

# The Most Expensive Spreadsheet in Australia

Seven manual workflows quietly costing businesses time - and a practical method for deciding which one to delete first.

# The expensive spreadsheet is rarely just a spreadsheet.

It is the visible part of a workflow: someone exports data, fixes the columns, asks a colleague for a missing number, pastes it somewhere else, checks it, and does it again next week. Buying another tool before mapping that sequence usually adds one more place to copy from.

**Use your own numbers. Do not borrow a benchmark.**

**annual labour cost = people × minutes per run ÷ 60 × runs per year  
× loaded hourly rate**

**annual exposure = annual labour cost + rework + delay + missed-  
opportunity cost**

## 01

### DATA RE-ENTRY

## The same information typed into two systems

Customer, product, job or finance data leaves one system and is manually re-entered into another. The work feels small because each transaction is small; the volume is what makes it expensive.

#### Count

records per week

#### Time

minutes per record

#### Risk

correction rate

**Seen in client work:** synchronising product and customer information across Webflow, Airtable and Salesforce for Merchgirls.

## 02

### RECURRING REPORTING

## A good employee rebuilds the same report

Exports arrive from several tools. Someone cleans them, applies the same logic, formats the same tabs and sends the result to the same people.

#### Count

reports per month

#### Time

hours from export to send

#### Delay

decisions waiting

**Seen in client work:** subscription and skip-cycle reporting pulled directly from Recharge for Knobby.

## 03

### QUOTING

## Every quote starts from a blank page

Requirements are gathered by email, pricing is found in several places, exceptions live in one person's head, and the finished quote is manually assembled.

#### Count

quotes per month

#### Time

touch time per quote

#### Leak

slow-response losses

**Deletion pattern:** structured intake, governed pricing logic, approval thresholds and document generation - without automating judgement that belongs with a person.

## 04

### FOLLOW-UP

## The next action depends on someone remembering

Leads, approvals, documents or renewals stall because the follow-up is buried in an inbox or owned by nobody after a handoff.

#### Count

open items

#### Delay

median days idle

#### Value

revenue at risk

**Deletion pattern:** define the state change that should trigger the next action, then make exceptions visible instead of automating silence.

## 05

### ORDER OR JOB PROCESSING

## A sale creates an internal relay race

Once an order or job is confirmed, staff copy details into delivery tools, create folders, notify people, request assets and update the customer manually.

#### Count

jobs per month

#### Handoffs

people and systems

#### Failure

missed setup steps

**Deletion pattern:** one confirmed event creates the delivery record, tasks, folders and notifications, with a human checkpoint for exceptions.

## Three systems disagree about the same thing

Products, memberships, contacts or inventory are maintained in more than one platform. Staff become the integration layer and uncertainty becomes normal.

**Count**

shared fields

**Drift**

conflicts per month

**Owner**

source of truth

**Seen in client work:** a 500-plus product catalogue operating across Webflow, Airtable and Salesforce for Merchgirls.

## Two sources must agree before anyone trusts either

Subscription, payment, membership or finance data is compared manually because neither system carries the complete operational truth.

**Count**

lines reconciled

**Time**

hours per cycle

**Impact**

errors found late

**Seen in client work:** Recharge subscription reporting for Knobby and member access administration for the Mint Directors Association.

RANK BEFORE YOU BUILD

# Score each workflow from 1 to 5.

| FACTOR            | 1                  | 5                                   |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Frequency         | Occasional         | Daily or continuous                 |
| Labour            | Minutes            | Several people or hours             |
| Rule stability    | Every case differs | Same rules repeat                   |
| Error consequence | Easy correction    | Customer, cash or compliance impact |
| Access readiness  | Closed systems     | Reliable API/export access          |

Start with high frequency, high labour, stable rules and available data. Keep judgement-heavy, rare or badly defined work out of the first automation.

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