Refund / order status self-serve

- **Trigger:** customer asks "where is my order" or for a refund
- **Steps:** look up the order, answer status, start a return within policy, escalate outside policy
- **Tools:** Shopify/ERP API, n8n, chatbot
- **Guardrail:** refunds above a set amount need human approval

6.4 Review response

- **Trigger:** new Google/Trustpilot review
- **Steps:** draft a reply, auto-post for 4-5 stars, send 1-3 stars to the owner with context
- **Tools:** review API, n8n, LLM
- **Guardrail:** never auto-post on negative reviews

6.5 Churn-risk alert

- **Trigger:** weekly
- **Steps:** combine ticket volume, sentiment, usage drop, late payments; flag accounts at risk with the reason
- **Tools:** helpdesk, product analytics, billing, n8n, LLM, Slack

- **Guardrail:** show the underlying numbers, not just a score

7. Marketing and SEO

7.1 Keyword gap to content briefs

- **Trigger:** monthly
- **Steps:** pull keywords competitors rank for that you don't, cluster by intent, write briefs with outline and questions to answer
- **Tools:** Ahrefs/Semrush API, n8n, LLM, Notion
- **Guardrail:** a human picks the briefs worth writing

7.2 Programmatic landing pages

- **Trigger:** new row in a data sheet (city, service, integration)
- **Steps:** generate a page from a template + real data, add internal links, publish as draft in the CMS
- **Tools:** Sheets, n8n, LLM, Webflow/WordPress
- **Guardrail:** pages need unique real data; no thin pages

7.3 Ad creative variations

- **Trigger:** new campaign brief
- **Steps:** write headline/body variants per angle, generate image prompts, push to a review board
- **Tools:** n8n, LLM, image model, Airtable
- **Guardrail:** compliance check list for the ad platform's rules

7.4 Weekly marketing report

- **Trigger:** Monday morning
- **Steps:** pull spend, leads, CAC by channel; compare to last week; write three plain-English observations
- **Tools:** Google Ads, Meta Ads, GA4, n8n, LLM, Slack
- **Guardrail:** numbers come from the APIs; the model only comments

7.5 Backlink / mention monitor

- **Trigger:** daily
- **Steps:** find new mentions of the brand, flag unlinked ones, draft a polite link request
- **Tools:** mention-monitoring API, n8n, LLM
- **Guardrail:** drafts only

8. Operations and admin

8.1 Client onboarding

- **Trigger:** contract signed / invoice paid
- **Steps:** create folders, Slack channel, project board, send welcome email + intake form, book kickoff
- **Tools:** DocuSign/Stripe, n8n, Drive, Slack, ClickUp/Asana, Gmail
- **Guardrail:** idempotent, so a re-run doesn't create duplicates

8.2 Meeting notes to tasks

- **Trigger:** meeting transcript ready
- **Steps:** extract action items with owners and dates, create tasks, post a summary to the channel
- **Tools:** Fireflies/Otter, n8n, LLM, task tool
- **Guardrail:** unassigned actions get flagged, not guessed

8.3 Invoice chasing

- **Trigger:** invoice overdue by 3/7/14 days
- **Steps:** send escalating reminders, notify the owner at day 14
- **Tools:** Stripe/QuickBooks/Xero, n8n, Gmail
- **Guardrail:** pauses if a payment or dispute is recorded

8.4 Hiring screen

- **Trigger:** new application
- **Steps:** parse CV, compare to the role's must-haves, summarise fit, schedule screening for the shortlist
- **Tools:** ATS, n8n, LLM, calendar
- **Guardrail:** the model summarises; a human decides; check for bias in criteria

8.5 SOP writer

- **Trigger:** screen recording or voice note of a task
- **Steps:** transcribe, write a numbered SOP with screenshots placeholders, file it in the wiki
- **Tools:** Loom/Whisper, LLM, Notion/Confluence
- **Guardrail:** owner signs off before it's published

9. Data and reporting

9.1 KPI dashboard feed

- **Trigger:** nightly
- **Steps:** pull data from the systems, clean, write to one warehouse/sheet the dashboard reads
- **Tools:** n8n, APIs, Postgres/BigQuery/Sheets, Looker Studio
- **Guardrail:** row counts checked against yesterday; alert on big swings

9.2 Ask-your-data in Slack

- **Trigger:** question in a channel
- **Steps:** turn the question into SQL against a read-only replica, run it, answer with the number and the query
- **Tools:** Slack, n8n, LLM, read-only DB user
- **Guardrail:** read-only credentials; show the query every time

9.3 Document data extraction at volume

- **Trigger:** files land in a folder
- **Steps:** classify document type, extract fields to a schema, validate, write to a table, park failures

- **Tools:** n8n, LLM vision / document AI, Postgres
- **Guardrail:** schema validation before any write

9.4 CRM hygiene

- **Trigger:** weekly
- **Steps:** find duplicates, missing fields, stale deals; fix the safe ones, list the rest for the owner
- **Tools:** CRM API, n8n, LLM
- **Guardrail:** merges are proposed, not executed, unless exact match

9.5 Anomaly alerts

- **Trigger:** hourly or daily
- **Steps:** watch key metrics (orders, signups, error rate), alert with likely cause when outside normal range
- **Tools:** n8n, DB/analytics, LLM, Slack
- **Guardrail:** tune thresholds for two weeks before paging anyone

10. E-commerce and finance

10.1 Product description + SEO generator

- **Trigger:** new product in the store
- **Steps:** write description, bullet benefits, meta title/description, alt text, from specs and photos
- **Tools:** Shopify, n8n, LLM vision
- **Guardrail:** facts only from the spec sheet

10.2 Abandoned cart recovery with context

- **Trigger:** abandoned checkout
- **Steps:** send a reminder that answers the likely objection (shipping, sizing, price), then a second touch
- **Tools:** Shopify/Klaviyo, n8n, LLM
- **Guardrail:** frequency cap and opt-out

10.3 Inventory reorder alerts

- **Trigger:** daily
- **Steps:** compare stock to sales velocity and lead time, propose reorder quantities, draft the PO
- **Tools:** store/ERP API, n8n, Sheets
- **Guardrail:** PO stays a draft until approved

10.4 Expense categorisation + receipt matching

- **Trigger:** new bank/card transaction
- **Steps:** categorise, match to a receipt from email, flag missing receipts
- **Tools:** bank feed, Xero/QuickBooks, n8n, LLM
- **Guardrail:** accountant reviews anything uncategorised

10.5 Monthly close summary

- **Trigger:** month end

- **Steps:** pull P&L, compare to budget and last month, write a short plain-English summary with the three biggest movements
 - **Tools:** accounting API, n8n, LLM, email
 - **Guardrail:** numbers from the ledger only; the model explains, never calculates
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How to pick the right one for a client

1. Ask where they lose the most hours or money every week. Not "what would be cool to automate".
2. Find the entry above that matches the problem, not the tool they mentioned.
3. Check the data exists and you can get API access. No access, no automation.
4. Build the smallest version in a few days. Run it with the guardrail on and a human in the loop for two weeks.
5. Measure one number before and after (hours saved, response time, leads followed up, invoices collected).
6. Only then expand to the next entry.

Mistakes that kill these projects

- Starting from a template and hunting for a problem it fits
- Letting the model send, pay, or delete on day one
- No logging, so nobody can say what it did last Tuesday
- Building for the founder's idea of the process instead of what the team actually does
- Selling "AI" instead of the outcome the client already wants

Starter checklist

- ☐ One problem, one owner on the client side
- ☐ Access to the systems involved, with least-privilege credentials
- ☐ Trigger, steps, tools, guardrail written down before building
- ☐ Every run logged (input, output, action, timestamp)
- ☐ Human approval on anything that sends, pays, or deletes
- ☐ A before/after number agreed upfront