

The Automation Inventory

This is the idea menu. It walks the firm function by function and shows what a machine can carry, and which track each task lands on.

TRACK A is pure automation. Structured data goes in, structured data comes out. No AI step reads content and makes a judgment call. A submitted intake form that builds the matter record is Track A.

TRACK B is automation with an AI step. The moment an AI system reads content and produces an output a person relies on, the task is Track B. One step is enough.

The test for every task: does an AI step read content and generate an output you rely on? No means Track A. Yes means Track B. Then two duty questions price a Track B step: does client information go into the AI, and do you rely on the output in a client's representation? Yes to the first brings the confidentiality duties; yes to the second brings competence, supervision, candor, and fees; yes to both is the full five-duty discipline. An internal-operations AI step that answers no to both - a receipt coder, an IT-ticket router - carries the vendor diligence and data-protection duties every build carries, and nothing more. Many tasks start on Track A and can be lifted to Track B by adding an AI step, shown here as a baseline line plus an "Enhanced with AI" line under the same task. A few tasks land on either track depending on how they are built; those are marked in the row. The track tag is a starting classification to orient you, not a legal ruling.

1. Client intake and onboarding

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Intake form to matter record	A submitted intake form creates the matter record, the client contact, and the folder structure with no retyping.	✓	

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step reads the free-text "describe your issue" field, drafts a short matter summary, and suggests the practice area. A person confirms it.		✓
Signed engagement letter to matter fields	When the letter is signed through an e-signature tool, the signed field values populate the matter fields with no retyping.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step reads a scanned or PDF engagement letter and pulls the parties, scope, and fee terms into the matter fields. A person confirms it.		✓
New-client welcome sequence	A signed engagement triggers the welcome email, the client portal invite, and the first set of forms.	✓	
Identity and document collection	A secure upload link gathers ID and know-your-client documents from the client and files them to the right record.	✓	
Engagement letter generation	The system merges client and matter fields into the firm's engagement letter template and sends it out for signature.	✓	
Inbound inquiry routing	A web inquiry is sent to the right practice group. Track A if the form uses fixed category fields that map to a group. Track B if an AI step reads the free-text inquiry and decides the group.	✓	✓
Intake questionnaire load	A practice-specific questionnaire is sent, and the returned answers load into the matter as structured fields.	✓	

2. Matter management

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Matter number and naming	A new matter draws the next number from a sequence and applies the firm's naming convention across every system.	✓	
Folder and permission build	Opening a matter builds the standard folder tree and sets access for the assigned team only.	✓	
Status sync across systems	A status change on the matter updates the calendar, billing, and document systems so they stay in step.	✓	
Matter status roll-up	A dashboard pulls open tasks, upcoming deadlines, and recent filings for each matter into one view.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step writes a plain-language status narrative for the partner from that activity. A person confirms it.		✓
Close-out checklist	When a matter is marked closed, the close-out checklist runs: final bill, retention date, and access changes.	✓	
Email-to-matter filing	Incoming email is filed to the right matter. Track A if the email carries a matter ID or tag that maps to the file. Track B if an AI step reads an untagged email and assigns the matter.	✓	✓

3. Conflicts screening

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Conflicts name search	A new party name is run against the conflicts database and the system returns every match.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step reads the match list and separates likely real conflicts from name coincidences with a short explanation. A person confirms before any clearance.		✓
Conflicts index update	Opening a matter adds the client, the adverse parties, and related entities to the conflicts index.	✓	
Lateral hire screen	A new hire's prior client and matter list is checked against the firm's active matters for overlaps.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step reads the candidate's résumé or deal sheet and pulls out the party names to screen. A person confirms it.		✓
Ethical wall setup	When a conflict is flagged, the system restricts file access and records who is walled off from the matter.	✓	

4. Calendaring, deadlines, and docketing

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Deadline calculation	The system calculates filing and response deadlines from a trigger date using stored court rules.	✓	
Docket-to-calendar sync	A new docket entry pushes the date and a set of reminders to the responsible attorneys' calendars.	✓	
Tiered deadline reminders	Reminders go out on a set schedule before each deadline and escalate if the task is not marked done.	✓	
Court order date extraction	A structured e-filing notice with coded dates creates the docket entries on its own.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step reads a narrative scheduling order and pulls out each deadline. A person confirms before docketing.		✓
Court feed monitoring	A watch on the court's electronic feed creates a docket entry whenever a new filing posts in a matter.	✓	

5. Document management and assembly

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Template assembly	A standard document is built from a template and the matter's merge fields, ready for review.	✓	

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Auto-filing by rule	Saved documents are routed to the right matter folder by naming convention and document type.	✓	
Version control and lock	The system tracks versions and locks the final so a signed copy can't be overwritten.	✓	
Bates numbering and stamping	A production set is Bates-numbered and stamped with the agreed confidentiality legend.	✓	
PDF conversion and metadata scrub	Documents are converted to PDF and stripped of hidden metadata before they leave the firm.	✓	
First-draft from a description	An AI step drafts a first version of a routine document from a plain-language description of what is needed. A person reviews before use.		✓

6. Legal research

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Saved research alerts	A saved search runs on schedule and delivers new cases and filings in the matter's area.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step summarizes each new result and flags the ones worth a closer look. A person confirms relevance.		✓

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Authority table from a brief	An AI step reads a brief and pulls every cited case and statute into a table for checking. A person confirms the list.		✓
Opinion summary	An AI step reads a long opinion and writes a short headnote a lawyer relies on. A person confirms before it guides the matter.		✓
Citing-references pull	The system pulls every firm document that cites a given case from the document store.	✓	

7. Contract and document review

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Contract intake and routing	An incoming contract is logged and routed to the right reviewer by type and value.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step reads the contract and flags clauses that fall outside the firm's standard positions. A person confirms each flag.		✓
Redline against playbook	An AI step compares a counterparty's redline to the firm's playbook and lists the gaps. A person confirms before responding.		✓
Key-term extraction	An AI step reads a contract and pulls parties, term, renewal, governing law, and key dates into a summary. A person confirms.		✓

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Document production review	A document set is sorted by date and custodian and de-duplicated for review.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step makes a first-pass call on responsiveness and possible privilege for each document. A person reviews every call.		✓

8. Billing, time, and collections

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Draft invoice generation	Draft invoices are built from posted time and cost entries on the billing cycle.	✓	
Billing-guideline checks	Each draft is checked against the client's rate table and billing rules, and violations are flagged before send.	✓	
Time capture	Activity from the calendar, email, and document systems is captured into draft time entries for each timekeeper.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step drafts a compliant time narrative from that activity. A person confirms before it posts.		✓
Collections reminders	Reminders go out by invoice age and escalate to a call list when an account passes a set point.	✓	
Payment reconciliation	Incoming payments are matched to open invoices and the ledgers are updated.	✓	

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Pre-bill narrative review	Pre-bills route to the billing attorney with guideline flags already marked.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step reviews each time narrative for guideline fit and rewrites weak entries for approval. A person confirms.		✓

9. Client communication and status updates

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Scheduled status updates	A status email goes out on a set schedule pulling the matter's latest milestones.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step writes the update in plain language from the matter activity. A person confirms before send.		✓
Inbound acknowledgment	Client emails get an immediate, logged acknowledgment so nothing sits unseen.	✓	
Email triage	Inbound client email is sorted by topic and urgency. Track A if the routing uses sender and subject rules. Track B if an AI step reads the message and decides priority.	✓	✓
Thread summary	An AI step reads a long client email thread and gives the attorney a short summary. A person confirms it.		✓
Appointment reminders	Reminders and intake links go out before each client meeting and update when the time changes.	✓	

10. Marketing, business development, and lead intake

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Lead capture and assignment	Web form and event leads load into the CRM and are assigned to the right person by rule.	✓	
Nurture sequences	A new lead enters a scheduled email sequence based on the service of interest.	✓	
Lead qualification	New leads are sorted by source, service, and location into ranked lists.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step reads the inquiry text and scores fit and intent. A person confirms before outreach.		✓
Contact de-dupe and enrichment	New contacts are matched against existing records and merged, with public firm data added.	✓	
Content scheduling	Approved posts and newsletters are scheduled and published across the firm's channels.	✓	
First-draft marketing content	An AI step drafts a first version of a post or newsletter from a set of bullet points. A person edits before publish.		✓
Experience and pitch database	Closed matters feed an experience database with client, practice area, and outcome fields.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step drafts a matter description or attorney bio from that record. A person confirms.		✓

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
RFP question mapping	An AI step reads an RFP and matches each question to the firm's prior answers. A person confirms before submission.		✓

11. Knowledge management and firm data

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Document tagging and indexing	Filed documents are indexed and tagged by matter, type, and date from their metadata.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step reads each document and adds topic tags and a short summary. A person confirms.		✓
Precedent and clause library	Final documents of set types are collected into a precedent library by practice area.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step pulls reusable clauses out of those documents and labels them. A person confirms.		✓
Template and know-how search	A search index answers "where is the template for X" from the firm's documents.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step answers a plain-language question across firm documents with a cited draft answer. A person confirms.		✓
Matter lessons capture	A closed matter prompts a short structured record of what worked and what to reuse, saved to the knowledge base.	✓	

12. Internal operations (HR, payroll, expense, vendor, IT)

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
New-hire provisioning	A start date triggers account creation, email setup, and the equipment and access checklist.	✓	
Offboarding	A termination date deprovisions accounts and access and routes the file for handoff.	✓	
Payroll run	Payroll is built from approved timekeeping and time-off on the pay schedule.	✓	
Expense approvals	Expense reports route through the approval rules and post to the right account.	✓	
Receipt coding	Submitted receipts are matched to expense reports and logged.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step reads a receipt image and codes the expense to the right category. A person confirms.		✓
Vendor invoice processing	A vendor invoice is matched to its purchase order and routed for approval.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step reads the invoice PDF and pulls the line items for matching. A person confirms.		✓
IT ticket routing	An IT request is routed to the right queue. Track A if the ticket form uses fixed category fields. Track B if an AI step reads a free-text request and classifies it.	✓	✓

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Time-off requests	Time-off requests route for approval and update the balance and the team calendar.	✓	

13. Court filing and litigation support

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Filing package assembly	A filing is assembled with its required components and checked against the court's formatting rules before submission.	✓	
Filed-stamp capture	The court's filed-stamp confirmation is captured and filed to the matter on its own.	✓	
Exhibit management	Exhibits are numbered, organized, and an exhibit list is generated for the set.	✓	
Case chronology	Dated documents are arranged into a timeline by their metadata.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step reads the documents and builds a fact chronology with sources. A person confirms.		✓
Deposition summary	An AI step reads a deposition transcript and summarizes the testimony by topic. A person confirms.		✓
Privilege log	A privilege log is built from document metadata: author, recipients, date, and type.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step drafts the privilege description for each entry. A person		✓

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
	confirms before production.		

14. Trust accounting and compliance

READ THIS BEFORE AUTOMATING ANYTHING IN THIS SECTION. Trust accounting is where automation errors end careers, and no AI is involved. Rule 1.15 violations are treated as strict-liability offenses in most states: a misdirected disbursement or a missed reconciliation is a bar problem whether a person or a workflow made it, and the automation that moves money faster also moves mistakes faster. So every build in this section carries two non-negotiable guardrails. A human approves before funds move - the automation prepares, a person releases. And the three-way reconciliation runs on its own schedule as a check on the other automations, never as a step inside them, so the thing that catches the error is never the thing that made it. Track A means no AI duties. In this section it has never meant low stakes.

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Retainer posting	A retainer deposit is recorded to the correct client trust ledger with the matter reference.	✓	
Three-way reconciliation	The trust bank balance, the book balance, and the client ledgers are reconciled on schedule and breaks are flagged.	✓	
Trust balance alerts	An alert fires when a client trust balance crosses a set point or would go negative.	✓	
Trust draw safeguards	The system blocks an operating expense from drawing on trust funds and logs the attempt.	✓	
Compliance reporting	The reports required for bar trust rules are generated on schedule from the ledgers.	✓	

Task	What you can automate	Track A	Track B
Settlement disbursement mapping	A disbursement sheet's listed amounts post to the matter ledger as structured entries.	✓	
	Enhanced with AI: an AI step reads a narrative settlement statement and maps each disbursement to a ledger line. A person confirms before funds move.		✓
License and CLE tracking	Attorney license renewals and continuing education credits are tracked and reminders go out before each deadline.	✓	

THE SAFEST 10. The lowest-risk, fastest Track A places to start: Matter open (folders, tasks, and the tracking sheet), Intake to matter, Deadline calendaring from the rules, Conflicts index update, New-client welcome sequence, Collections reminders, Auto-filing by rule, Draft invoice generation, Appointment reminders, and New-hire provisioning. Each is structured data in, structured data out, with no AI step reading content.

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