

The Manager's Weekly Desk

A practical way to turn scattered notes into clear priorities, team updates, task plans, decisions and follow-through.

One working rhythm. Eight short chapters. Human judgment at every decision.

This is an original sample companion to the MODIR prepared-workflow prototype. It is not a connected AI product, operating policy, or substitute for a manager.

Start with a manager's brief

A useful manager desk begins with context, not a list of generic tasks. Capture what changed, why it matters, and which decision belongs to a person.

Four practical moves

- Name the project and the next milestone in plain words.
- Write one priority that explains the outcome, not merely the activity.
- Separate observed facts from assumptions and unresolved questions.
- Record the decision needed and who has authority to make it.

Example

Project: client onboarding refresh. Priority: reduce handoff gaps. Update: two teams use different checklists. Decision needed: choose the approved checklist and the welcome-email approver.

Try it

Draft a six-line brief: project, priority, latest fact, open question, decision owner, next milestone.

Working page

Project or service: _____

Priority outcome: _____

Verified change since last review: _____

Decision owner and next milestone: _____

Boundary

Do not paste confidential customer, employee or financial records into an unapproved tool. A brief is a working summary, not permission for software to act.

Write the daily brief

The daily brief gives a manager a reliable starting point. It should make the most important issue visible before the day fills with messages.

Four practical moves

- Lead with the priority and one sentence on why it matters today.
- List the two or three facts that changed since the last review.
- Put the decision or blocker on its own line.
- Finish with a checkpoint that can be observed by the next review.

Example

Today: align the onboarding checklist before the next client cohort. Changed: two versions are in use; the email draft is ready. Decision: who approves the final email? Checkpoint: one approved checklist is shared with both teams.

Try it

Take yesterday's notes. Cut them to a brief that a colleague can read in one minute, then ask what a manager still needs to verify.

Working page

Today's single priority: _____

New fact 1 / new fact 2: _____

Decision or blocker: _____

Next observable checkpoint: _____

Boundary

The draft should not invent certainty. Use 'confirm' when a status, owner or deadline has not been established.

Turn updates into a team message

Team updates work when people can see the current direction, the reason, and the response requested from them.

Four practical moves

- Name the audience before writing; different teams need different details.
- State what changed and what remains the current plan.
- Ask for one specific response or flag; avoid vague 'thoughts?'.
- Have the manager check recipients, facts, tone and timing before sending.

Example

Subject: onboarding refresh - current focus. We are working toward a single approved checklist. Two versions are still circulating. Please flag any step your team relies on that is missing from the draft. The manager will confirm the final version and approver.

Try it

Write a five-sentence update: focus, change, impact, request, next check. Remove anything that does not help the reader act.

Working page

Audience and channel: _____

What changed: _____

Response requested: _____

Manager approval before send: _____

Boundary

A draft message is not a sent message. Do not imply a team received or accepted it until that is confirmed.

Make a task plan with real ownership

A task list is useful only when each item can be owned, checked and closed. The manager assigns owners; the desk can suggest the structure.

Four practical moves

- Write each task as a verb plus a verifiable result.
- Keep 'owner to assign' visible until a person accepts ownership.
- Add a date only when it has been agreed or comes from a real milestone.
- Identify dependencies before calling a task ready.

Example

Task: compare both onboarding checklists and propose one approved version. Result: one marked-up comparison and manager decision. Owner: to assign. Dependency: collect current versions from both teams.

Try it

Convert three vague tasks into checkable outcomes. For each, add owner, due date, dependency and definition of done - leaving unknowns explicit.

Working page

Task and checkable result: _____

Owner who accepted: _____

Agreed due date and dependency: _____

Evidence that closes the task: _____

Boundary

No role title makes software a manager. Scheduling, performance decisions and authority remain with designated people.

Keep a decision log

Decisions are easy to forget when their reasoning stays in a chat. A compact log protects continuity without pretending every choice is final.

Four practical moves

- Record the decision question before discussion starts.
- Compare the current path, a proposed change and a deliberate delay.
- Capture the chosen option, reason, trade-off and decision owner.
- Set a review point if new evidence may change the answer.

Example

Question: which onboarding checklist becomes the single source of truth? Options: keep the current split; adopt a revised common version; defer until missing steps are mapped. Decision: pending owner review.

Try it

Choose one open decision. Fill in question, evidence, options, owner, outcome, reason and review date. Leave the outcome blank until the person decides.

Working page

Decision question and owner: _____

Options compared: _____

Chosen option and reason: _____

Review date or trigger: _____

Boundary

A prepared template may frame options; it must not fabricate a decision or approval.

Close the loop on follow-ups

Follow-up is the bridge between a good meeting and real progress. It should make open work visible without creating a flood of reminders.

Four practical moves

- Review the last brief and ask what changed since it was written.
- Check each action for an owner, due date and evidence of completion.
- Escalate unresolved decisions to the right person with the minimum context needed.
- Mark closed work clearly and carry only live items into the next review.

Example

Open: name the welcome-email approver. Next action: manager confirms owner. Check: before the next planned client-cohort review. Evidence: approved version and decision log updated.

Try it

Make a three-column list: open, waiting, closed. Move each item only when the evidence supports the change.

Working page

Open item and owner: _____

What we are waiting for: _____

Evidence of closure: _____

Next check date: _____

Boundary

The prototype does not schedule reminders, send messages or change task systems. A human must approve any connected workflow.

Run a weekly manager review

A weekly review turns many small updates into a practical picture of direction. Keep the meeting about evidence and decisions, not status theatre.

Four practical moves

- Open with the week's priority and the evidence of progress.
- Review decisions made, decisions still open and their owners.
- Look at unfinished tasks and the actual reason they are blocked.
- Choose the few follow-ups that matter most next week.

Example

Week focus: one onboarding path. Progress: comparison complete. Open decision: final approver.
Blocker: ownership not confirmed. Next week: approve version, share it and observe handoff questions.

Try it

Use a 20-minute agenda: 4 minutes priority, 5 evidence, 5 decisions, 4 blockers, 2 next actions. Adjust the time to your team.

Working page

This week's priority and evidence: _____

Decision made / still open: _____

Blocker and its actual cause: _____

Two actions for next week: _____

Boundary

Do not score people from a draft summary. Review performance through the organisation's approved human process.

Scope a connected AI version

The working demo is deliberately limited. A real AI manager assistant needs a defined job, approved access, measurable value and a person responsible for the result.

Four practical moves

- Choose one workflow to connect first; define its input, output and success measure.
- List each data source and the permission needed to read it.
- Name which outputs require review before a message, task or record is changed.
- Estimate model, integration, support and data-handling costs before pricing.

Example

Pilot: draft a daily brief from manager-approved project notes. Output: one editable summary. Approval: manager checks facts and sends it manually. Measure: time saved and corrections needed over four weeks.

Try it

Write a one-page pilot scope with user, source, draft, approval, privacy boundary, failure path, cost owner and review date.

Working page

Pilot workflow and user: _____

Approved source and privacy boundary: _____

Human approval before action: _____

Cost owner, success measure and review date: _____

Boundary

Do not describe a prepared-workflow demo as a live AI service. A connected system should never silently gain authority over staff, payments, customers or external communication.