

The 5HESAR Picker

Find the AI use case that gives at least five hours back

5HESAR means 5-Hours Effort Saving Rule. The idea is deliberately simple: before investing time in an AI project, identify a recurring task where AI can realistically save at least five hours of human effort within a review period that makes sense for your business.

Below is a completed example. On the next pages, use the same logic to find, calculate, and choose your own first use case.

Worked Example: Routine Customer Email Handling

1

Where do the hours go?

A small service company spends about 10 hours each month reading routine customer emails, finding standard information, and drafting repetitive replies. One person performs nearly all of this work.

2

What could AI change?

AI can classify incoming messages, draft replies from approved company information, and prepare the response for a human to review before sending. The human still handles unusual, sensitive, or high-value cases.

3

How much human effort remains?

Current human effort: 10 hours / month

Expected human effort after AI: 3 hours / month

Expected effort saving: $10 - 3 = 7$ hours / month

4

Does it pass the 5HESAR rule?

YES. The realistic saving is 7 hours in the chosen review period, so this use case clears the 5-hour threshold.

5

Is it a sensible first test?

Yes. The task is frequent, digital, easy to measure, and can be piloted while keeping a human in the loop. The company can test it for two weeks and compare actual effort before and after.

Notice the shape: a recurring task, a clear baseline, a realistic AI-assisted workflow, and a measurable saving of at least five hours. That is a use case worth testing.

Find Where the Hours Go

Start with the work, not the tool. List recurring activities that consume human time. Use one review period consistently so the numbers can be compared.

A

Choose one review period

☐ Week ☐ Month ☐ Quarter ☐ Other: _____

B

List recurring work

Look especially for work that is repetitive, digital, information-heavy, rules-based, or dependent on searching, writing, sorting, summarizing, checking, or transferring information.

TASK / ACTIVITY	FREQUENCY	TIME EACH	TOTAL EFFORT
			____ h
			____ h
			____ h
			____ h
			____ h
			____ h
			____ h

C

Shortlist the most promising candidates

Circle three to five activities where AI could plausibly remove or accelerate a meaningful part of the work. Do not count time that simply moves elsewhere - for example, time needed to review or correct AI output.

Run the 5-Hour Test

For each shortlisted task, compare the human effort today with the human effort that would remain after AI assistance. Use realistic numbers, not best-case assumptions.

RULE Effort saved = current human effort - human effort after AI
A candidate passes 5HESAR when the realistic saving is at least 5 hours within your chosen review period.

CANDIDATE TASK	CURRENT HUMAN EFFORT	HUMAN EFFORT AFTER AI	EFFORT SAVED	RESULT
	____ h	____ h	____ h	☐ PASS ☐ NO
	____ h	____ h	____ h	☐ PASS ☐ NO
	____ h	____ h	____ h	☐ PASS ☐ NO
	____ h	____ h	____ h	☐ PASS ☐ NO
	____ h	____ h	____ h	☐ PASS ☐ NO
	____ h	____ h	____ h	☐ PASS ☐ NO

CHECK Reality check before you count the hours

☐ Yes ☐ No Can AI actually perform or accelerate a meaningful part of this task?

☐ Yes ☐ No Did you include the time a person still needs to review, approve, correct, or finish the work?

☐ Yes ☐ No Will the saving repeat often enough to matter in your chosen review period?

☐ Yes ☐ No Can you measure the before-and-after effort without guessing?

☐ Yes ☐ No Can you test the idea without unacceptable data, legal, safety, or business risk?

Important: 5HESAR measures effort saving, not technical sophistication. A simple use case that saves six hours may be a much better first project than an impressive one that saves thirty minutes.

Choose Your First AI Use Case

Only compare candidates that pass the five-hour threshold. Start with one that is valuable enough to matter and simple enough to test without turning it into a major transformation project.

A Compare the candidates that passed				
PASSING CANDIDATE	HOURS SAVED	EASY TO TEST?	LOW RISK?	MY RANK

	____ h	[]	[]	____
	____ h	[]	[]	____
	____ h	[]	[]	____

B My 5HESAR pick	
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Task I will improve

Review period

Week / Month / Quarter / Other: _____

Current human effort

____ hours

Expected human effort after AI

____ hours

Expected effort saving

____ hours

5HESAR result

[] PASS - 5+ hours [] NOT YET

First AI-assisted step I will test

Test duration

____ days

Owner

Success means

C Would you notice the difference?	
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If those five or more saved hours came back to you or your team, what higher-value work would you use them for?