

USE CASE 04

Nobody approved it. It shipped anyway.

A document goes out for review. It comes back as four copies with overlapping comments, two of which contradict each other. Someone merges them. Someone else did not reply at all, and their silence gets read as a yes. When it matters later, no one can say which version was approved, or by whom.

For work where the approval is consequential — a policy, a contract, a decision paper, a specification.

The problem	Drafts split into copies, comments lose context, and silence is mistaken for approval.
The workflow change	Keep comments tied to one version and route explicit approve, return, or reject decisions to named owners.
The working result	One current document and a traceable record of who decided what and why.

The eight stages of approving one document

The rule the whole chain rests on: no comment may disappear. An unresolved comment is not a closed comment — it travels to the decision owner attached to a specific version, with the positions, the grounds and the consequences of deciding either way.

01 Fix the question and the baseline

The decision owner states the goal, the source document, the question to be decided, what counts as done, and the deadline. That exact version becomes the baseline everything after it refers to.

Carried by people

02 Assign roles and access

Decision owner, document editor and reviewer are assigned as separate roles with separate rights. Role, participant type and access permission are three different things and are recorded separately.

Carried by people

03 Collect independent comments

Reviewers read one named version and leave comments anchored to specific text. Independent first: comments are collected before they are reconciled, so agreement is not manufactured by whoever commented first.

Carried by people

04 Merge the register, revise the document

Duplicates merge in a way that keeps disagreement visible, and the editor issues a new version. Every comment ends in a stated outcome: integrated, not integrated with a reason, superseded, or needs a decision.

People and AI agents together

05 Send the question a person must answer

Only questions that sources and rules cannot settle reach a human — with the exact question, the options, the consequences, the grounds, where the parties disagree, what remains uncertain, and the one action required.

People and AI agents together

06 Assemble the approval package

For each comment the reader can open the original passage, the change made, or the reason it was declined. The package travels with the version, not separately from it.

Carried by AI agents

07 Approve one specific version

The decision owner receives the document together with every unresolved comment, and approves, rejects, or returns it for revision — explicitly, per comment. Agreement between AI agents is not approval, and neither is no reply.

Carried by people

08 Close the cycle

The outcome carries the actions, the people responsible, and the conditions that start them. Anyone entitled to can open the history of any significant change or decision afterwards.

People and AI agents together

Where the manual work goes

PROBLEM	WHAT A PERSON DOES TODAY	WHAT THE WORKFLOW CHANGE DOES
Different versions in circulation	Compare files by hand and carry comments across.	Every significant record names an immutable version and its checksum.
Participant, agent owner and authority are conflated	Work out too late who could actually decide.	Participant type, agent owner, process role and access rights are shown separately.
A comment, or its meaning, is lost	Hunt for the old email and reassemble the room.	The original comment, a reversible merge of duplicates, and the final outcome are all kept.

PROBLEM	WHAT A PERSON DOES TODAY	WHAT THE WORKFLOW CHANGE DOES
"Addressed" with nothing to show	Re-read the whole document and argue about interpretation.	Either the specific change or a reasoned refusal, with its grounds.
A dispute with no clear question and no owner	Hold the same meeting again.	A named person gets a neutral statement of the question, the options and the consequences.
An edit after approval	Investigate which version was actually accepted.	A new version requires a new review and its own separate confirmation.

What you end up holding

One approved version that cannot silently change, a comment register where every comment has a stated outcome, and a history that separates who proposed, who changed, who released, who decided and who approved.

WHAT THIS DOES NOT CLAIM

This is a product hypothesis assembled from two project calls and checked against current MVP material. It is not a description of automation that already exists, it is not an API contract, and it does not change accepted MVP decisions. The full document-centric history view and addressed follow-up questions to a past participant are explicitly not approved MVP capabilities; in a manual pilot the register is kept as a versioned file.

NEXT STEP

Bring us this workflow.

Twenty minutes, one recurring workflow, and an honest answer about whether a bounded first case is worth running.

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