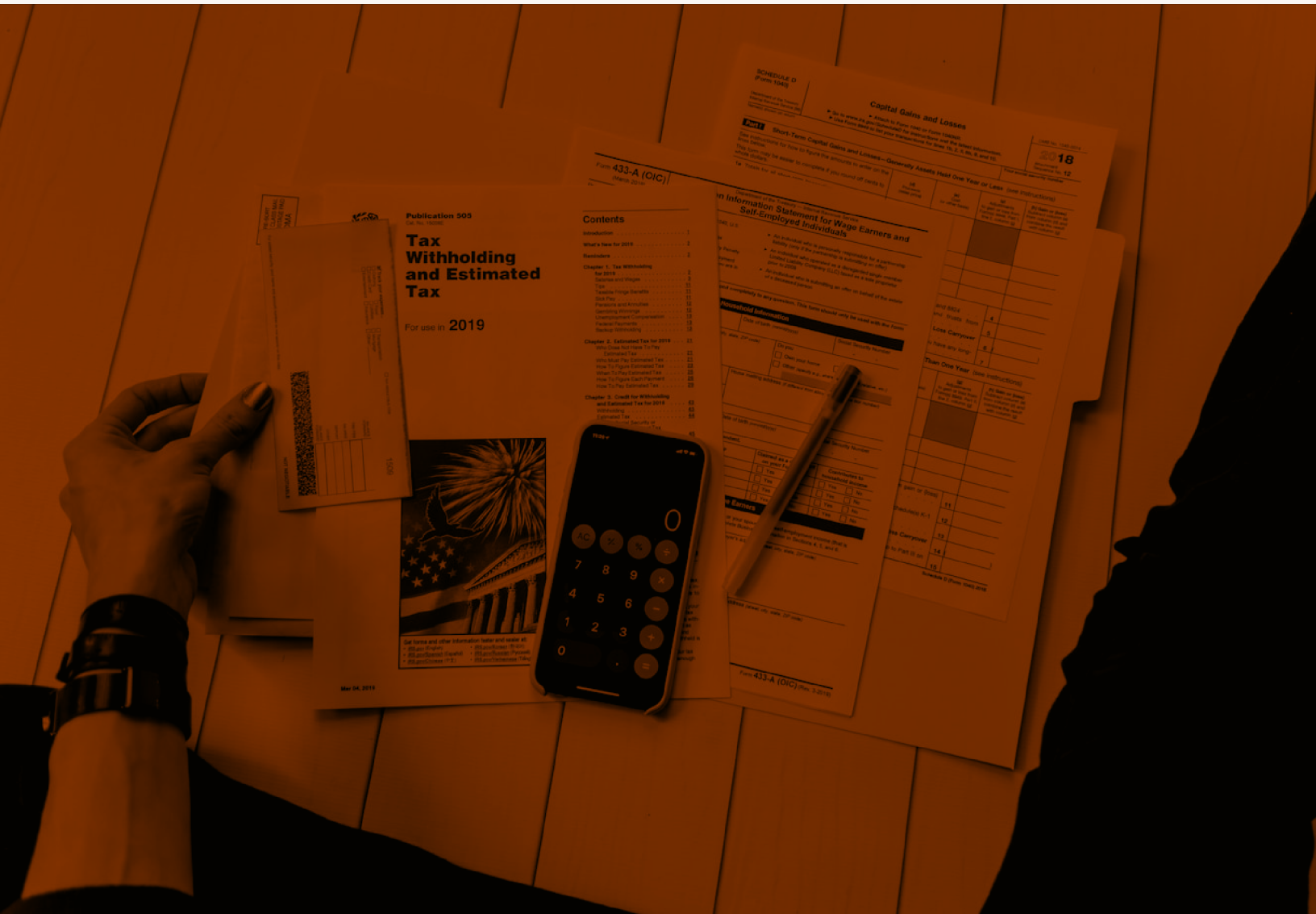


YOUR ARCHETYPE – LONGER READ

The Spreadsheet Republic

Your operation runs on a constellation of spreadsheets and the people who maintain them. Things work as long as the same handful of people don't take vacation simultaneously.



THE PATTERN

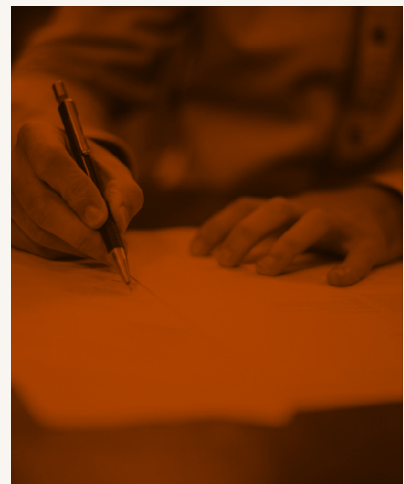
What this means in practice

Spreadsheet Republics are usually built one Friday afternoon at a time. Someone needed a number a system didn't produce; they built a spreadsheet to bridge it; the bridge stuck; the next bridge attached to it; eventually the bridges *are* the operation. There's nothing wrong with any one spreadsheet. The pattern is the cumulative effect.

"The bridges are the operation."

Tells you'll recognize

- You can name the person who maintains the most-load-bearing spreadsheet without thinking.
- It has a column whose formula nobody else fully understands. It's been there long enough that nobody questions it.
- The end-of-month process involves at least one person staying late to "stitch" data from places that should already agree.
- A process you'd describe as "automated" has a human re-keying numbers somewhere in the chain — usually because the integration didn't quite work and the workaround stuck.
- New hires spend their first month learning the spreadsheets, not the work.
- "What if the laptop dies" is a question someone has asked out loud in the last year.
- A quiet recurring conversation: *"we should really replace that one."* It's been quiet for a while.



What it's costing you

For an operation your size, the pattern typically shows up as 2–4 FTE-equivalents of recurring rework per quarter — most of it invisible because it's distributed across people's days in 30-minute slices. The harder cost to quantify is decision-quality: numbers that are “close enough” until they aren't, and the small decisions made on those numbers compound. The risk-shaped cost is concentration: the laptop, the inbox, the one person who knows the formula.

Your sequencing read — and why

Automation first. Analytics next. AI later. The reason isn't ideology. It's that the data feeding any model right now is being re-keyed, version-drifted, and stitched by hand. An AI pilot here will starve, and you'll add it to the pile of things that didn't work.

Automation in this context doesn't mean replacing people — it means stopping the spreadsheet stitching that's eating the hours your best people should spend on judgment work. Once that hour-budget is freed, the analytics conversation gets sharp: there's a single source of truth to point at, and the next question becomes *“what should we be measuring that we aren't?”* rather than *“why don't these two reports match?”*

AI sits on the other side of that conversation, not before it.

Three first moves (this week)

- 01 List the five most-load-bearing spreadsheets in your operation, by name and owner. Show the list to two people who think they don't depend on those sheets — see if they recognize anything.
- 02 Pick the one spreadsheet whose disappearance would hurt most. Document what it does in plain English (not formulas) — half a page is enough.
- 03 Identify one number that gets re-keyed weekly between two systems. That's your smallest, most defensible automation candidate.

What to look for over the next 30 days

Watch for the third name on the list of “people who could maintain this” being noticeably less confident than the first two. Watch for a new spreadsheet being created instead of an old one being modified. Watch for someone asking *“are we sure these numbers are right?”* — not as a challenge, just a question. Those are signals that the pattern is still compounding.

If any of this resonates, the next step isn't a sales call — it's a 30-minute conversation about which one of the three first moves is actually first for you. The link to book that conversation is on the result page.