



Everything you've always wanted to know about
workflow automation*

**But we're too busy fighting excel to ask*

Brought to you by Altron Document Solutions -
Because someone should finally explain this stuff in plain English.

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**A human's guide to
making sense of**
digital transformation



[Read more](#)



Introduction **Welcome to reality**

If you're reading this whilst surrounded by printouts, wondering why your "digital transformation" still involves a surprising amount of paper, and secretly questioning whether artificial intelligence might actually be artificially unintelligent - you're in the right place.

This isn't another white paper promising to revolutionise your business with synergistic cloud-native solutions. This is a conversation about the real problems you're facing and the practical solutions that might actually help.



Chapter 1

Let's be honest about your current situation



The reality check nobody asked for

Here's what we know about your day: you've spent at least 20 minutes this week looking for a document that definitely exists but has seemingly vanished into the digital equivalent of that drawer where you keep old phone chargers. You've had three conversations about the same contract with different people who all have different versions. And somewhere, a spreadsheet is crying because it's being used for something it was never designed to do.

Sound familiar? You're not alone.

The numbers don't lie (unfortunately)

According to recent research by deloitte, organisations worldwide are hemorrhaging **£1.8 Trillion** annually due to poor agreement and document management. That's not a typo - **trillion with a t**.

£1.8 Trillion =  **x2**
That's enough to buy every coffee shop in the world.

Here's what's actually happening in businesses like yours:

52%

of people wait for identity and notary verification, introducing deal closure risk.

190,000

hours wasted by companies annually on disconnected agreement management workflows.

54%

of businesses manually copy contract data into downstream systems.

49%

experience multiple delays in obtaining the correct signatures in the proper order.

The hidden costs of "it's always been done this way"

Let's talk about what this actually costs you.



Time wastage

Your finance team spends 18% more time on agreements due to disconnected workflows. That's nearly four extra hours per week per person - enough time to actually have lunch instead of eating sad desk sandwiches.



Error multiplication

Every manual handoff is an opportunity for something to go wrong. And when it does go wrong, it goes spectacularly wrong, usually right before a deadline.



Compliance anxiety

Remember that audit last year? The one where you spent three days recreating a paper trail that should have taken three minutes to find? That's your compliance risk in action.

Why traditional solutions don't work

You've probably tried fixing this before. Maybe you:

1

Bought expensive software that required a phd in computer science to operate

2

Hired consultants who spoke exclusively in acronyms and left you with a 200-page implementation plan

3

Attempted to "digitise" by scanning everything into folders that somehow became more disorganised than the original filing cabinet



The problem isn't you. The problem is that most solutions are built by people who've never actually had to use them in the real world.

Chapter 2

The tools everyone's talking about (Translation included)

The buzzword-to-english dictionary

Before we dive in, let's translate the tech speak:



AI-powered document intelligence

Your computer can finally read invoices without having a nervous breakdown



Workflow automation

The computer does the boring stuff so you can do the interesting stuff



Cloud-native solutions

It works on any device, anywhere, without needing your IT department to perform ritual sacrifices



Intelligent document processing

Documents get sorted automatically, like having a really efficient personal assistant who never calls in sick

What actually works (and what doesn't)

Let's break down the tools that might actually help:



Document capture and AI recognition



What it does

Automatically reads and understands documents - invoices, contracts, purchase orders, that mysterious form from HR that everyone fills out differently.



What it doesn't do

Read minds or fix documents that were created by people who apparently hate readable fonts.



Reality check

Modern AI can achieve 95%+ accuracy on standard documents. The remaining 5% is usually because someone decided Comic Sans was an appropriate font for legal documents.



Workflow automation



What it does

Routes documents to the right people automatically, sends reminders, creates audit trails that actually make sense.



What it doesn't do

Force people to actually read their emails (we're still working on that one).



Real example

Instead of playing email tag for approval on a purchase order, the system automatically routes it to the right approver based on amount and category, sends gentle reminders, and tracks everything.



Digital signatures and e-forms



What it does

Gets signatures without printing, scanning, emailing, printing again, and questioning your life choices.



What it doesn't do

Make people sign things faster (some people will still take three weeks to sign a document that takes 30 seconds to read).



Integration capabilities

This is where the magic happens. Good workflow tools play nicely with your existing systems:

1

Your accounting software actually talks to your document management system

2

Data flows smoothly between applications without manual re-entry

3

Reports generate automatically without someone spending half their Friday wrestling with spreadsheets



The square 9 and papertrail advantage

Here's where we stop being theoretical and start being practical. Our partnership with square 9 brings you inquireai - generative AI that can handle any document type without requiring expensive template creation.

What this means in real terms:



Set up in weeks, not months



No expensive customisation for each document type



Works with handwritten forms (yes, even dave's handwriting from procurement)



Integrates with your existing systems without causing it to have an existential crisis

Our papertrail contract management solution handles *the entire lifecycle:*

Template creation
that doesn't require a law degree

Approval workflows
that actually reflect how your business works

Digital signatures
that are legally binding and audit-ready

Renewal alerts
that prevent "Oh no, did that contract expire?" moments



Chapter 3

What could actually go right (real stories from real people)

Success stories that aren't stock photo fantasies

Let's talk about what happens when workflow automation actually works:



The Finance team that got their Fridays back

The situation

A major South African retailer was processing 2,000+ invoices weekly. Their Finance team was working weekends just to keep up, and invoice approval was taking 12-15 days.

The solution

Automated invoice processing with InquireAI, integrated with their existing ERP system.



The result

- Invoice processing time dropped to **2-3 days**
- **70% reduction** in manual data entry
- Finance team now uses Fridays for actual **financial analysis** instead of data entry
- **1500% ROI** (yes, you read that correctly)



The food retailer that saved R2.1 Million

The challenge

Manual procurement processes were creating errors, delays, and a lot of very frustrated suppliers.

The fix

Intelligent document processing for purchase orders and supplier communications.



The outcome

- **R2.1 Million** in annual savings
- **350% ROI** within the first year
- Error rates dropped by **85%**
- **Supplier satisfaction** actually improved (they sent a thank-you card)



The University that made enrolment actually enjoyable

The problem

Student enrolment was taking 14 days and involved more paperwork than a mortgage application.

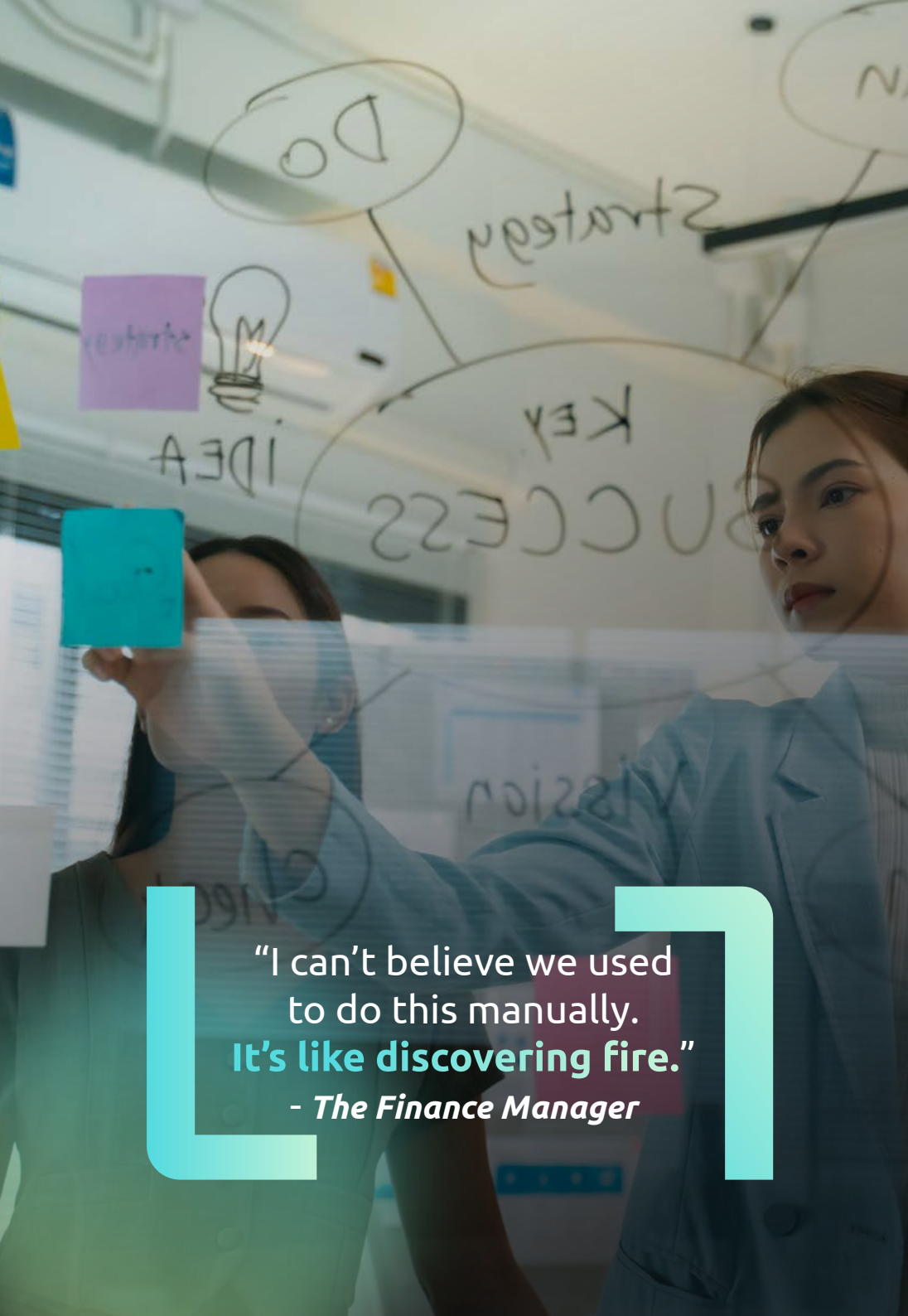
The solution

Digital workflow automation for the entire student onboarding process.



The magic

Enrollment time dropped to **1 day**. Students now actually **smile** during the process.



"I can't believe we used to do this manually.
It's like discovering fire."
- *The Finance Manager*



The small wins that make big differences

Not every success story is about massive transformations. Sometimes it's about:



The HR Manager

who no longer spends Monday mornings hunting for signed employment contracts



The Operations Team

that can finally find the latest version of safety procedures



The Legal Department

that doesn't panic when audit season arrives

What about when things go wrong?

Let's be honest - not every implementation is smooth.
Here's what we've learned:



The biggest failures happen when:

- ✗ You try to **automate broken processes** (automation doesn't fix bad processes, it just makes them fail faster)
- ✗ You **don't involve the people** who actually use the system
- ✗ You assume technology alone will **solve cultural problems**



The biggest successes happen when:

- ✓ You start with one process and **prove value** before expanding
- ✓ You get **buy-in from actual users**, not just management
- ✓ You choose a partner who **understands your industry** and your reality



Chapter 4

The Partner You Didn't Know You Needed



Why local matters

Here's something the big international consulting firms won't tell you: local knowledge matters. **A lot.**

South African businesses face unique challenges:



Regulatory requirements that don't exist anywhere else



Economic pressures that require practical, cost-effective solutions



Infrastructure realities that affect technology choices



Cultural considerations in change management



The Altron Document Solutions difference

We're not going to claim we're revolutionary.
We are going to claim we're practical.

What makes us different:

Real experience

50%+ of JSE Top 100 companies trust us with their document and workflow challenges. That's not because we have the prettiest brochures.

Actual support

When something goes wrong (and occasionally it will), **you get help from people who understand your business**, not a call centre in another time zone.

Hybrid expertise

We understand both the legacy document world and modern digital transformation. Most providers understand one or the other, not both.

Proven integration

We've **connected workflow solutions** to SAP, Sage, Pastel, and dozens of other systems that South African businesses actually use.





Our partner ecosystem

We work with the best:



Square 9

For AI-powered document intelligence that actually works/



PaperTrail

For contract management that reflects how business really happens DocuSign: For digital signatures that are legally bulletproof.

But here's the key - we don't just resell their products. We implement solutions that make sense for your business.

The ROI reality check

Let's talk about return on investment, because that's what you're really wondering about.

Typical ROI timeframes:

Months 1-3

Implementation and training (investment phase)

Months 4-6

Efficiency gains start showing (break-even)

Months 7-12

Real cost savings and productivity improvements (profit phase)

Year 2+

Compound benefits and scalability (expansion phase)

Where the savings actually come from:



Reduced manual labour

(your people do higher-value work)



Fewer errors

(mistakes are expensive)



Faster processing

(time is money, especially in finance)



Better compliance

(avoiding penalties and audit costs)



Improved customer experience

(happy customers buy more)



Chapter 5

Your Next Steps (Without the Corporate Fluff)

The decision framework that actually works

Before you do anything else, answer these questions honestly:

1

What's currently breaking?

Don't fix what isn't broken, but be honest about what's causing real problems.

2

Who's feeling the pain?

The people doing the work daily are your best source of truth.

3

What's the cost of doing nothing?

Sometimes the status quo is more expensive than change.

4

Do you have leadership support?

Workflow transformation needs champions, not just budget.

The pilot project approach

Don't try to transform everything at once. Pick one process that's:



Clearly **broken** or inefficient



Well-defined with measurable outcomes



Used by **people** who are open to change



Not **mission-critical** (so if something goes wrong, the world doesn't end)



Good pilot candidates:

- Invoice processing
- Contract approvals
- Employee onboarding
- Purchase order management



Bad pilot candidates:

- Payroll (people get grumpy when their pay is wrong)
- Anything involving customer-facing processes until you're confident
- Complex regulatory processes until you've proven the technology



Everything you've always wanted to know about workflow automation

What to expect from us



Week 1-2

Discovery phase

We'll actually talk to the people who do the work, not just the people who manage the people who do the work.



Week 3-4

Proof of concept

We'll build something small that demonstrates value. You'll see real results with real documents.



Month 2-3

Implementation

Gradual rollout with training and support. No "big bang" implementations that leave everyone confused.



Month 4+

Optimisation

Ongoing refinement based on actual usage and feedback.

The honest conversation about investment

Good workflow automation isn't cheap, but bad manual processes are expensive. Here's how to think about it:



Small business (10-50 employees)

Start with document capture and basic workflows.

Budget **R50,000 - R200,000** for meaningful change.



Medium business (50-200 employees)

Integrated workflow automation with multiple departments. Budget **R200,000 - R500,000** for comprehensive transformation.



Large enterprise (200+ employees)

Full-scale digital transformation with advanced Aland integration. Budget **R500,000+** but expect proportional returns.

These are rough ranges - your actual investment depends on what you're trying to achieve and what you already have in place.



Red flags to watch for

Not all workflow automation providers are created equal. Be wary of:



Promises of **"complete automation"** (some human oversight is always needed)



Solutions that require **replacing all your existing systems**



Providers who won't show you **working examples**



Implementation timelines that seem **too good to be true**



Anyone who uses the phrase **"paradigm shift"** unironically



Green flags to look for

Good signs include:



References from businesses similar to yours



Willingness to start with a small pilot project



Clear understanding of your existing systems



Realistic timelines and expectations



Ongoing support and training offerings





Conclusion

The future is more human, not less

Here's the thing about workflow automation - it's not about replacing people. It's about freeing people to do the work that actually requires human intelligence, creativity, and judgment.

When your finance team isn't spending half their time on data entry, they can focus on analysis. When your operations team isn't chasing paperwork, they can improve processes. When your legal team isn't hunting for contract versions, they can actually practise law.

The future of work isn't robots taking over.

It's technology handling the tedious stuff so humans can handle the interesting stuff.

Your next move

Ready to stop fighting excel and start working smarter?
Here's what happens next:

- 1. Book a conversation**
(30 minutes, no obligation, no sales pitch)
- 2. We'll assess your current situation**
(honestly - we'll tell you if automation isn't the answer)
- 3. If there's a fit, we'll propose a pilot project**
(small, measurable, practical)
- 4. You decide**
(no pressure, no lengthy sales cycles)

Because here's what we've learned after helping hundreds of South African businesses: the best workflow solutions are the ones that make work work the way it should - efficiently, reliably, and without driving people to despair.



Everything you've always wanted to know about workflow automation

About Altron Document Solutions

We help South African businesses make work work better. Sometimes that involves cutting-edge AI. Sometimes it involves having an honest conversation about whether you actually need cutting-edge AI.

We partner with Square 9, PaperTrail, DocuSign, and other leading providers to deliver solutions that work in the real world, with real businesses, facing real challenges.

Contact us

✉ adsmarketing@altron.com

🌐 documentsolutions.altron.com

This e-book is brought to you by people who believe technology should serve humans, not the other way around.



We hope you found it useful, shareable, and perhaps even mildly entertaining.

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