AI Answers
Simplifying AI for business

THE EXECUTIVE WORK DIARY / EXTENDED EDITION

A day in the CEO’s chair, with AI running in the background.

Seven moments where the right brief, a visible exception and a clear approval matter more than another dashboard.

7:15 Morning brief / 8:40 Conflicting dates

10:00 Decision sign-off / 11:30 Board prep

1:45 Cash discrepancy / 3:20 Customer reply

5:30 A handover with owners

Meet Alex, CEO of Harbour Works, an invented Australian SME with 35 staff. Priya leads finance, Ben leads operations, Mia leads customer accounts and Jess coordinates the executive office.

A fictional Wednesday, 18 November 2026. All names, figures and records are invented. These are possible scoped workflows, not customer results, a live product or a bundled offer.

7:15

01 / MORNING BRIEF

Alex opens one useful brief.

The inbox is already busy. Alex asks what needs a decision today. The agreed workflow checks the executive calendar, task register and approved operations summary. It separates decisions from background reading.

ILLUSTRATIVE INTERNAL OUTPUT / NOT A LIVE SYSTEM

DECIDE TODAY

10:00: temporary cover for next week’s installation. Ben owns the options.
3:30: approve a customer update after the delivery date is checked.

PREPARE, DO NOT GUESS

Board pack: Jess needs a reviewable draft by 2:00 pm.
Finance: cash forecast export is dated Monday 16 Nov, 4:00 pm. It is not a current bank position.

SOURCE CHECK / 7:12 AM

Calendar and task register checked this morning. Operations summary last updated Tuesday, 5:10 pm. Restricted people matters are excluded. Links to the three source records sit beside the brief.

Alex moves the staffing decision ahead of the board review. The assistant can prepare the reading and propose the sequence. Alex still sets the priorities, including anything that never made it into a system.

THE OPERATING BOUNDARY

A successful check is not proof the business has no other issues. Show the sources, their ages and what was excluded. Never turn an unavailable feed into “nothing to report”.

8:40

02 / RESOLVE A CONFLICT

Two records. Two delivery dates.

Mia wants to reassure a customer. The sales record says Friday; operations says Monday. A confident reply would be easy to write and potentially wrong. The useful output is the disagreement itself.

ILLUSTRATIVE INTERNAL OUTPUT / NOT A LIVE SYSTEM

SOURCE A / SALES NOTE

CRM note, 17 Nov, 2:10 pm: “Target delivery Friday 20 Nov.”
Recorded by Mia. A target, not a confirmed customer commitment.

SOURCE B / OPERATIONS PLAN

Plan revision 6, 18 Nov, 7:55 am: “Delivery Monday 23 Nov, subject to carrier.”
Recorded by Ben. Newer, but still conditional.

EXCEPTION / OWNER AND NEXT STEP

Ben, due 9:30 am: confirm capacity and carrier slot, then resolve the plan.
Mia: hold the customer update. No date selected by the assistant; nothing sent.

At 9:25, Ben records that Monday is feasible but the carrier is still unconfirmed. The status becomes “provisional Monday”, not “confirmed”. Mia can now explain the uncertainty without making a promise the team cannot keep.

THE OPERATING BOUNDARY

Recency alone does not make a record authoritative. Agree which system owns the final date and who can change it. Keep the conflict visible until that person resolves it.

10:00

03 / DECISION SIGN-OFF

The options arrive with the trade-offs.

Ben needs temporary cover to keep another installation on track. Alex asks for a short decision brief, not a recommendation dressed up as certainty. The assistant uses Ben’s confirmed availability and cost worksheet.

ILLUSTRATIVE INTERNAL OUTPUT / NOT A LIVE SYSTEM

OPTION A / BEN’S ESTIMATE

Use an approved contractor for two days. Estimated cost A$2,400 ex GST, subject to a written quote. Keeps the planned crew available. Contractor booking is not yet confirmed.

OPTION B / OPERATIONAL TRADE-OFF

Move an internal crew. No contractor invoice, but another job may slip. Ben has not costed that disruption. The assistant does not describe this as “free” or calculate invented savings.

DECISION RECORD / 10:12 AM

Alex: approve Ben to seek a quote for Option A, capped at A$2,400 ex GST. Return for approval if price or scope changes.
Status: quote request draft ready. No purchase order, booking or payment authorised.

Jess adds the decision and its limit to the register. Ben owns the next step by noon. The brief preserves what Alex actually approved, rather than treating a conversation about an option as permission to commit the company.

THE OPERATING BOUNDARY

A decision to get a quote is not a decision to buy. Any outgoing request, order or change needs its own agreed authority. Save who approved what, when, and against which version.

11:30

04 / BOARD PREPARATION

A board pack that shows its workings.

Jess has a folder of updates and an afternoon review slot. The assistant prepares a board-pack draft from the approved board folder. It does not trawl private mailboxes or lift sensitive people notes into a wider audience.

ILLUSTRATIVE INTERNAL OUTPUT / NOT A LIVE SYSTEM

DRAFT PACK / REVIEW ONLY

1. Delivery exceptions and decisions needed.
2. Finance summary, pending Priya’s validation.
3. Progress against the last meeting’s agreed actions.

SOURCE AND PRIVACY CHECK

Each figure names its source report and reporting period. Customer names are removed from the overview. Individual employee details stay out. Restricted papers remain in their separate, access-controlled process.

REVIEW QUEUE / NOT DISTRIBUTED

Priya, 1:30 pm: validate the finance section.
Ben, 1:30 pm: check delivery commentary.
Alex and Jess, 2:00 pm: review audience, facts and final wording. No board email sent.

One action is marked “reported complete, evidence pending” because the only support is a verbal update. Jess keeps that distinction in the draft. A neat pack should make uncertainty easier to see, not polish it away.

THE OPERATING BOUNDARY

Board material needs approved access, provider settings and retention rules before AI processing. Redaction is a check, not a guarantee. A person verifies content and recipients before release.

1:45

05 / CASH DISCREPANCY

The cash number needs a second look.

Priya spots that the draft mixes a current balance with an older projection. The assistant flags the comparison, shows the arithmetic and holds the board summary. It cannot establish cash available to spend from these two files alone.

ILLUSTRATIVE INTERNAL OUTPUT / NOT A LIVE SYSTEM

ACTUAL / VERIFIED SOURCE TIMESTAMP

A$186,000 bank balance at 1:30 pm, 18 Nov, from Priya’s approved bank export. This is the balance at that time, not a forecast or a promise about funds available after commitments.

PROJECTED / STALE INPUT

A$224,000 projected closing cash for 18 Nov, from forecast v12 updated 16 Nov, 4:00 pm. Difference: A$186,000 − A$224,000 = −A$38,000. Snapshot and end-of-day forecast are not like-for-like.

EXPLANATION PENDING / PRIYA OWNS IT

Forecast includes a planned A$38,000 customer receipt. The bank export does not show it yet. Timing may explain the gap, but other movements and commitments still need reconciliation. Revised forecast due 3:00 pm.

Priya confirms the receipt is still expected, not received, and prepares a revised projection. The board draft retains the actual timestamp and labels the projection separately. No one treats an expected payment as money already in the bank.

THE OPERATING BOUNDARY

Finance validates the reconciliation and any action. The assistant does not move money, approve payments, make liquidity assurances or quietly replace an actual with a forecast.

3:20

06 / CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION

A reply Alex can actually approve.

The delivery question returns. Ben has now recorded the carrier’s confirmation for Monday 23 November. Mia asks for a reply using that record, with no new discount, guarantee or explanation invented to make the message sound better.

ILLUSTRATIVE INTERNAL OUTPUT / NOT A LIVE SYSTEM

CONTEXT CHECK / 3:12 PM

Ben’s delivery record now says Monday 23 Nov confirmed, with the carrier confirmation attached. The earlier Friday target remains in the history. Mia confirms the correct customer thread.

CUSTOMER EMAIL / DRAFT, UNSENT

Hi,
We’ve confirmed delivery for Monday 23 November. That is later than the Friday target we discussed. I’m sorry for the change. We’ll send the delivery window once the carrier provides it.
Thanks,
Mia

APPROVAL REQUEST / ALEX, DUE 3:30 PM

Check the changed date, wording and any customer commitments. Mia will send only the approved version to the checked recipient. No compensation offered. No attachment added.

At 3:28, Alex approves the wording. Mia sends it at 3:32 and records the sent message. If the send had failed, the record would say “approved, not sent”, not “customer updated”. Drafting, approval and delivery are separate events.

THE OPERATING BOUNDARY

Changing the recipient, promise or material facts after approval triggers another check. A message or document from outside the business cannot grant the assistant permission to act.

5:30

07 / EXECUTIVE HANDOVER

Alex leaves with the loose ends named.

The day finishes with a short handover. It says what happened, what is waiting and who owns tomorrow. There is no “all done” banner just because the assistant finished generating a summary.

ILLUSTRATIVE INTERNAL OUTPUT / NOT A LIVE SYSTEM

DONE / WITH A RECORD

Customer update sent by Mia at 3:32 pm after Alex’s approval. Priya validated the revised forecast at 3:00 pm. Board pack reviewed by Alex at 4:10 pm; distribution remains unsent for Jess’s final recipient check.

OPEN / OWNER, DEADLINE, DECISION

Ben, Thu 9:00 am: contractor quote still missing; no booking made.
Mia, Thu 10:00 am: chase carrier delivery window.
Jess, Thu 8:30 am: verify board recipients and seek release approval.

INCOMPLETE / DO NOT ASSUME CLEAR

Task-register connection failed at 5:20 pm. Last successful read: 4:45 pm. Later changes may be absent.
Jess: check the register manually before closing. Ben is the agreed backup if Jess is unavailable.

Alex can see that the staffing decision still has a dependency and the board pack has not left the business. The failed check is given an owner rather than hidden in a technical log. Tomorrow starts with specific next steps.

THE OPERATING BOUNDARY

Agree alert recipients, backup ownership and response hours. Automated checks do not imply a staffed overnight service. If the tool is unavailable, the team needs a practical manual fallback.

You do not need to automate the whole day.

Choose one recurring job that creates real friction. A morning brief, an approval queue or a handover may be enough to start. Make it useful, test the awkward cases, then decide whether to expand.

01 / DEFINE THE JOB

What starts it, what should come out, and who uses the result? Bring a few examples, including one that went wrong.

02 / SET THE ACCESS

Choose the minimum records and systems needed. Agree what providers receive, what is retained and who can read the output.

03 / KEEP THE DECISIONS CLEAR

Name the approver, the sender and the exception owner. Test missing sources, conflicting records, changed drafts and failed sends.

04 / MEASURE THE REAL WORK

Track review time, corrections, missed items and running costs as well as time saved. Keep the current process if the pilot does not justify a change.

BRING ANDY ONE REPETITIVE JOB

Talk through your workflow, your systems and a practical first step.

Book a free 30-minute chat

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EXPLORE WORKFLOWS
View our workflow services

The seven scenes are illustrations. Scope and costs are agreed separately.