ZOO 1 · PROBLEM CARD

The desk questions

At our library branch, the same fifteen questions come up at the desk every day. The answers live in four places: a binder, a shared drive, an old email, and one person's head.

What I've tried: We made a cheat sheet. It is already out of date.

Invented for this workshop. Not a real person.

ZOO 2 · PROBLEM CARD

Sixty essays

I teach grade 9. Every week I read sixty short essays and write nearly the same five comments on most of them. It takes my whole Sunday.

What I've tried: I made a comment bank. I still retype and adjust each one.

Invented for this workshop. Not a real person.

ZOO 3 · PROBLEM CARD

The 7:10 bus

I take two buses to a shift that starts at 8. When there is construction or a detour, the route changes and I only find out at the stop. I have been late three times this fall.

What I've tried: I check the app when I remember. It doesn't always show the detour.

Invented for this workshop. Not a real person.

ZOO 4 · PROBLEM CARD

The repair log

My landlord is slow on repairs. I write emails each time something breaks, but I don't keep track of the dates, and I can never remember what I asked for and when.

What I've tried: I take photos. They are scattered across my phone.

Invented for this workshop. Not a real person.

ZOO 5 · PROBLEM CARD

The catering emails

I run a small catering side business. Every evening I answer emails asking the same things: price per person, how far ahead to book, and whether a dish has nuts, dairy or gluten. I lose two hours I don't have.

What I've tried: I wrote a template email. People still write back with questions it didn't cover.

Invented for this workshop. Not a real person.

ZOO 6 · PROBLEM CARD

Same resume, new job

I'm looking for work. Every posting asks for something slightly different, so I rewrite my resume each time. It takes two hours and I have done it forty times.

What I've tried: I keep one master copy. I still end up rewriting most of it.

Invented for this workshop. Not a real person.

ZOO 7 · PROBLEM CARD

The shoebox

This is my first year filing taxes in Canada. I have a shoebox of slips and receipts and no idea what counts. I'm afraid of a mistake that costs me money.

What I've tried: I asked a friend. Her situation is different from mine.

Invented for this workshop. Not a real person.

ZOO 8 · PROBLEM CARD

The photographed notices

I use a screen reader. My daughter's school sends notices as photos of paper pages, and my reader can't read them. I wait for her to read them to me, which she is getting tired of.

What I've tried: I asked the school to send text. They said they would try.

Invented for this workshop. Not a real person.

ZOO 12 · PROBLEM CARD

The text from the bank

I'm 74 and I live alone. I get texts and calls that say they are my bank or the government. Some of them are real, I think. Last month I almost clicked one, and I was scared for a day.

What I've tried: My son told me to ignore anything with a link. But my real bank texts me links too.

Invented for this workshop. Not a real person.

ZOO 13 · PROBLEM CARD

Five clinics

I look after my father. He sees five different clinics, each with its own phone number, its own letters in the mail and its own booking system. I keep double-booking a day or missing a refill.

What I've tried: A paper calendar on the fridge. The letters pile up beside it.

Invented for this workshop. Not a real person.

ZOO 14 · PROBLEM CARD

The homework line

I'm in grade 11. One teacher says AI is fine for studying, one says it's cheating, and one said nothing. I don't know where the line is, and I'm afraid of being flagged for something I thought was okay.

What I've tried: I stopped using it for anything. Now I'm falling behind in the subjects I find hardest.

Invented for this workshop. Not a real person.

ZOO 15 · PROBLEM CARD

The rental listings

I'm looking for a one-bedroom and I've saved forty listings. Prices, commute and what's included are all different, and a few seem too good to be true. Two asked for a deposit before I could see the place.

What I've tried: A messy note on my phone. I can't compare the places side by side.

Invented for this workshop. Not a real person.

ZOO 9 · CUT THE LINES APART

The co-op board

I'm the volunteer secretary of our housing co-op. Every month I get stuck with four jobs, all of which feel like one big job.

a Turn a two-hour meeting into minutes.

b Answer members' questions about what the bylaws allow.

c Track who is behind on their monthly charges and send reminders.

d Put each notice into the three languages our members speak.

What I've tried: I use a template for minutes. The rest I do from memory, and I've already made one mistake on a charge.

Invented for this workshop. Not a real person.

ZOO 10 · CUT THE LINES APART

The community fridge

Our neighbourhood runs a free community fridge. Four volunteers, forty regulars, and everything on a group chat that nobody can scroll back through.

a Make a weekly schedule so someone checks it every day.

b Decide what food is safe to put in and when to throw it out.

c Write the thank-you notes and the appeals for donors.

d Some people have asked us to "prioritize the neediest" when stock is low.

What I've tried: A shared calendar that people forget. A laminated sign about food safety that nobody reads.

Invented for this workshop. Not a real person.

ZOO 11 · CUT THE LINES APART

Eighty applications

I own a small shop. I posted one job and got eighty applications in a week. I can't read them all properly, and I don't want to miss someone good.

a Sort eighty resumes into a readable pile.

b Rank the people from best to worst.

c Tell the ones who aren't getting an interview.

d Write the job post so the right people apply next time.

What I've tried: I read the first twenty and ran out of time. I felt bad about the rest.

Invented for this workshop. Not a real person.

YOUR OWN

Write your own

Specific, recurring, annoying.

What I've tried: