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# The Big Picture: AI, Automation, and Your Power

This week, the big news for every Australian micro-business owner is the Fair Work Commission's decision to increase the national minimum and award wages by 3.75% from July 1st. While supporting our teams is crucial, this adds undeniable pressure to already tight budgets, especially with ongoing inflation and the ATO's continued focus on collecting small business tax debts. This isn't a time for panic, but a moment to get strategic. The conversation is no longer about \*if\* you should use smart technology, but \*how\* you can use it to absorb these new costs and build a more resilient business.  
  
The emerging trend is a clear shift towards 'operational efficiency' as the key to survival and growth. The wage increase acts as a catalyst, forcing us to look at every process and ask, "Can a simple piece of software do this for me?" This is where AI and automation become your most valuable employees. By setting up simple software agents to handle repetitive, time-consuming tasks—like answering routine customer emails, chasing invoices, or scheduling appointments—you free up precious human hours. This allows you and your small team to focus on what truly matters: serving customers, developing new products, and steering the business forward.  
  
Think of this not as an expense, but as an investment in your own time and sanity. The goal is to automate the mundane so you can amplify the meaningful. Simple, low-cost AI tools can create efficiencies that directly offset rising wage costs, turning a potential financial strain into a powerful opportunity to streamline your operations. By embracing these tools now, you're not just coping with change; you're building a smarter, more profitable, and more sustainable business for the future.

# Your Action Plan: Practical AI & Automation Takeaways

* Time-Sensitive Action: \*\*Act on the Wage Increase Now:\*\* With the 3.75% wage rise confirmed for July 1, use the next two weeks to map out your team's most repetitive tasks. Set up a simple AI-powered email agent (like those in Help Scout or Front) with pre-written templates to automatically answer your top 5 most common customer questions. This can immediately free up hours of staff time, helping to balance the new wage costs.
* Time-Sensitive Action: \*\*Automate Your Cash Flow Monitoring:\*\* The ATO is actively pursuing tax debts. To stay ahead, use the AI features in your accounting software (like Xero or QuickBooks). Create a rule that automatically categorizes all recurring expenses and flags any invoice that goes 7 days past its due date. This simple automation gives you a real-time, accurate picture of your financial health, helping you plan for tax obligations and avoid debt.
* Time-Sensitive Action: \*\*Boost Productivity with an AI Scheduler:\*\* To make every minute count, trial an AI scheduling assistant like Calendly or Reclaim.ai. Connect it to your calendar and let it manage all your appointment bookings automatically based on your availability. This eliminates the back-and-forth emails and ensures your time is locked in for revenue-generating work, directly counteracting the rising cost of labour.

# Ready to Take Back Control?

Don't let the technical talk drown you out! Just like Trish fought to find her feet, DigitalABCs is here to simplify these Key Updates. We show you exactly how to use simple agents and automation to turn this week's challenges into your next big opportunity.

# Sources

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