

Workflow Automation Is a Vibe

Forget the hype. Here's how to use AI for practical, high-value results in M365 today.

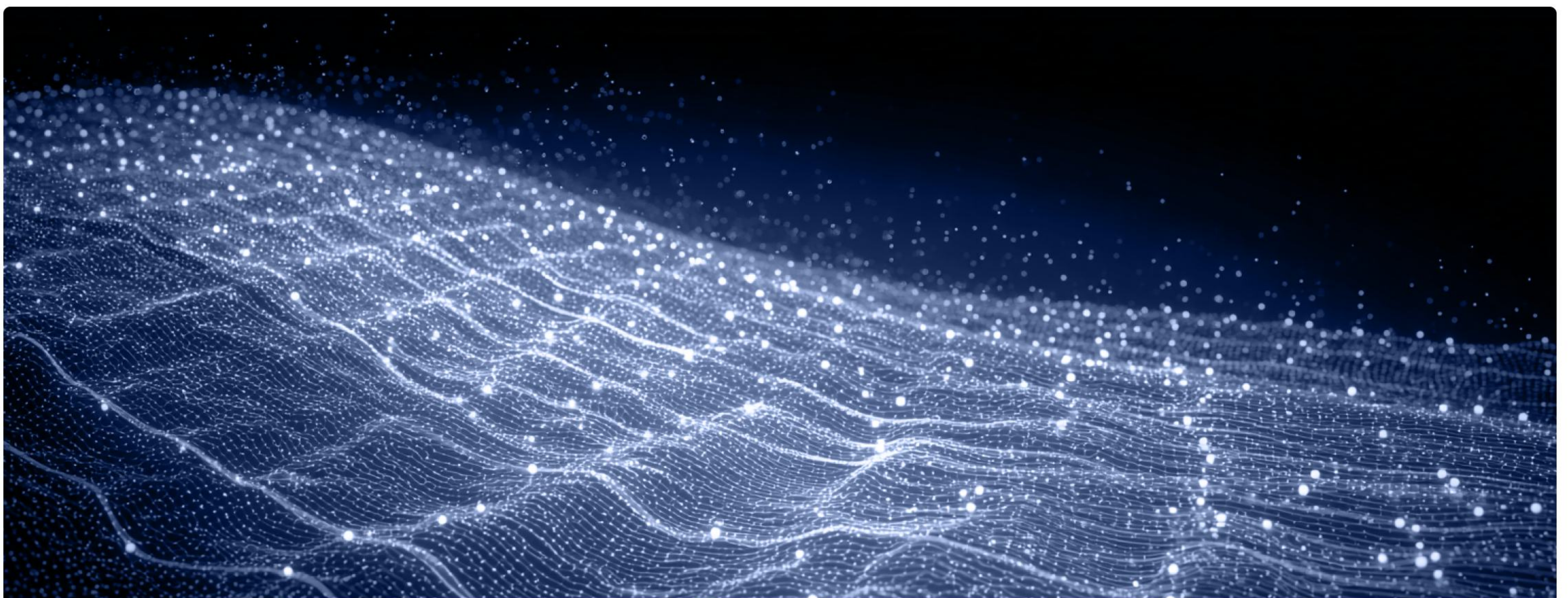
We'll look back at 2025 as the Year of Vibe Coding, a term for natural language development leveraging AI that enables non-technical users to create applications with simple prompts.

While still very much a consumer driven movement, vibe coding is a micro-representation of the possibilities of where enterprise IT could end up in the future. Imagine a scenario where IT empowers business units and their citizen developers to build their own solutions and/or AI agents, freeing up internal engineering teams to focus on more complex, mission-critical projects.

The idea of democratizing application development can be scary; however, if any of the ROI promises of AI are to be true, it is going to be critical. The early adopters of this strategy know that it takes more than feeding natural language prompts to an LLM genie to realize business value. Using AI to harness intellectual capital through citizen development still requires operating within a predictable framework for the potential to be lasting as well as transformational.

This is where workflows come in. The lasting value and true ROI of citizen development will only be realized when connected in workflows. AI value will be realized when an agent is not just automating one task, but being leveraged by multiple departments across the organization automating hundreds of tasks and interacting other agents. This connection will be made with workflows and it is becoming clear that Microsoft Copilot Studio as well as Power Automate are quickly becoming the backbone to the enterprise strategy.

Workflow automation tools have been around for a while but the broad adoption of Microsoft 365 (M365) and Power Automate provide the UI-backbone for semi-technical folks to create sophisticated enterprise solutions with measurable ROI. Add in AI as both a Power Automate tutor and a workflow designer (Copilot Studio), and it's possible to muster a productive team of actual citizen-developers who can transform business processes in meaningful and measurable ways.



What does workflow automation in M365 look like?

Consider a high-volume administrative process, like triaging online support tickets with unstructured information, that is labor-intensive and low value work for a support engineer. An automated workflow could trigger upon receipt of the message and call an AI agent to analyze the raw information provided; categorize it by topic and severity; submit it to a ticketing queue and reply to the sender with a relevant response (maybe even resolve the issue and close out the ticket) virtually in real-time and with no human intervention.

Or take a similar business process as inbound support inquiries, but for a healthcare insurer. Instead of technical details, the information would contain sensitive patient data. To maintain privacy compliance, the company may have thousands of shared emails to ensure different types of inquiries are routed to the right people. This is not only an administrative nightmare but can lead to confusion, frustration, and mistakes by patients and partners expecting timely help.

An automated workflow could process inbound inquiries and, with the help of AI analysis, provide superior customer experience. For instance, it could instantly reply to the sender with additional questions as well as forms that require signatures to ensure their information is accurate and complete. Once the AI confirms the necessary details, it then routes the information in an optimized format to the right internal resource. Not only would this keep patients' information safe, but it would reduce administrative errors, eliminate the (now) redundant shared emails, accelerate response times, and allow employees to focus more on customer care.

These are just a few examples of AI-driven automation being done right now that deliver a lot of value with little development. It's not as simple as vibe coding, but it's definitely a vibe.

Where to start?

Begin with a personal pain point. Is there a report you manually compile every week? An email you forward multiple times a day? Go to Copilot or OpenAI and type "Tell me how to make a Power Automate workflow that every Friday takes the attachment from an email with the subject 'Weekly Report' and saves it to this specific SharePoint folder." Let it walk you through the steps; have it explain things you don't understand and then tell you how to fix it when it doesn't work. Your first automation can be just for you.

Sure, the learning curve is steep because you're a pioneer in the first generation of enterprise AI users, but it won't take long before you create something that would have otherwise taken thousands of hours of coding experience – and it will feel like a superpower.

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