



HACKATHON TOPIC BRIEF

n8n Builders Challenge

10 real SME problems · 3 levels · 60 minutes to ship

Saturday, 19 September 2026

MindX Technology School, Ho Chi Minh City

Hosted by Trung Tran, n8n Ambassador HCMC

HOW IT WORKS

Ten real problems. Three levels. One workflow.

Each team picks one of ten problems that small and medium businesses (SMEs) in Vietnam deal with every day. Every topic comes in three levels, so your team can choose the challenge that fits its skills. Hack & Build runs for 60 minutes (09:45–10:45), so each topic is scoped to a single n8n workflow you can run and demo live.

10

real-world topics

3

levels per topic

60 min

Hack & Build

2–4

builders per team

How the levels work

Levels stack: Medium extends Easy, and Hard extends Medium. Get the Easy flow running end-to-end first, then upgrade.

EASY

~20 min

The core flow: input → store → notify. No AI required.

MEDIUM

~40 min

Adds intelligence: AI understanding, classification or calculations.

HARD

Stretch

Adds real-world robustness: routing, approvals, de-duplication and reminders.

A level sets the size of the challenge, not your score. A polished Easy solution can still score high.

HOW IT WORKS

Build rules & starter kit

- **Sample data provided.** Each topic comes with a Google Sheet/CSV of 20–30 rows plus 3–5 edge cases (missing address, duplicate invoice, double booking, out-of-stock item...). Copy it to your own Drive.
- **One entry point.** Start with n8n Form Trigger or Webhook. For Zalo, Facebook or marketplace scenarios, simulate with sample messages; no real account connection needed.
- **AI is optional.** Use it to understand messages, read documents or write content. Use clear rules (Code, If, Switch) for money, matching and thresholds.
- **Fake data only.** Send outputs to an email or chat channel your team controls.
- **No custom UI needed.** The n8n canvas and your output channel are the demo.
- **Deliverable.** One workflow that runs end-to-end, shown with one normal case and one edge case. Export the JSON so winning templates can be shared with the community.

Judging

Criterion	What judges look for	Weight
Real-world value	Solves a real SME pain point. Someone could use it tomorrow.	30%
Workflow works	Runs end-to-end without manual fixes, and the outputs are correct.	35%
Edge-case handling	Handles missing, duplicate or invalid data gracefully and brings a human in when needed.	20%
Demo & pitch	A clear story: problem → live run → result, within the time limit.	15%

THE TOPICS

Topics at a glance

#	Topic	Typical business	Where AI helps
01	AI Lead Intake Assistant	Furniture, agencies, training centres	Classify need & priority, draft replies
02	Chat Message to Order	Online shops, retail stores	Turn Vietnamese chat into structured orders
03	Payment Reminder Autopilot	Distributors, B2B services	Tone-matched reminder messages
04	After-sales Care Desk	E-commerce, service businesses	Classify issue & urgency, policy-based replies
05	Low-stock Early Warning	Shops, cafés, distributors	Optional: explain reorder suggestions
06	Booking & Reminder Assistant	Salons, spas, training centres	Optional: understand free-text requests
07	Invoice Capture & Expense Approval	Any SME finance team	Read invoice images and PDFs
08	Store Content Assistant	Retail, F&B, local brands	Write channel-specific posts
09	Warranty Intake & Dispatch	Electronics, computer & device shops	Classify fault type
10	Owner's End-of-Day Report	Any SME owner	Explain changes in plain language

01

AI Lead Intake Assistant

Furniture, agencies, training centres

THE PROBLEM

Furniture showrooms, agencies and training centres miss enquiries or reply too late, so warm leads go cold.

EASY

A form captures the enquiry → save it to Google Sheets → notify sales.

MEDIUM

AI reads the request, classifies the service and its priority (hot / warm / cold), then drafts a tailored first reply.

HARD

Route each lead to the right salesperson by specialty, flag duplicates (same phone or email), and send a reminder when a lead is still untouched after the SLA.

SUGGESTED NODES

n8n Form Trigger · Google Sheets · Text Classifier · AI Agent · Switch · Wait · Gmail / Telegram

DEMO IT WITH

Normal case: A clear request for a 3-bedroom interior design package.

Edge case: The same customer submits twice under a different name.

Tip For the SLA demo, set the Wait node to 1–2 minutes instead of hours.

02

Chat Message to Order

Online shops, retail stores

THE PROBLEM

Shops take orders through free-text chat. Staff re-type every order and often get products or quantities wrong.

EASY

An order form → look up the price list → calculate the total and generate an order confirmation.

MEDIUM

AI turns a Vietnamese chat message into a structured order (items, quantity, phone, address) and asks the customer when details are missing.

HARD

Check stock, suggest a substitute when an item is sold out, and wait for the seller's approval before recording the order.

SUGGESTED NODES

Webhook / Form Trigger · Information Extractor · Google Sheets · Code · If · Send and Wait for Response

DEMO IT WITH

Normal case: "Cho em 2 áo thun trắng size M, giao 12 Lê Lợi, Q1."

Edge case: A message with no delivery address, or an item that is out of stock.

Tip Give the Information Extractor a clear schema: items[], phone, address.

03

Payment Reminder Autopilot

Distributors, B2B services

THE PROBLEM

Receivables live in Excel. Reminder dates get forgotten and cash comes in late.

EASY

Read the receivables sheet → filter invoices that are due → create reminder emails.

MEDIUM

Group invoices into due soon / overdue / paid, and write a reminder in the right tone for each group.

HARD

Match receivables against sample bank transactions, mark the matches, send unclear cases to accounting, and stop reminders for invoices already paid.

SUGGESTED NODES

Schedule Trigger · Google Sheets · Filter · Switch · Merge
· Code · Gmail

DEMO IT WITH

Normal case: An invoice 5 days overdue gets a polite but firm reminder.

Edge case: A customer paid only part of the amount, or used the wrong payment reference.

Tip Keep money logic in rules and Code. Use AI only for the wording.

04

After-sales Care Desk

E-commerce, service businesses

THE PROBLEM

Complaints arrive scattered across channels, and nobody knows what to handle first.

EASY

Receive feedback → create a ticket ID → log it and notify the responsible team.

MEDIUM

AI classifies each case as delivery, return or warranty, detects urgency and drafts a reply.

HARD

Check the return and warranty policy to recommend a resolution. Escalate to a person when the policy doesn't cover the case, and send reminders on overdue tickets.

SUGGESTED NODES

Form Trigger / Webhook · Text Classifier · AI Agent ·
Google Sheets · Switch · Gmail / Telegram

DEMO IT WITH

Normal case: A customer complains that a delivery is 3 days late.

Edge case: An angry customer asks for a refund outside the 7-day return window.

Tip Paste the short policy into the agent's system message; no vector store needed.

05

Low-stock Early Warning

Shops, cafés, distributors

THE PROBLEM

Shops and cafés only notice a shortage when a customer tries to buy.

EASY

Read the stock sheet → alert on items below their minimum threshold.

MEDIUM

Use average daily sales and supplier lead time to estimate the stock-out date and suggest how much to reorder.

HARD

Group the suggestions by supplier → draft purchase requests → a manager approves them before the status is updated.

SUGGESTED NODES

Schedule Trigger · Google Sheets · Code · Aggregate ·
Send and Wait for Response · Gmail

DEMO IT WITH

Normal case: Coffee beans drop below the reorder level.

Edge case: An item with no sales history or no lead time recorded.

Tip $\text{Days left} = \text{stock} \div \text{average daily sales}$. Reorder when $\text{days left} \leq \text{lead time}$.

06

Booking & Reminder Assistant

Salons, spas, training centres

THE PROBLEM

Staff spend hours confirming bookings, and customers forget appointments or get double-booked.

EASY

Receive a booking request → save it → send a confirmation.

MEDIUM

Check free slots, offer alternative times when there is a clash, and send a reminder before the appointment.

HARD

Allow rescheduling and cancellations. When a slot opens up, invite people on the waitlist and confirm only the first one who accepts.

SUGGESTED NODES

Form Trigger · Google Sheets / Google Calendar · If · Wait
· Gmail / Telegram

DEMO IT WITH

Normal case: A customer books an open slot for Saturday at 10:00.

Edge case: Two customers request the same slot at almost the same time.

Tip Use a status column (held → confirmed) to prevent confirming the same slot twice.

07

Invoice Capture & Expense Approval

Any SME finance team

THE PROBLEM

Employees send invoices through many channels. Accounting re-types them by hand and details are often missing.

EASY

A payment-request form with invoice upload → store the file → notify accounting.

MEDIUM

AI extracts the supplier, date and amount from the image or PDF → writes them to the sheet and flags fields to double-check.

HARD

Detect likely duplicates, check spending limits using sample rules, and route each request to the right approver.

SUGGESTED NODES

Form Trigger (file upload) · Extract from File · Information Extractor · Google Drive · Google Sheets · Switch · Send and Wait for Response

DEMO IT WITH

Normal case: A clear PDF invoice under the auto-approval limit.

Edge case: The same invoice is submitted twice, or the photo is blurry.

Tip Use a vision-capable model, and flag low-confidence fields rather than guessing.

08

Store Content Assistant

Retail, F&B, local brands

THE PROBLEM

SMEs have no marketing staff and spend hours writing product and promotion posts.

EASY

Enter product details → AI writes a Vietnamese post → save it as a draft.

MEDIUM

Create versions for Facebook, Zalo and email in the brand voice, and check prices and offers against the input data.

HARD

Add an approve / request-changes loop and scheduling. Only approved content moves to the publishing queue.

SUGGESTED NODES

Form Trigger · Basic LLM Chain / AI Agent · Code · Google Sheets · Send and Wait for Response

DEMO IT WITH

Normal case: A 20%-off weekend promotion for a new milk tea.

Edge case: The AI invents a discount that isn't in the input, and the check catches it.

Tip Compare the prices in the AI output with the input in a Code node before approval.

09

Warranty Intake & Dispatch

Electronics, computer & device shops

THE PROBLEM

Shops selling electronics, computers and devices struggle to track repair requests and assign technicians.

EASY

Receive a request → create a warranty ticket → send the customer a tracking code.

MEDIUM

Check the purchase date against a sample policy to decide warranty status, then classify the fault type and area.

HARD

Assign a technician by area and skill, send reminders on late jobs, and update the customer on progress.

SUGGESTED NODES

Form Trigger · Google Sheets · Date & Time · Text Classifier · Switch · Gmail / Telegram

DEMO IT WITH

Normal case: A laptop bought 4 months ago that won't power on.

Edge case: The warranty has expired, or the serial number isn't found.

Tip *Warranty end = purchase date + warranty months, calculated with the Date & Time node.*

10

Owner's End-of-Day Report

Any SME owner

THE PROBLEM

Owners have to open several files to understand revenue, orders, receivables and open issues.

EASY

Aggregate today's sales → send revenue, order count and average order value.

MEDIUM

Compare with yesterday or the target, and let AI explain the changes in plain Vietnamese.

HARD

Combine revenue, receivables and stock → recommend the top three priorities, each backed by numbers.

SUGGESTED NODES

Schedule Trigger · Google Sheets · Aggregate · Code · Basic LLM Chain · Telegram / Gmail

DEMO IT WITH

Normal case: A normal day with revenue 12% above yesterday.

Edge case: A day with zero sales, or a data file that is missing.

Tip *Calculate every number in Code, and let AI only explain them.*

BEFORE YOU DEMO

Demo checklist

✓	The workflow runs end-to-end, from trigger to output
✓	A normal case is ready to run live
✓	An edge case is ready and handled gracefully
✓	Only test accounts and fake data are used
✓	The workflow is exported as JSON
✓	A one-sentence pitch: who has this problem, and what your workflow saves them

Stuck? Raise your hand. Mentors are on the floor all morning.

Organised by Trung Tran · n8n Ambassador, Ho Chi Minh City