

*Automation is a decision you can't afford not to make.*

# AUTOMATION IS A MINDSET

*How to Overcome 2 Mistakes,  
2 Misconceptions and 3 Fears  
to SAVE MORE TIME &  
MAKE MORE MONEY  
in Title & Escrow.*



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# AUTOMATION IS A MINDSET

Over the past 7 years, we've had the opportunity to get up close and personal with the operations departments of hundreds of title and escrow companies and law offices.

We've rolled up our sleeves with countless organizations to help solidify processes, implement first-ever automations, and insert CloseSimple into hyper-complex, hyper-automated systems where we were just a tiny piece of the puzzle.

At the end of the day, here's what we've learned: *Automation is a mindset.*

What I mean by that is when you look up the definition of "mindset" (a quick Google search will do it!), here's what you will find: *the established set of attitudes held by someone.*

An automation mindset is absolutely an attitude of thinking about problems differently. And as title production systems offer more and more opportunities to automate, adding staff has become harder and harder, and the cost of EVERYTHING is going up. It's time for a big-time attitude adjustment.

WHY?

Because there is so much at stake.

***Automation is  
the established set  
of attitudes held  
by someone.***



## WHAT'S AT STAKE

For decades, title and escrow companies have grown through traditional growth models.

Let me explain: in traditional growth models, increased revenue grows in direct correlation to increased cost. It's "win more business, open a new office" ... "win more business, add staff to keep up" ... "win more business, spend more on X, Y, Z."

In a scaling model of growth, however, revenue growth is exponential, and cost increases are incremental. The key to this type of growth?

You guessed it. Technology and, more specifically, automation.

***Automation WILL create opportunities  
for you to spend less and make more.***

Here's one example. We recently heard from a customer who implemented a semi-automated CloseSimple solution (we're not even talking about full automation here) to streamline their communication.

In this implementation, email and text messages are easily sent from their title production system. Since rolling this out they have one large real estate customer who just told them that between the two escrow companies they use, they call our customer 75% less than the other provider.

75% less!

Just by automating (or even semi-automating) communications.

What would your escrow department look like with 75% less phone calls and emails?

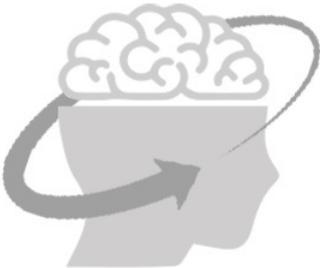
Would you even recognize it?

# WHAT'S STANDING IN OUR WAY?

No matter who you are or what your role is in title and escrow, my guess is that over time you've established some sort of relationship with automation.

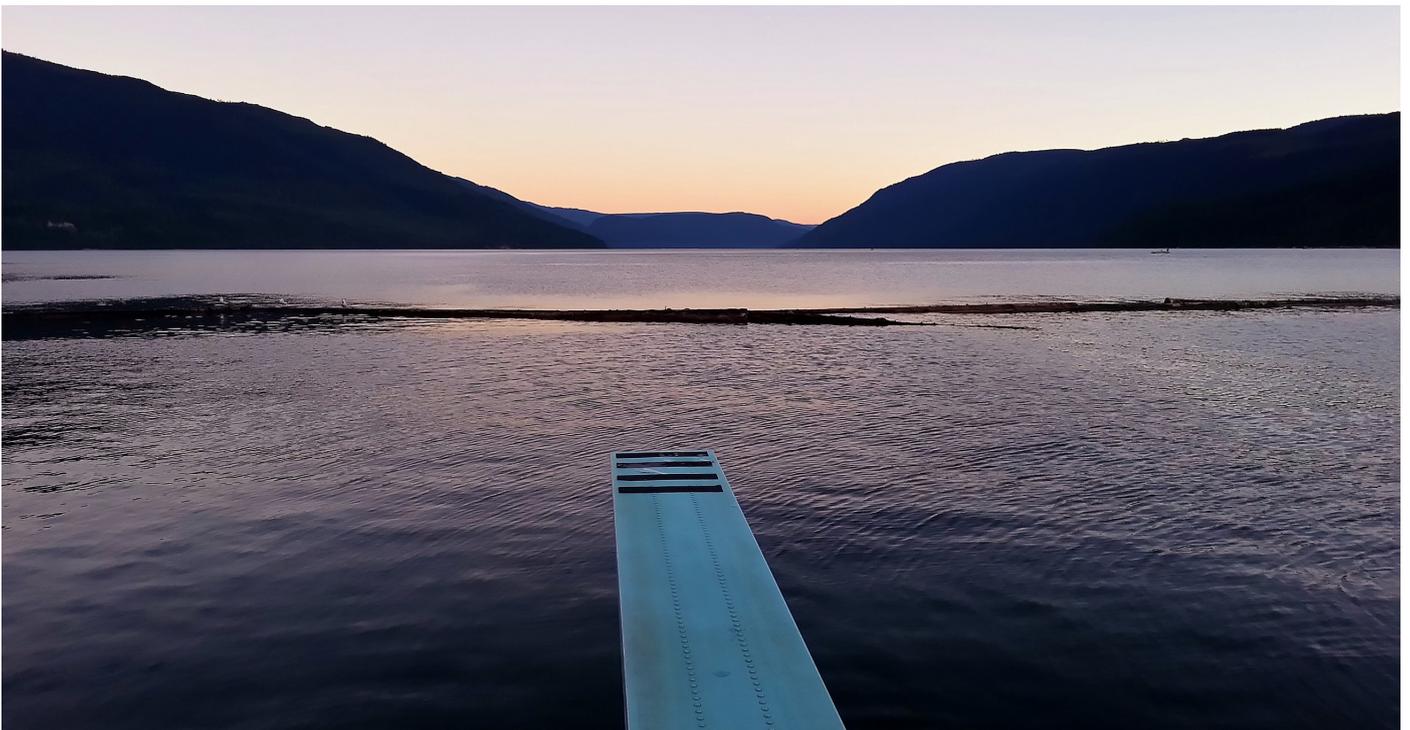
Perhaps you fit into one of these camps:

1. You're begrudgingly reading this white paper because you hate the idea of automation.
2. You know you should embrace it (and maybe even want to!), but don't know where to start.
3. You've tried automation, but it didn't go well and you bailed.
4. You're rocking and rolling with SOME automation, but you're ready to take it to the next level.



Regardless of who you are, I believe *overcoming the following 2 mistakes, 2 misconceptions, and 3 fears that paralyze people will dramatically impact your attitude towards automation and ultimately lead to an improved automation mindset.*

Let's dive in.



## Mistake #1: Letting 10% of your Files Dictate 100% of Your Behaviors

Throughout the years, we've heard title and escrow professionals tell us over and over that "every file is different." Perhaps you can relate. In some respects, that's true! Surprisingly, however, what we find is that in reality about 90-95% of orders are actually pretty similar. It's just the 5-10% that stick out in our minds.

*And what's unfortunate is that those 5-10% of orders actually dictate how title and escrow companies handle 90-95% of their business.*

***Don't let the 10% of your files that can't be automated kill the 90% that can be automated.***



It's time to stop letting 5-10% of our orders dictate 100% of our behaviors. Especially when it comes to automation.

When we got into the title and escrow space, we quickly realized that business is almost always done differently from state to state. And it actually caused us to create far too much "customization" in our product.

20-30 clients later, however, we started to see patterns.

And what we found is that not just within a state or region, but ACROSS THE COUNTRY, we can essentially utilize the same 5 steps to complete a closing.

Sure, there are nuances. Attorney states have different players, the west coast operates a little differently than the east coast, and some states have more split closings than others. But at the end of the day, the process we help communicate is the same.

1. Open the order
2. Complete the commitment
3. Schedule the closing
4. Provide closing documents (or remind the customer of the closing)
5. Let everyone know it's closed/funded

My point here is not to say that you are not unique. You are. My point is to say within your 4 walls (or branches), I'd argue that from file to file there are a TON of consistencies and opportunities to automate.

But here's the secret sauce: when you think about a 90/10 or 95/5 strategy, you must train your people to identify the 5/10. And you must build in a bailout/kill switch for your automation.

Here's a great example: a customer once brought a scenario to me in which she was trying to use CloseSimple, and this is how she described it: it was a Japanese brother and sister from Tokyo buying a divorcing couple's home in a southern suburb of Minneapolis. She was asking me how she should use CloseSimple on this particular order.

My answer? "DO NOT USE CLOSESIMPLE ON THIS ORDER."

I mean, from the international piece (please don't ask me to describe FIRPTA) to the divorcing piece, NOTHING was simple about this, and no amount of automation for communication in this scenario was saving anyone time. What I did say was "how's it working on your other orders?" and her response that it was highly effective.

If we had thought of that Japanese brother and sister when implementing the automation for that title company's communication strategy, we would have gotten nowhere.



**What's the mindset shift you should embrace?** WIN on 90-95% of your orders, and give your team an easy way to bail out of automation to manually address the other 5-10%.

## Mistake #2: Taking the Kitchen Sink Approach to Automation

One of the biggest mistakes we've witnessed as we've worked with title and escrow companies is the idea that if you're going to automate your business, you have to automate 100% of it. We've seen companies go through 2-year software implementations, or invest hundreds of thousands of dollars into automation in an attempt to take their businesses from 0 to 100% automation in one step.

In some cases, these attempts don't even launch, or the business ends up being LESS efficient at the end of the day, due to losing their ability to simply "block and tackle" in the business. Let's be honest: complexity is often the killer of progress. And let me be clear, I am not saying that software changes or upgrades are inherently bad. In a lot of cases, a switch is 100% necessary to achieve the level of automation that you're looking for.

*What I am saying is small, incremental enhancements driven by automation can actually move the needle faster than the kitchen sink approach.*

Imagine looking at one department in your organization and taking a week or two to implement a new automated process that could save each member of the group even 45 minutes per day.

That's an almost 10% increase in efficiency (or almost 4 hours/week time savings). Is it as sexy as a "fully automated closing process?" Maybe not. But imagine what those team members could do with that extra time. Close 2 more orders per month? Process 4 more? Open 10 more? Or think back to my earlier example. Just simply automating communications could reduce your inbound calls/emails by 75%. 75%! Again, can you even imagine what your escrow team could do with that many fewer phone calls?

And if you took 3-6 months and systematically reduced redundant tasks within your closing process little by little, my guess is you could reduce waste within your process to the tune of 25% per employee. Again, some of our customers say they might save 30-60 minutes per file just by having to type less emails. That's good math.



**The mindset shift?** Approach automation incrementally. You don't have to try to eat it all in one bite.

## Misconception #1: My clients want personalized service, and automation takes the personal touch out of it

It may be true that your customer wants personalized service. I'd argue, however, that *what your customer really wants is consistency*. And nothing creates consistency like implementing automation.

In fact, what we've learned is that it is often the process (or I might even call it the *practice*) of implementing automation that will actually reveal gaps in your process. Automation requires following patterns and behaviors to guarantee its success. And in most cases, those processes don't exist.

What's cool about actually going through this practice of implementing automation is that it gives you the opportunity to create a consistent closing experience across your organization. Whether it's Team Amy or Team Marge, you know that your brand is going to be represented well, and your customer is going to be taken care of during every closing.

I would argue that if you have a team that's flawlessly executing a consistent closing process, it will actually create MORE opportunities for personalized service. *When you embrace automation, your team is going to be spending less time on redundant tasks and more time being strategic.*



**Mindset Shift:** Consistency through automation creates an amazing platform for personalizing the experience.

## Misconception #2: You Can Implement Automation Flawlessly

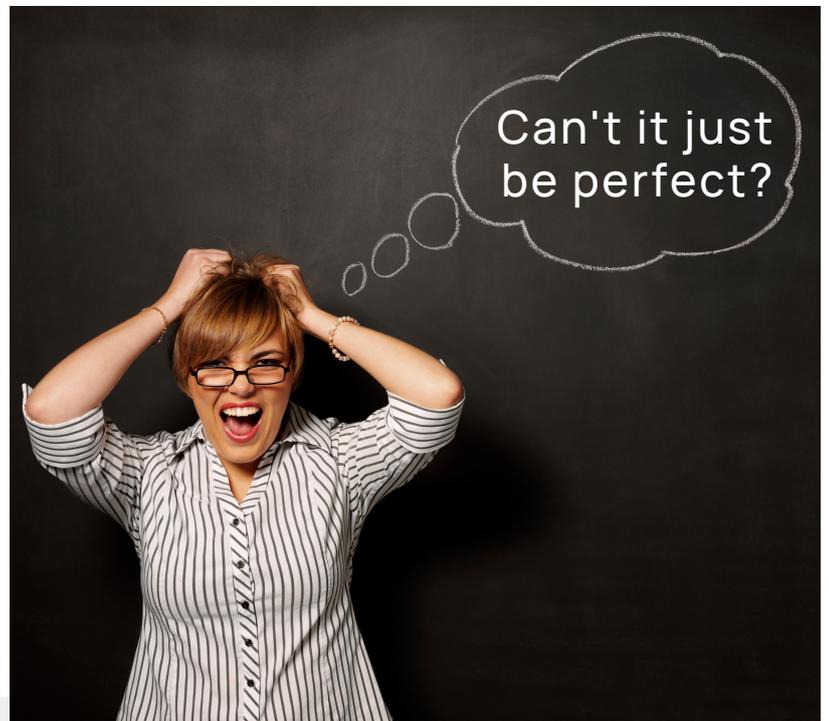
This might feel like a downer or even a deterrent to implementing automation. However, let's be real and just get this out of the way: *implementing automation can be messy!*

No matter how much testing, tweaking, and training you do, there's always the chance for some messiness in the process of rolling it out.

And here's the truth of the matter: *you won't know for sure if it's right until it's live in real life!*

Here's an example of what I'm talking about: we had a customer recently upgrade from an older title production system to a new version, and they approached us to work with the software provider to coordinate a simultaneous upgrade of our system with the TPS.

It also bears mentioning that the staff using the old system had never utilized automation before, and each closing team did things a little differently in their process (see #1 Misconception above).



***Implementing Automation  
can be messy.***

As part of the process, we did a ton of work to implement a program and process that would meet the needs of multiple closing teams.

We tested thoroughly. And then we went live ... here's how it went:

- There were emails flying around all over the place
- What the team thought their process was wasn't what it actually was
- One group would make a request, only to have a different group chime in that they "liked it how it was"
- We were collaborating with the software provider, so we were determining who was supposed to be doing what throughout the launch

Here's the best part though: right at the point where it felt like stuff couldn't get any crazier, we all got together, lined up the specific needs, made the updates, and just like that everything was smooth.

In a way, launching automation can be a little like a big storm over water where everything seems a little too crazy and you should be hitting the eject button ... and then everything is suddenly still.



Here's the **HUGE MINDSET SHIFT**: Don't bail too early. It's kind of funny to say, but it's always darkest right before dawn. The efficiencies and the process improvements are so close. Buckle up. Strap in. Stick with it. There's a rainbow at the end.



## Fear #1: I've Tried, It Didn't Go Well

We hear this one a lot, and I'll get right to the point:

1. You know automation was right when you tackled it the first time. It's still right!
2. Title production systems are improving, their support/implementation teams are also improving, and their number of automation-ready integrations is growing. Automation has never been more attainable. Even if your first attempt wasn't that long ago, we're seeing quick progress from the software providers.
3. You can always simplify. Likely, the reason things didn't go well the first time is due to too much complexity (Mistake #2 above) or not going in with your eyes wide open (Misconception #2). It can be different this time!
4. There are a plethora of resources in the industry, from consultants to vendors, to help get you started.

Here's a quick example: we work with a lot of different customers, and as we work through our implementations, we're making the best guess as to what processes look like, what should trigger what within the title production system, and how everything should work.

With this type of implementation, sometimes we miss the mark, and a rollout that we had planned on "changing our customer's lives" never gets off the ground.

It might seem strange for us to include a story that starts like this in a white paper about how great automation is, but it's just the reality.

Sometimes the implementation is just wrong, or it might be too complex. However, 9 times out of 10, in this scenario we come back to the drawing board and start with #3 above. We SIMPLIFY what we're trying to do, and we try not to make Mistake #2 above and do too much all at once. We might go from 5-6 automations to 2-3.

And again, 9 times out of 10, we're able to implement automation that actually does move the needle for our customers and their teams.



**Mindset Shift:** Don't give up! Give automation another try, but try to simplify it this time.

## Fear #2: Automation Feels Out of My Control

Let's face it, we are operating in an industry where the people executing the work have, in most cases, been doing things the same way year after year for years (and in many cases, decades).

They know that when they click the mouse, something happens ... when they type the email, something happens ... when they pick up the phone, something happens.

Automation can be scary when things start happening “without clicking.”

We see this fear pop up as we're working with title and escrow company owners, operations managers, or escrow managers. There is real fear among the staff that “automation has a mind of its own” or “things are just happening without me doing anything!” And they don't like it.

*Here's the thing: change is hard ... for all of us.*

But, change is necessary, and here's what I've observed over the years: I've sat across the table from many 1-2 decade long employees to get their feedback on “how CloseSimple is going for them.” What they say is “At first I didn't like this. I was skeptical. But, now that I've been using it for a few weeks, I can really see how this is going to help me.”

One specific 20+ year veteran of the title industry stands out in these “feedback meetings” that I've had over the years.

We were in a small town in Arkansas, and I have to be honest, I was terrified when she walked into the room. I thought for sure she was going to destroy me (if not with the look she was giving me, then with a scathing review I was about to receive).

***Change is hard  
but necessary.***

Not surprisingly, though (ok maybe a little surprisingly to me at the time), she gave a very frank assessment of how it was going. She said, “Paul, I think right now, about 3-4 weeks in, this is actually saving me about 30 minutes per file. But, I think once I really get the handle of it, it’s going to be more like 60.”

I was floored.

This was a woman who was hyper skeptical to start. She liked doing things her own way and with all of the control that she was used to, but she was telling me that she was a believer and that it was only going to get better.



**The mindset shift?** Relinquishing some control IS required when adopting an automation mindset. But it’s worth it!



## **Fear #3: I'm Way Too Busy to Take This on, and Even More, I Can't Ask My Team to Do Anything Else Right Now!**

I saved the best and most relevant fear for last. Of all the things we hear from current and potential customers, this is the most frequent: “right now just isn't a good time to implement automation. It's not just that I don't have the time to do it, I simply can't put another thing on my staff right now.” To that, I'd say, “I get it.”

I'm a small business owner and the idea of implementing new processes, automating this or automating that, can often feel cumbersome. And I would NEVER recommend a kitchen sink approach (Mistake #2 above) to enhance technology in today's market and industry climate.

However, in the same breath, I will say that *if you aren't embracing automation today, I don't think you're going to be able to afford sitting on the sidelines for too much longer.*

We've discussed it already, but the myriad forces contributing to the difficulties of growing a title and escrow company or a law office the way we always have are becoming too great to bear.

***It's time to start making small, incremental steps towards converting your growth model to scale.***

That's it. Small and incremental.

Put a 24-month goal out there to achieve a 25% reduction in time spent on redundant tasks or to achieve 75% less phone calls, like we talked about earlier.

Whatever the goal, just don't think you have to achieve it in one day.



**Mindset Shift:** You can make time for small & incremental changes!

# BONUS: BUT WHAT IF I'M CRUSHING IT AT AUTOMATION OR LOOKING FOR NEW IDEAS IN THE AUTOMATION SPACE?

Congratulations! You're ahead of the title and escrow curve! Here are some ways to start thinking about how you can take automation to the next level!

1. Look outside of your core production processes and think about how to tie in TPS with sales, marketing, or your customer relationship management software -- these connections can be automated and provide added value throughout the lifecycle of a customer.
2. Think about automation as being more than strictly operational. Here's an example of a growth hack to drive marketing through automation: if you use automation for sending an introductory email to a new buyer or seller, then you can also send emails to other parties involved (real estate agents, lenders etc).
3. Find or create a user group of like-minded title companies so you can share tips and tricks (*this tactic is super underrated by the way*).
4. Lean on your title production system and/or vendor partners to make sure you stay current with updates in technology and automation.

## NEXT STEPS

If any of this resonated with you or if you want to learn more about what I walked through, please don't hesitate to reach out!

Over the last 7+ years, we've rolled up our sleeves and helped our partners overcome a lot of mistakes, misconceptions, and fears of pushing technology forward in their organizations through implementing automated (or semi-automated) solutions that have helped them save time and make more money.

We would love to help you do the same.



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