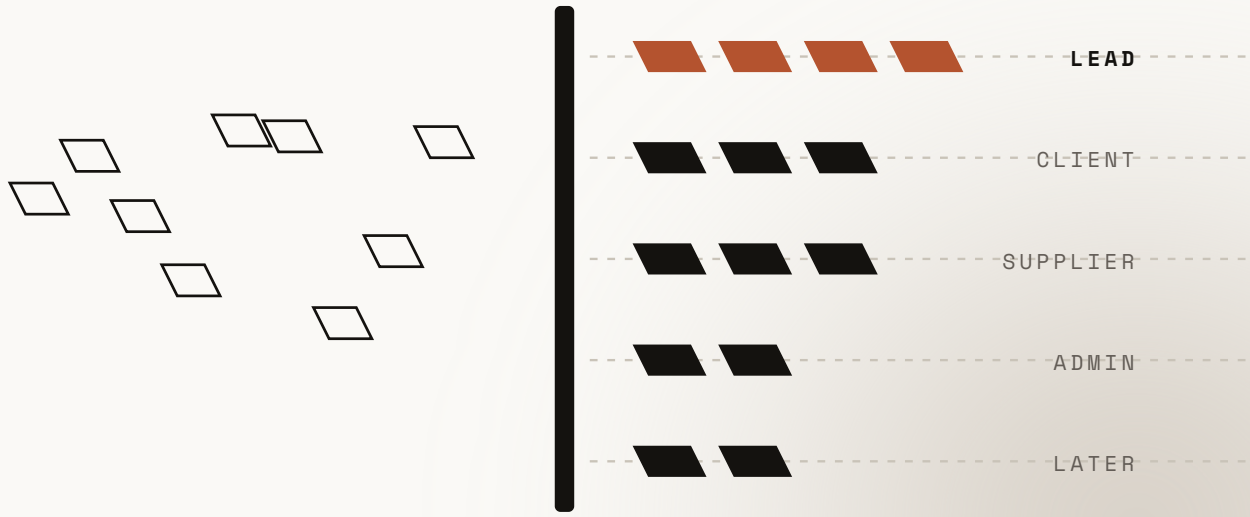


Your First AI Agent in a Weekend: an inbox assistant that sorts, drafts and follows up

Build an assistant that sorts every email, logs new leads, drafts replies in your voice and flags leads going quiet. It never sends anything without you.

INBOX TRIAGE + LEAD FOLLOW-UP EDITION · FREE SAMPLE

NEUROVA AI
SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

About this guide

GUIDE	Your First AI Agent in a Weekend: an inbox assistant that sorts, drafts and follows up
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This free sample contains chapter 01. The full guide has all 6 chapters, plus the prompt library and the checklist.

The promise. In one weekend, about five hours, you'll build three small automations in Zapier: a **sorter** that labels every incoming email, a **lead catcher** that logs inquiries and drafts your reply, and a **follow-up assistant** that tells you each morning which leads are going quiet. Everything it writes waits for you in your drafts folder.

What you need. A Gmail or Outlook mailbox, a Google account for the lead sheet, and a **paid Zapier plan**. The free plan only runs two-step automations without paths, and this build needs more. Most plans start with a free trial long enough to build and test everything here.

Licence. This is a free sample. You are welcome to share it as it is.

Examples. The worked-example business in this guide is fictional. The build is real: every step was carried out on the tools named, on the date above. Case studies from real companies are cited with their source.

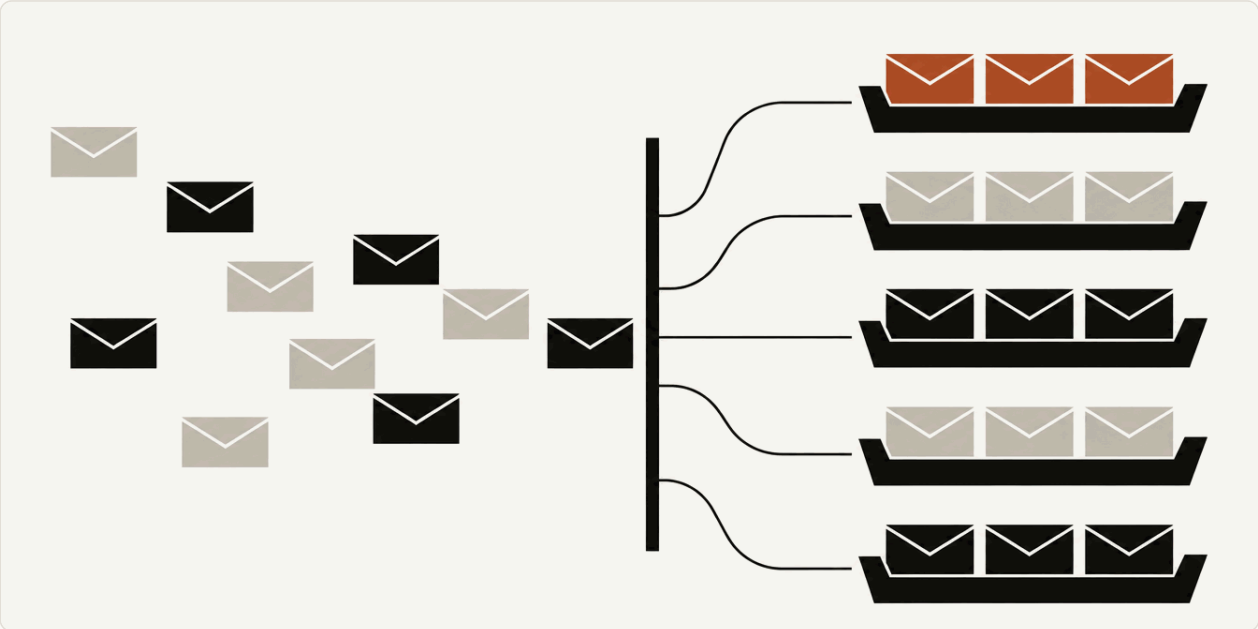
Tools change. AI products update often. If a screen looks different from the one described, the method still applies; owners get free updated versions in their library.

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CHAPTER 01

What an inbox assistant is, and isn’t

An AI "agent" sounds like science fiction. The one you'll build is simpler and more useful. It reads each email, decides what kind it is, and does the one thing you've told it to do for that kind. You stay in charge of everything that leaves your outbox.



YOU'LL HAVE	A clear design for your assistant, and a decision on whether to build or buy
TIME	20 minutes

Microsoft's 2025 study of the "infinite workday" found that the average Microsoft 365 user receives **117 emails a day** (its data leaves out the EU). Somewhere in that pile are the few that matter: a new client asking about work, a supplier delay, a customer with a problem.

The cost of missing them is real. In a well-known 2011 Harvard Business Review article, the same researchers report two findings. Across 1.25 million sales leads at 42 US companies, firms that tried to reach a lead within an hour were nearly **seven times more likely** to qualify it than firms that waited even an hour longer. And when they sent test inquiries to 2,241 US companies, **23% never replied at all**. The tools have changed since then. People haven't: a slow answer still reads as "not interested".

Read, decide, act

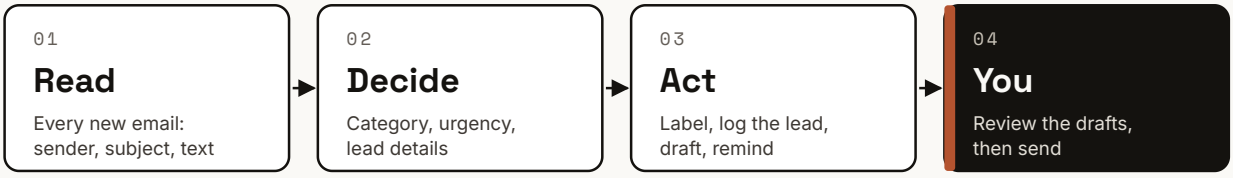


Fig 1.1 Every email goes through the same three steps. Only you send.

Your assistant does four jobs, built as three small automations:

1. **Sort**: label every email (Lead, Client, Supplier, Admin, Later) and flag what's urgent.
2. **Capture**: copy every new inquiry into your lead list, with the details filled in.
3. **Draft**: write a reply to each new lead in your voice and leave it in your drafts.
4. **Chase**: every morning, draft a polite follow-up for leads that went quiet, and send you a short summary.

> THE GOLDEN RULE: DRAFTS, NEVER SENDS
>
> Your assistant never emails anyone but you. AI drafts are good, but now and then one gets a name or a date wrong, and a ten-minute morning review catches it. Every build in this guide uses *Create Draft*, never *Send*.

Build it, or buy it?

You may already pay for AI in your mailbox. What each option does well, at the time of writing:

OPTION	GOOD AT	WHERE IT FALLS SHORT FOR THIS JOB
Gemini in Gmail	Summaries and quick drafts; on some paid plans it can label and archive on request	Its priority view is limited to some paid plans and US English at the time of writing. No lead list or follow-ups
Copilot in Outlook	Summaries, tone coaching, prioritising new mail	A paid add-on per user. It doesn't follow your own categories or keep a lead list
Ready-made AI email assistants	Fast to start, polished drafting	A subscription per mailbox, their categories not yours, and another company handling your mail
Build your own (this guide)	Your rules, your lead list, your follow-ups, one place to change things	About five hours to build, and a paid Zapier plan

> WHEN BUYING IS THE BETTER CHOICE
>
> With only a handful of inquiries a month, the assistant in your mail app may be enough. Build your own when leads matter to your income, your categories are your own, or you want control over where your data goes.

PROMPT 1.1 · IS IT WORTH IT FOR ME? COPY · PASTE · FILL THE MARKED PARTS

```
My email in a typical week: number a day, about number new inquiries a week, the rest clients, suppliers,
admin and newsletters.
I take time to reply to a new inquiry. Estimate the time I'd save each week if every email were pre-sorted
and every inquiry
had a draft reply waiting, and tell me honestly whether an assistant is worth building.
```

WHAT NEXT

Get the full guide

You've read the first chapter. The full guide takes you through all 6 chapters of the build, step by step, with every prompt ready to copy and a checklist to work from.

02 **Set up in an hour**
Labels, your rules card, the lead sheet and a safety check, before any automation.

03 **Build 1: the sorter**
Every new email gets a label in under two minutes, and urgent mail gets a second one.

04 **Build 2: catch leads, draft replies**
Every new inquiry lands in your lead sheet with a reply waiting in your drafts.

05 **Build 3: follow-ups that don’t slip**
Every weekday at 08:00, leads that went quiet get a polite follow-up waiting in your drafts.

06 **Run it safely**
What our test build measured, what it will cost you in tasks, and the 10-minute weekly tune-up.

SEE THE FULL GUIDE

neurova-ai.com/guides/first-ai-agent/inbox-triage/