
FROM THE MEHRUTHERM BLOG · AI AUTOMATION

You Like the Idea of AI. You Just Don't Trust It Yet.

The worry isn't whether AI can do the work. It's whether you can trust it with your business. Here are the honest questions to ask before you let it near anything that matters.

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You have seen what the new tools can do. You can imagine handing off the paperwork you redo every week, or finally [answering the questions customers ask after hours](#). The idea is appealing. The hesitation is real too.

Because the questions underneath are the right ones. Where does my information go? What happens when it gets something wrong and nobody catches it? Am I handing a stranger the keys to work I am responsible for? For a small business or a small town, those are not paranoid questions. They are the questions of someone who has to answer for the result.

So this is not a sales pitch for automation. It is the honest version: what actually deserves caution, what is overblown, and how to bring these tools into your work without ending up somewhere you did not mean to be.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **The real risks are worth respecting**, but they are manageable. The way you set the work up matters more than the tool you pick.
- **Your information should stay yours**. Ask plainly whether your data is used to train anything, and get the answer in writing.
- **These tools can be confidently wrong**. For anything touching a customer, a dollar, or a public record, a person reviews it before it goes out.
- **You should own the result and the setup**, so nothing depends on one vendor or one login.
- **Start with one low-stakes task**. Prove it in a corner where a mistake costs minutes, not trust.

Where does your information actually go?

This is the question that stops most people, and rightly so. If a tool reads your customer list, your invoices, or your town's records, you have every reason to ask where that information travels and what happens to it after.

The honest answer depends entirely on how the thing is built. Some setups keep your information walled off and use it only to do the job you asked for. Others feed what you type into a larger pool that trains future products, which is a very different thing to agree to without knowing. The words to ask for are simple: is my data used to train your models, who else can see it, and how long is it kept? A straight answer to those three, in writing, tells you most of what you need. If you cannot get one, that is your answer.

For a town holding public records, or a clinic holding anything about a patient, this is not optional diligence. It is the whole job. Some information carries legal rules about where it can live and who can touch it, and those rules do not bend because a tool is convenient.

It can be confidently wrong

The tools that draft text and pull answers are genuinely good, and they are also capable of stating something false with total confidence. They do not know when they are wrong, which means they cannot warn you. Left unattended on the wrong task, that is how a made-up figure ends up in a quote, or a wrong date ends up in a public notice.

This sounds alarming until you notice it describes a new employee too. You would not let someone on their first day send quotes or file records without a look from someone who knows better. AI gets the same arrangement, for the same reason. The point of these tools is to remove the busywork, not the judgment, so a person reviews anything that reaches a customer, moves money, or becomes part of the record. Done that way, the tool does the tedious bulk of the work and a human still owns the outcome. We wrote more about that balance in [practical ways to use automation without the hype](#).

AI dropped in carelessly

- × Pointed at your most important, highest-stakes work first
- × Left to send things to customers with nobody checking
- × Fed your private information with no idea where it goes
- × Owned by a vendor, on a login you cannot see into
- × Trusted because it sounds sure of itself

AI brought in carefully

- ✓ Started on one low-stakes, repetitive task
- ✓ A person reviews anything that reaches a customer or a record
- ✓ Your information walled off, with the terms in writing
- ✓ Set up so you own the result and can walk away
- ✓ Trusted only where it has proven itself

Who is accountable when it matters?

A tool cannot be responsible for anything. You can, and so can whoever set it up for you. That is the line that should never blur.

Keeping a person in the loop is partly about catching mistakes, but it is also about accountability. When a quote goes out, someone stands behind the number. When a notice is posted, someone signs off that it is right. Automation that quietly removes the person who was accountable has not saved you work; it has moved the risk somewhere you can no longer see it. The good version keeps a human at every point where being wrong would actually cost you, and takes the load off everywhere else.

You should own it, not rent your own work

There is a quieter risk that has nothing to do with the technology being wrong. It is being locked in.

If an outside setup ends up holding your customer information, your drafts, and the way your work gets done, and you cannot get any of it back or move it elsewhere, then you do not really own your own operation anymore. You are renting access to it. The same principle that applies to your website and your accounts applies here: the setup, the information, and the keys should belong to you, with more than one way in and no single person or vendor you cannot function without. It is the same lesson as [when the one person who knew the system leaves](#), just wearing new clothes.

Start where a mistake is cheap

The safest way to find out whether any of this is worth it is not a leap of faith. It is a small, boring first step.

Pick one task you repeat often, one where a slip costs a few minutes rather than a customer's trust: sorting incoming messages, drafting a first pass at a routine document, pulling the same handful of numbers into one place. Run it there, with a person reviewing the output, until you either trust it or you do not. If it earns its place, you widen the circle. If it does not, you have lost almost nothing. Good judgment about AI comes from watching it work on something small, not from a brochure.

None of this requires you to become a technology expert, and it does not require blind faith either. It requires asking a handful of plain questions, keeping a person where the stakes are real, and starting somewhere safe. That is the same standard you would hold any new tool to. AI is not exempt from it, and the businesses and towns that do well with these tools are simply the ones who never treated it as exempt.

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Interested in the idea but not ready to take anyone's word for it? Get in touch and we'll talk it through plainly: what your information would and wouldn't touch, where a person stays in control, and one small place it might be worth trying, with no pressure to go further than that.

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