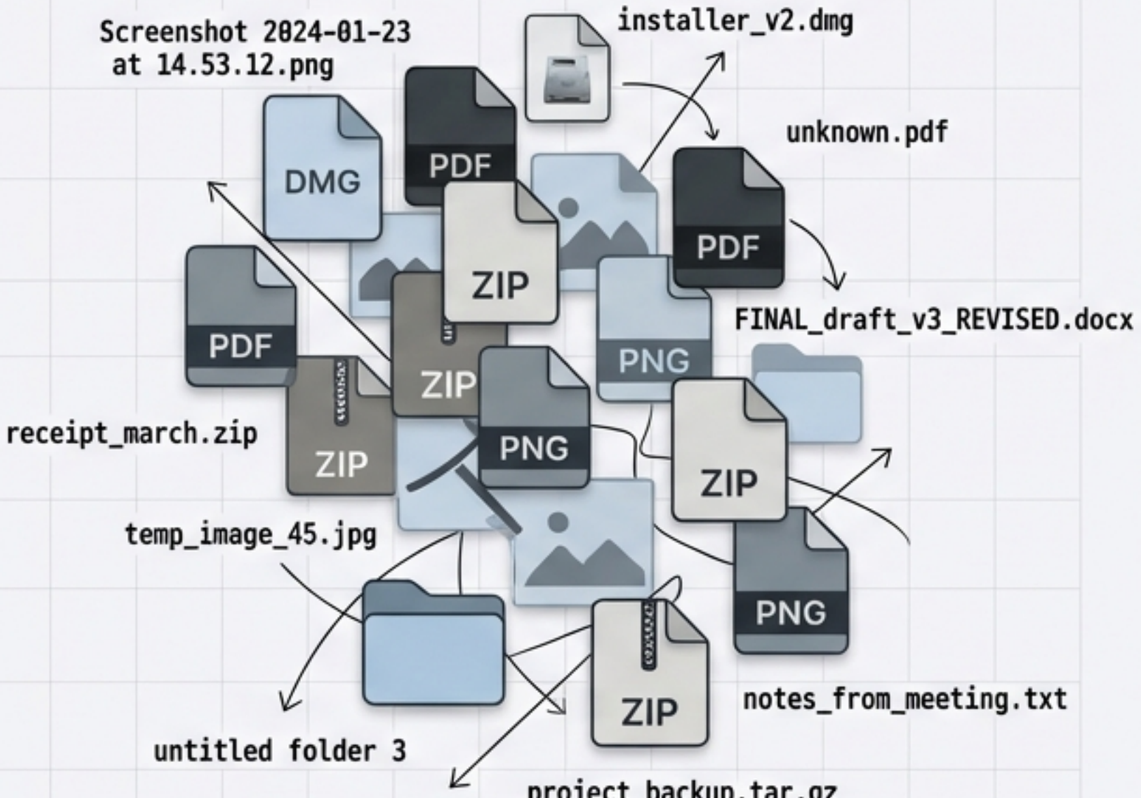
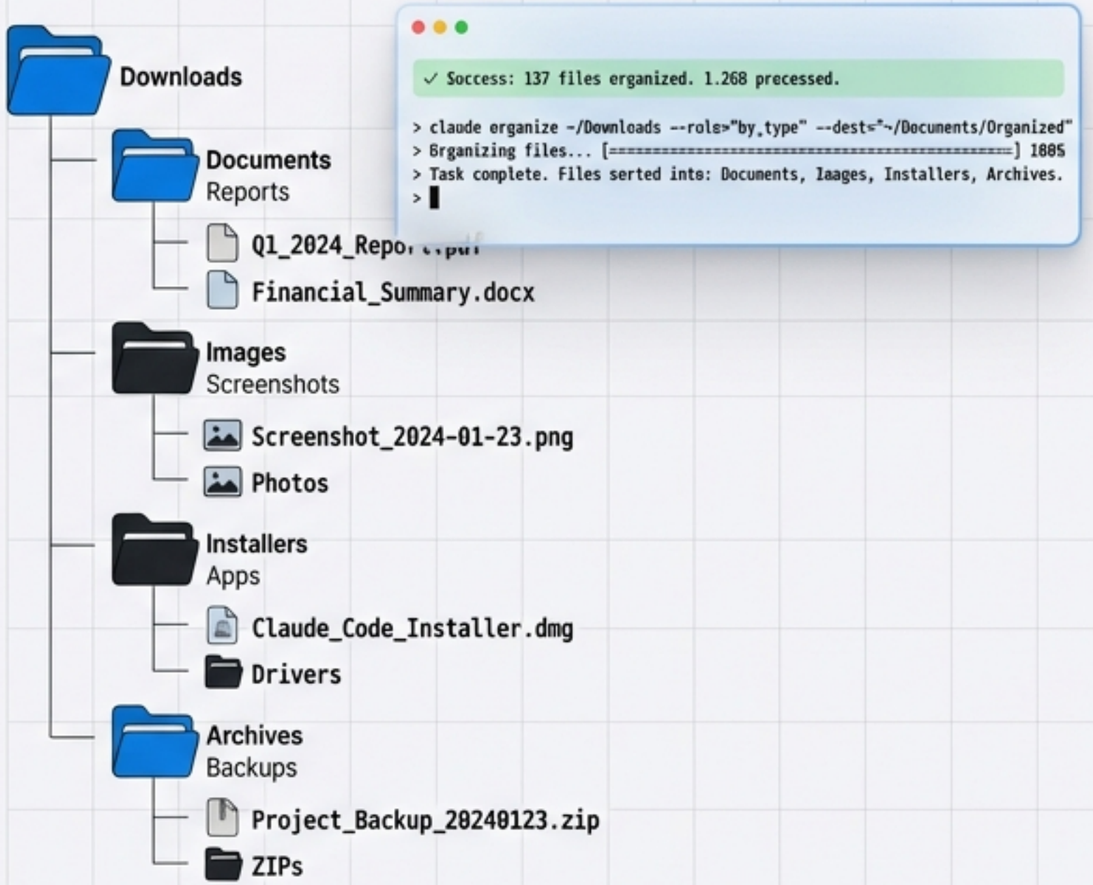
Your First Agent Workflow: From Chaos to Order

Moving beyond command typing to directing intelligent systems.

CURRENT STATE



TARGET STATE



Case Study: Transforming a Downloads folder using Claude Code.

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	THE HUMAN OPERATOR	THE AI AGENT
STRATEGY	Describes the Solution `('Run ls -la')`	Understands the Problem `('Analyze this mess')`
SPEED	Wins at simple tasks `(Drag & Drop)`	Wins at complexity `(Regex/Scripting)`
SCALE	Linear Effort `(1 file = 1 second)`	Exponential Effort `(1000 files = 1 second)`

THE MINDSET SHIFT: If you can describe the task faster than you can do it, use the Agent. If you can do it faster than you can describe it, do it yourself.

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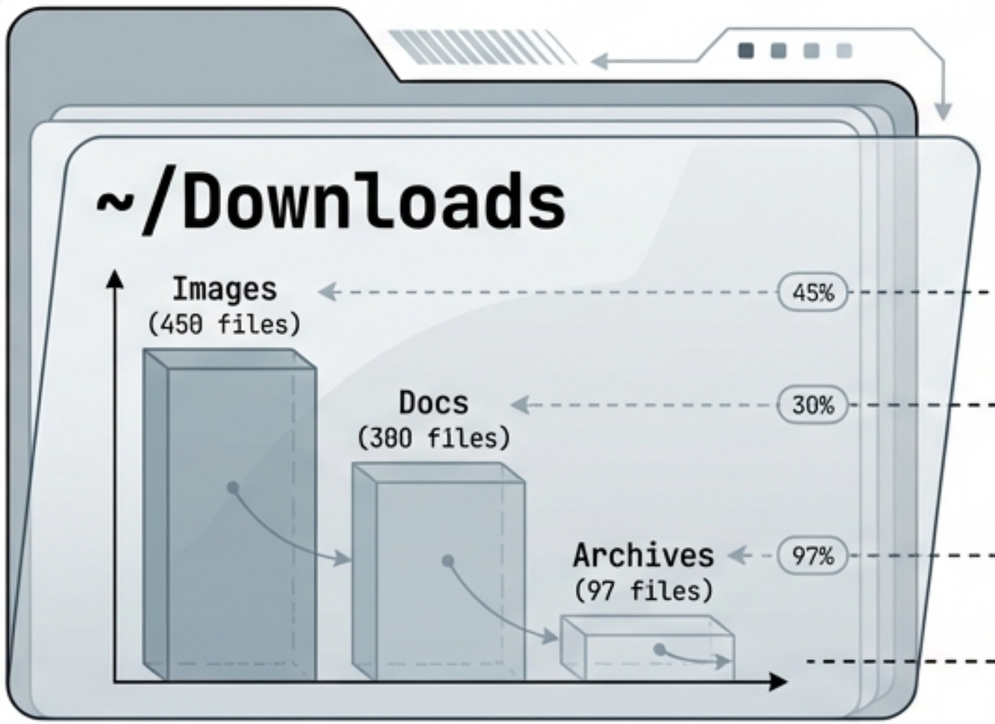
Step 1: The Survey (Observability)

Making the Black Box Visible



THE AGENT'S TOOLKIT

ls - List Files

find - Match Patterns

du - Measure Disk Usage

wc - Count Items

Help me understand my Downloads folder. What's here, what's old, what's taking up space?

```
$ Total files: 847
  Size: 12.4 GB
  Duplicates: 400+
```

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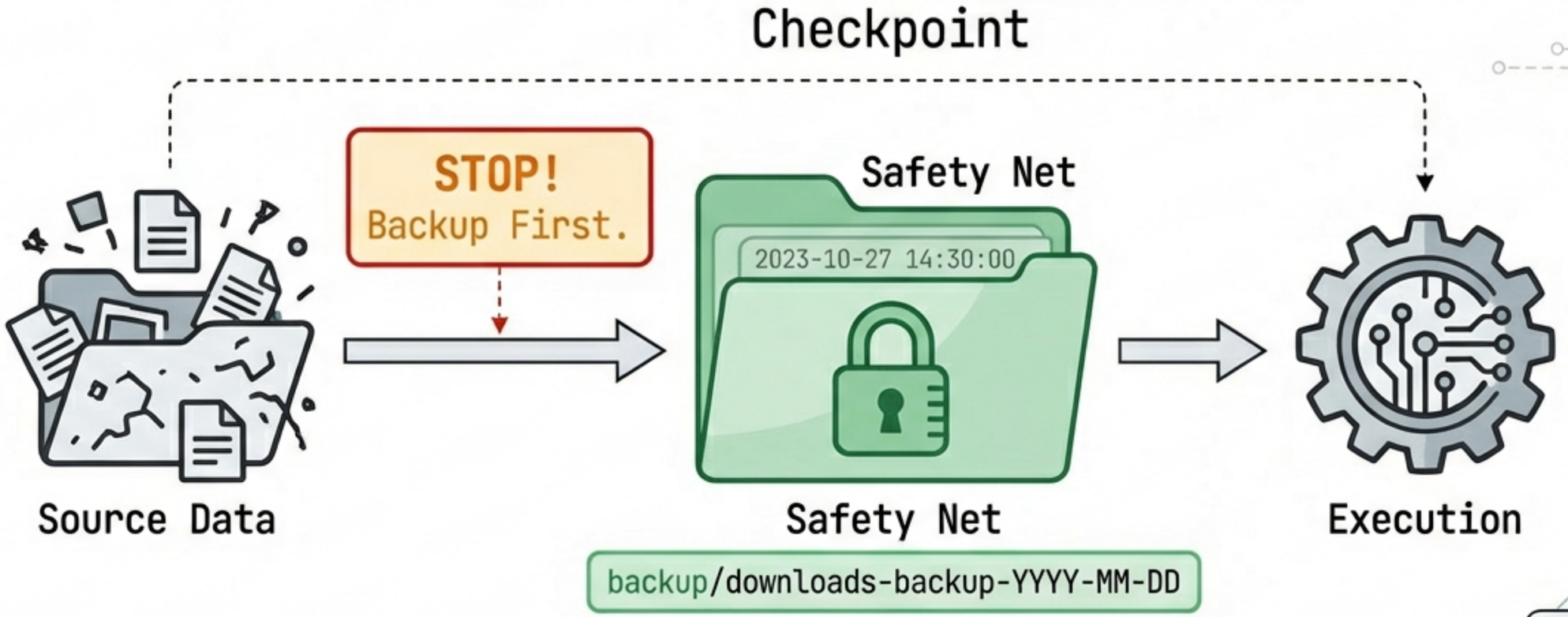
Step 2: The Safety-First Pattern



The Golden Rule: Never change what you cannot restore.

Key Prompt: Before we make any changes... create a timestamped backup of important files.

Agent Tools:

- mkdir
- cp
- chmod

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Step 3: Collaborative Rule Design

Ephemeral Conversation

Persisting State

rules.md

```
## Categorization Rules

- *.pdf -> /Documents
- *.csv -> /Spreadsheets
- *.jpg -> /Images
```

Don't just move files. Design the rules for moving files.
Save the logic so it isn't lost when the chat closes.

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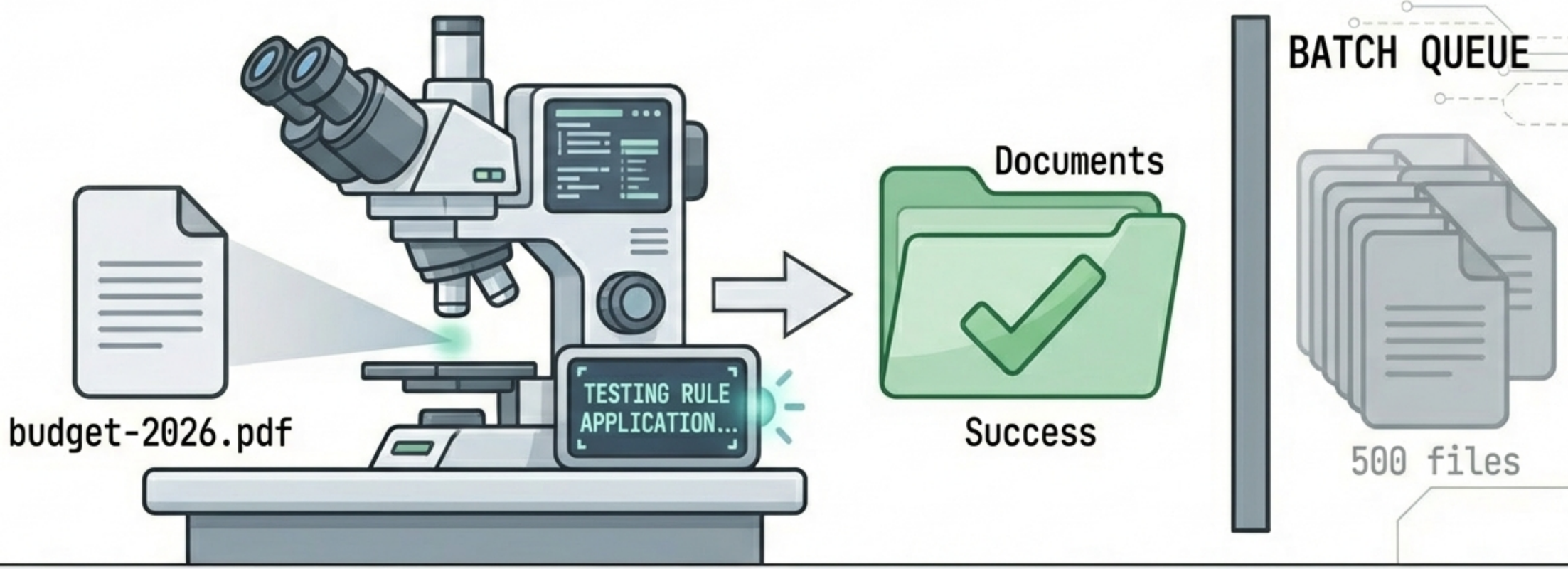
Step 4: The 'Dry Run' & Single-File Test



Key Prompt: Test your rules on ONE file first. Show me the result.

Small, Reversible Decomposition. Fix the rule, not the file.

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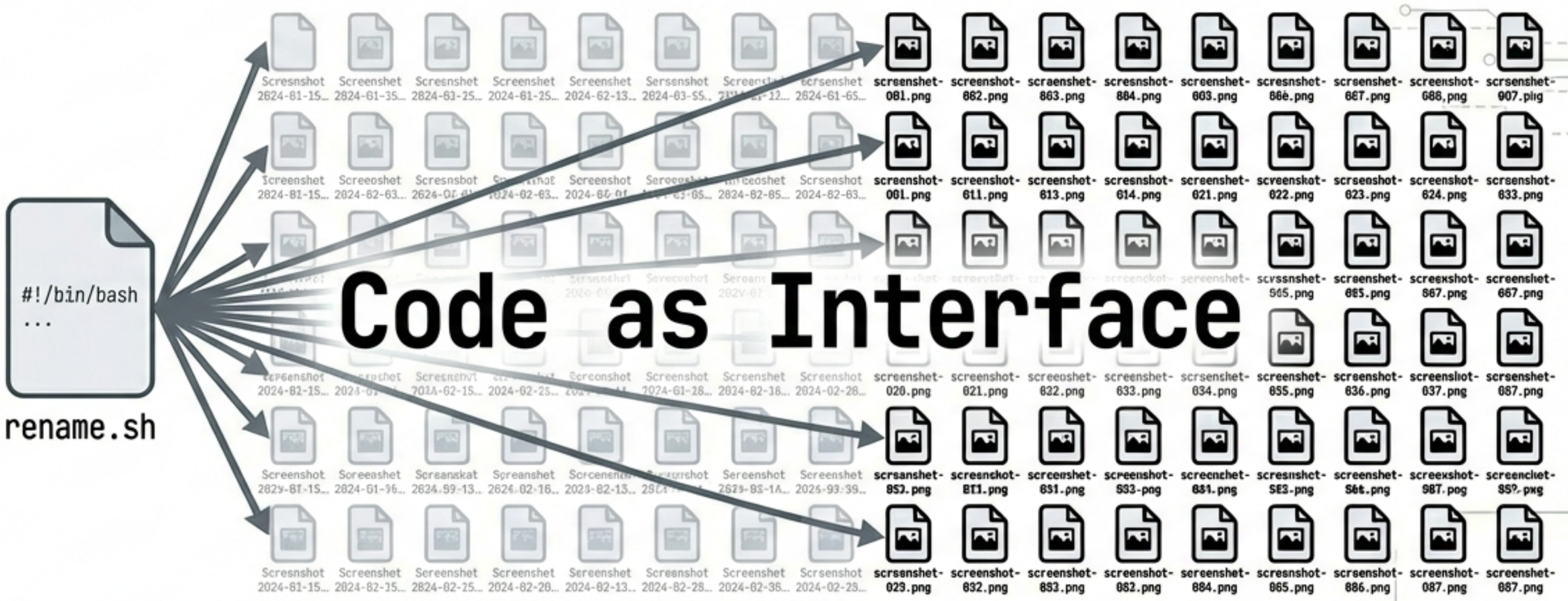
Step 5: Batch Operations



Don't rename manually. Don't ask the agent to click. Ask the agent to write a reusable script that solves the category of problems forever.

Key Prompt: Show me what you'll do before doing it. Then create a reusable script.

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Step 6: Verification

Trust but Verify

Plan (Expected)

Move 486 files.

=

Result (Actual)

`ls | wc -l` = 486

```
> Verifying organization...
> Source folder: 0 files remaining.
> Destination folders: 486 files total.
> Status: COMPLETE.
```

Verification is not optional. It is the mathematical proof that the work is done.

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Step 7: Search & Discovery

Syntax Search (Hard)

```
find . -name "*.pdf" -mtime +365
```

Agent's
find → xargs → grep
"Bridge"

Descriptive Search (Easy)

Find the tax pdf from last year.

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The Inevitable Mistake (Error Recovery)

Error Occurs
(Structure Lost).

Compare State
(`diff`).

Restore
(`cp -r backup/`).

Recovery is a planned workflow, not a panic response.

Key Insight: The ‘Deliberate Mistake’ exercise: Break it on purpose to prove you can fix it.

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The Seven Principles of Agent Direction

Bash is the Key

Code as Universal Interface

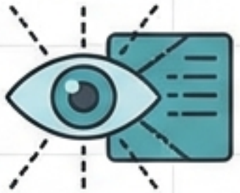
Verification

Small, Reversible Decomposition

From Chaos to System.

Persisting State

Constraints & Safety



Observability

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Building Your Toolkit (The Capstone)

You aren’t just cleaning a folder; you are building a **system**. These assets are **portable**, **reusable**, and **permanent**.

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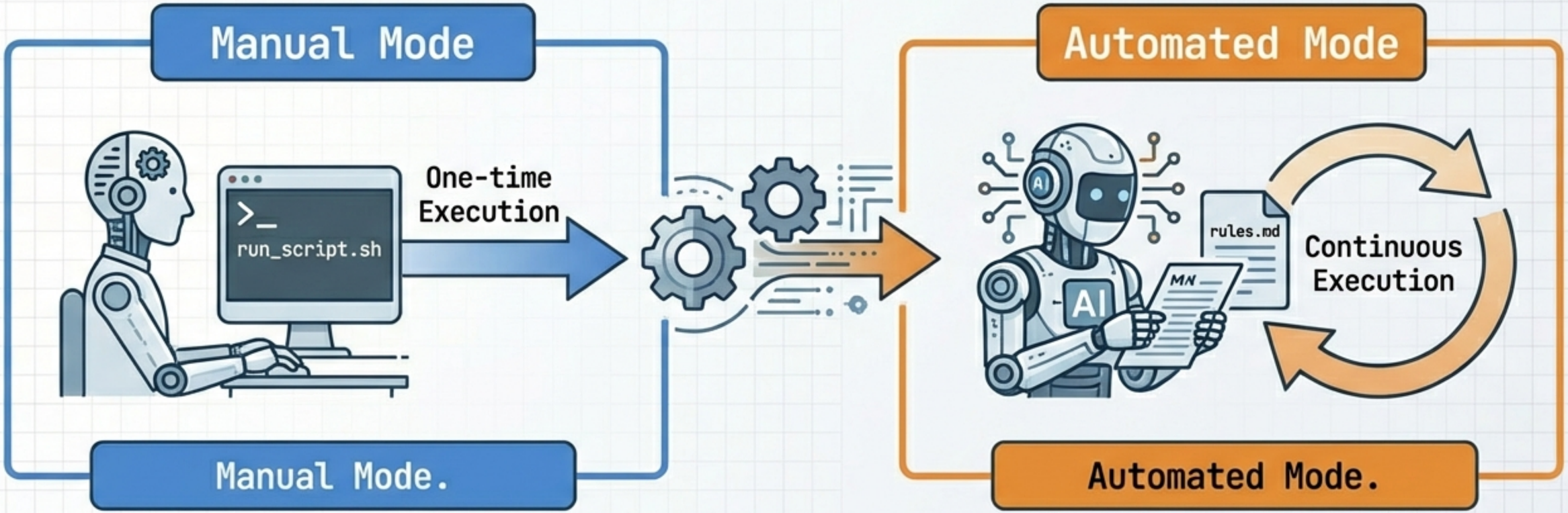
The Bridge to Automation



"The manual workflows you mastered are the foundation. Automation adds the layer that runs without you."

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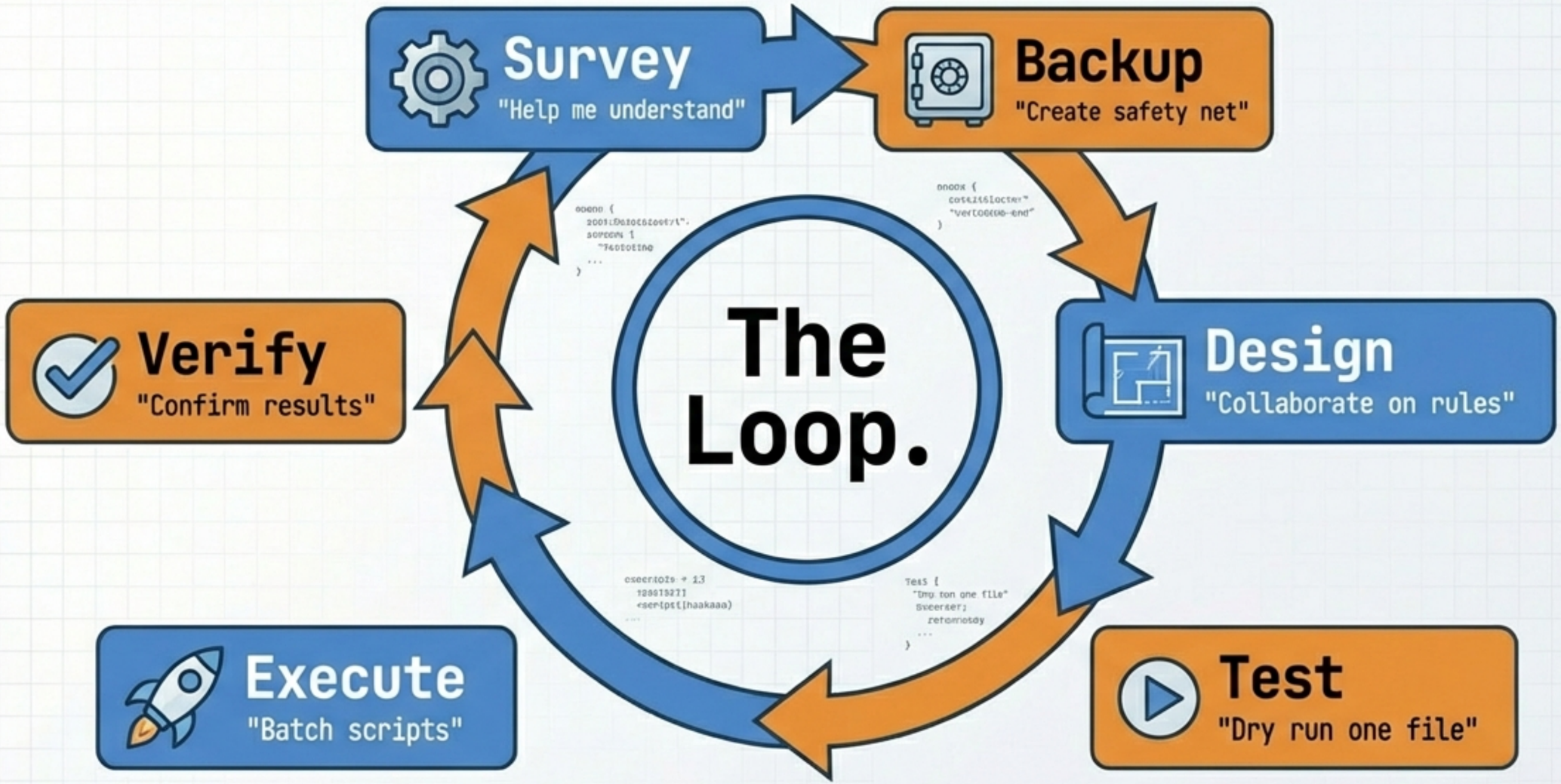
Summary Checklist



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Your Turn

1. Open your terminal.
2. Pick a chaotic folder (Downloads or Desktop).
3. Run the "Help me understand" prompt.

You are no longer just a user.
You are the director of an intelligent system.

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