

Case Study: Designing a Daily Pinterest Publishing Process

How a daily publishing job across Notion, Canva and Claude got designed, streamlined, and (partly) automated.

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The process

I run a food blog. Every recipe (URL on site, basically) on it gets promoted on Pinterest, and each recipe needs several images, each one going to a particular Pinterest board on a particular day, with its own title and description written before it goes out.

At its core, it's a process that's made up of a few sub-processes:

- **Creating Pins.** Images, titles and descriptions, prepared whenever a new recipe goes up.
- **Scheduling Pins.** Once a pin has been created, it needs to be scheduled according to a couple of rules. Scheduling a new pin depends on what's already scheduled, so the daily count stays even.
- **Daily publishing.** Each day a number of Pins (prepared in advance) need to be uploaded and published on Pinterest.

You don't need to know how Pinterest works to follow this. What matters is the shape of the process: a daily task, inputs scattered across several tools, and small decisions that have to be made correctly every time. You probably have at least a few such processes in your business.

The hardest constraint I set was this:

Daily publishing has to be finishable in three minutes on a Saturday, with no thinking involved.

Almost every decision below comes back to that line.

Disclaimer: This whole case study covers my business, not a client's. This way I can show you the actual structure, the real numbers, and the two things I got wrong. No holding back here.

[VIDEO EMBED] *Five minutes: the architecture, then a real morning start to finish.*

The tools

The process started with three:

- **Notion** — the data centre. Everything the process knows lives here, and it's where most of the work happens.
- **Canva** — where the designs live.
- **Claude** — writes the pin titles and descriptions, using the data from Notion.

Notion and Canva hold the data, while Claude uses it.

That meant there was quite a bit of carrying information from one tool to the next by hand. Done by me.

To speed things up, two more tools got added later:

- **Google Drive** — where the exported images land. Before this, publishing meant opening Canva, finding the right slide, exporting it to my desktop and picking it up from there. Now the day's images are simply waiting in a folder, exported automatically before I look.
- **n8n** — an automation tool. Small workflows that pull data out of Notion, process it, call other services, and write results back.

Adding more tools often means the process gets more complex. That's not the case here.

The difference is that neither of these holds any of the data. They're there to take coordination off my plate: Drive is a drop-off point and n8n is wiring. With both in place, most of the copying, pasting and clicking that used to sit between the first three tools disappears.

How a process gets improved

This is the method. It's what I used here, and it's what I use when working with clients.

Stage 1: Work out what has to be true. What the process has to hold, what it has to make easy, what its constraints are. Done before anyone opens a tool. It's the hardest stage and it determines everything after it.

Stage 2: Design the data, then build it. Where each piece of information lives, and what relates to what. Once there's an obvious place for every piece of data, "where does this go" is no longer a question.

Stage 3: Run it by hand. Do the process manually, the same way, enough times to know whether it's actually settled. This confirms whether the design from stage 2 is correct and if any improvements or changes are needed.

Stage 4: Automate what's deterministic. When possible, automate the steps that run identically every time. That might be a button or a formula inside the tool you're already in, or a workflow in an external tool we use for wiring things together.

Stage 5: Introduce AI where it earns its place. A different stage from automation, because AI handles the steps that aren't deterministic. There's usually a question that comes with it: does a person sit in front of it and review what it produces, or does it run in the background inside a workflow and write straight back into the system? Anything where you'd check the output anyway belongs in the first group.

Where a diagnostic sits. The diagnostic picks the process (or part of a process) worth fixing, then does stages 1 and 2. On the calls we work out what has to be true and how the process actually needs to run; then the data gets designed around it, and adjusted if the design turns out not to fit. Automation and AI are a separate conversation, after that groundwork exists and has been used.

The rest of this document is those five stages, applied.

Stage 1 — What had to be true

I started by writing down what the system had to hold and what it had to make easy. Everything after this is downstream of the list.

The data:

- A piece of content (think URL) can have several pins
- Each pin goes to one Pinterest board, on one date
- Each pin points at a specific image: which Canva design file, which slide
- Each board carries its own keywords
- Each piece of content carries its own keywords too

The scheduling:

- Pins for the same piece of content need to sit at least a week apart
- Pins need to spread evenly across days, not land as nothing, nothing, then six on a Wednesday

The daily publishing job:

- Publishing happens every day, so it has to be as simple as possible
- Everything I need to copy has to already exist, written, in one place

That last group is the three-minutes-on-a-Saturday constraint in action. It rules out any design that needs me to make a judgement call in the moment, or to assemble data from several places.

This is the part of the work that's actually hard. Working out what has to be true, in enough detail that the structure follows from it, is where a process is won or lost. The building that comes after is usually the easy part.

The result: clarity on what needs to be built and how the pieces relate, before anything gets built or changed. Nothing exists yet, but every decision in the next stage already has its rationale waiting.

Stage 2 — Designing the data

Three databases

The simplest version is one database of pins, with a column for the board and a column for the content it belongs to.

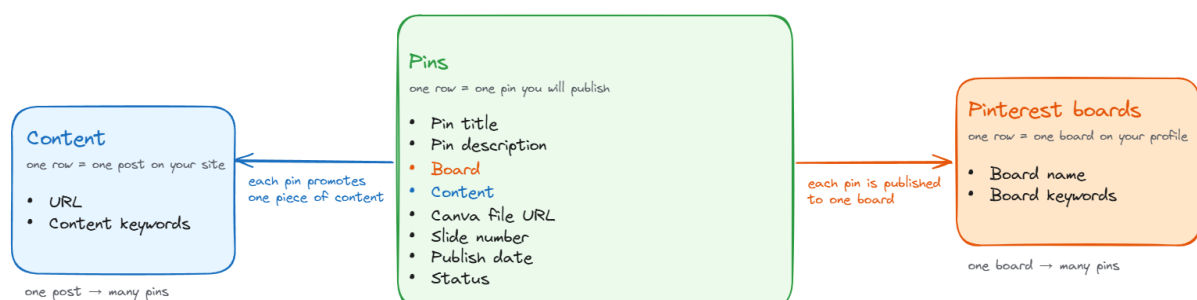
The content column resolved itself immediately. I already had a database of content, one entry per recipe URL, so instead of typing the URL onto every pin, the column became a relation to that database. Two databases, and every pin now sits under the content it promotes.

Boards took longer to settle, because at first a board really is just a name. The reason it can't stay a text column, or a simple select, is what a board carries: its own keywords, and the other details I use when writing titles for it. Put that in a column and the same keywords get repeated on every pin going to that board. Change them and there are dozens of rows to edit.

A board isn't just a label, it's a thing with properties. So it became the third database.

Content, pins, boards — each pin belonging to one piece of content and one board, inheriting keywords from both.

The pin also carries where its image lives: a link to the Canva design file and the slide number inside it. At first that seems like unnecessary bookkeeping, since I could always open the file and find the slide myself. But it makes the location explicit instead of something I have to go looking for. It's also the detail that later made it possible to stop opening Canva at all.



Two views

With the structure in place, the views that make the job easier were almost automatic.

The pin calendar. Every scheduled pin laid out by date. Tuesday has five and Thursday has none, so things get dragged until it's even, which makes the scheduling rules easy to enforce by eye. With the calendar open in a second tab, scheduling all the pins for one piece of content takes about thirty seconds.

July 2026

Manage in Calendar < Today >

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
27 Ginger Cinnamon Eclairs Recipe (Spic... Fall Dessert Recipes and Ideas Published	28 Easy Pumpkin Oatmeal Recipe (Cream... Oats Recipes Published	29 Easy Pumpkin Overnight Oats Recipe (... Healthy Fall Breakfast Recipes Published	30 The Best Pumpkin Pastry Cream Recipe... Fall Dessert Recipes and Ideas Published	31 Easy Apple Cinnamon Overnight Oats ... Healthy Fall Breakfast Recipes Published	Aug 1 Easy Pumpkin Spice Glaze Recipe (Rea... Fall Dessert Recipes and Ideas Published	2 Easy Pumpkin Financiers Recipe (Mini Al... Fall Dessert Recipes and Ideas Published
Dulce de Leche Eclairs Recipe (Fall Des... Fall Dessert Recipes and Ideas Published	Easy Apple Compote Recipe (Perfect F... Apple Recipes Published	Homemade Pear Sauce - A Cozy F... Healthy Fall Breakfast Recipes Published	The Best Pumpkin Protein Powder Pan... Pumpkin Recipes Published	Brown Butter Madeleines - Easy Frenc... French Pastries and Desserts Published	Easy Pear Compote Recipe (Perfect Fal... Fall Dessert Recipes and Ideas Published	French Pumpkin Eclairs Recipe (Baker... French Pastries and Desserts Published
3 Homemade Ginger Cinnamon Eclairs ... French Pastries and Desserts Published	4 Easy Biscoff Panna Cotta Recipe (Cozy... Fall Dessert Recipes and Ideas Published	5 Easy No-Bake Biscoff Tart Recipe (Perf... Fall Dessert Recipes and Ideas Published	6 Easy No-Bake Vanilla Cheesecake Cup... Dessert Cups Published	7 The Best Apple Cinnamon Overnight ... Oats Recipes Published	8 Easy Orange Panna Cotta Recipe (Mak... No Bake Desserts Published	9 The Best Pumpkin Spice Icing (Perfect... Pumpkin Recipes Published
Dulce de Leche Eclairs Recipe (Crisp S... French Pastries and Desserts Published	Pumpkin Eclairs Recipe (Fall Dessert w... Pumpkin Recipes Published	No-Bake Mini Biscoff Cheesecakes Re... Fall Dessert Recipes and Ideas Published	Creamy Pumpkin Overnight Oats ... Pumpkin Recipes Published	Easy Pumpkin Protein Powder Pancak... Healthy Fall Breakfast Recipes Published	Pumpkin Financiers • Mini Almond F... Pumpkin Recipes Published	Easy Oreo Cheesecake Cups Recipe (N... Dessert Cups Published
10 Easy Pistachio Panna Cotta Recipe (Make... No Bake Desserts Published	11 No Bake Biscoff Panna Cotta (Easy Italia... No Bake Desserts Published	12 Easy Pumpkin Pastry Cream Recipe (T... Pumpkin Recipes Published	13 Easy Vanilla Panna Cotta Recipe (Make It... No Bake Desserts Published	14 The Best No-Bake Biscoff Tart (Crunch... No Bake Desserts Published	15 Easy Brown Butter Financiers Recipe (Fre... French Pastries and Desserts Published	16 The Best Pumpkin Financiers Recipe (... French Pastries and Desserts Published
Lemon Cheesecake Cups Easy Individ... Dessert Cups Published	Easy No-Bake Vanilla Cheesecake Cup... No Bake Desserts Published	Easy No-Bake Mini Biscoff Cheesecakes ... No Bake Desserts Published	Pumpkin Overnight Oats (No Cook, 10 M... Oats Recipes Published	Apple Cinnamon Overnight Oats Recl... Apple Recipes Published	Pumpkin Pastry Cream Recipe (Easy C... French Pastries and Desserts Published	Easy Mini Chocolate Cheesecakes Recipe... No Bake Desserts Published
17 Easy Strawberry Cheesecake Cups Recipe... Dessert Cups Published	18 Easy No-Bake Mini Oreo Cheesecakes ... No Bake Desserts Published	19 Easy Biscoff Panna Cotta Cups (Make ... Dessert Cups Published	20 Easy Strawberry Panna Cotta Recipe (No ... No Bake Desserts Published	21 No-Bake Strawberry Cheesecake Cups... No Bake Desserts Published	22 Brown Butter Financiers Recipe (Easy ... Fall Dessert Recipes and Ideas Published	23 Chocolate Cheesecake Cups - Easy No... Dessert Cups Published
Easy Pistachio Panna Cotta Cups (Perf... Dessert Cups Published	Easy Mini Peanut Butter and Jelly Chees... No Bake Desserts Published	Easy No-Bake Mini Lemon Cheesecak... No Bake Desserts Published	Vanilla Panna Cotta Cups: A Make-Ah... Dessert Cups Published	Snickers Eclairs Recipe (Makes 18 Mini... Fall Dessert Recipes and Ideas Published	Easy Orange Panna Cotta Cups (Perfec... Dessert Cups Published	Orange Panna Cotta Cups Recipe (No ... No Bake Desserts Published

(Scheduling is dragging pins until the days look even.)

Today. A filtered view on the dashboard showing only what goes out today, with the board, title and description sitting there ready to copy. Nothing to filter, look up, or decide. Just get on with publishing.

Pins To Publish

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin-creation-tool/>

Table

Pin Title	Description	BoardName	Date
 Easy Biscoff Panna Cotta Cups (Make Ahead Party Desser	Pour it into little glasses and let the fric	Dessert Cups	19/08/2026
 Easy No-Bake Mini Lemon Cheesecakes Recipe (Make-Ah	This no bake cheesecake is creamy, tar	No Bake Desserts	19/08/2026
+ New page			

(The view that shows pins to publish today.)

The result: every piece of information the process needs has one place it lives, and two views that turn that data into instructions. Scheduling became a thirty-second job done once per piece of content, and publishing became copying from a list. A data design that fits the work, plus a couple of views built on top of it, is most of what makes a process feel smooth.

Stage 3 — Running it by hand

Then I used it. Daily, manually, for long enough to find out which parts of the design were actually right.

Two things surfaced.

The keyword design needed an update

Keywords lived in two places: the board carried keywords related to the board, the content carried its own. When it was time to write a pin title and description, both sets got used together.

Sounds simple enough.

The problem was that some pins need a subset. A recipe might carry eight keywords, but one particular pin is only about the make-ahead angle, and using all eight produces a title and description that's about everything and nothing in particular. Same on the board side. The right keyword set for a specific pin is often narrower than what its parents carry.

The fix? Keywords became a field on the pin, auto-populated from the board and the content. Most pins take what they inherit and I never touch it. When a pin needs something narrower, or something extra, I edit that one field without changing what the board or the recipe carries.

Scheduling didn't need automating

I'd built a scheduling automation early: a button that found dates keeping the daily pin count roughly even.

It worked. I used it a handful of times and removed it.

Scheduling by hand on the calendar takes about thirty seconds for all the pins on one piece of content, so there was almost nothing to save. And by hand I get more control, because I can see the month while I'm deciding rather than trusting rules I set weeks earlier.

The deeper reason is the one worth highlighting: **I wasn't doing it the same way every time**. Sometimes I wanted pins closer together, sometimes I wanted one to land before a weekend, sometimes I wanted to dodge a date for reasons no rule knew about.

Automation works great if you do perform a process one way. If it still holds legitimate variation that cannot be encoded, the automation will be wrong often enough that you stop trusting it. And once you don't trust it, you won't use it.

I'd built that one before the process was settled, so in the end it had to go.

The result: the keyword design turned out not to fit how the work actually happens, so it got changed to accommodate the process. A scheduling automation built too early got deleted.

Neither was obvious or easy to find at the design stage. Both took going through the process a number of times to surface.

Stage 4 — Automating what's deterministic

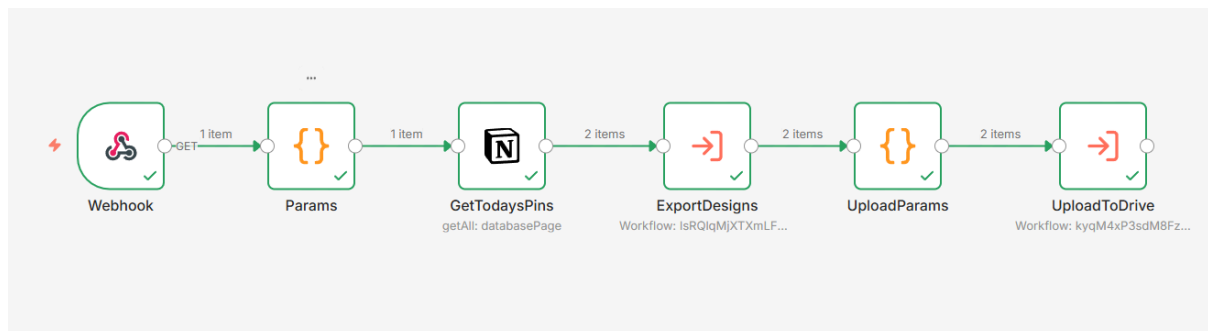
By this point the process had run by hand long enough that I knew which parts never varied. Exporting the day's images is the clearest example.

Everything needed is already in the system. The pin knows its date, its design file and its slide number. There's no decision anywhere in the step: given a date, there is exactly one correct set of files, and it's the same set no matter who asks or when. In tech speak, it's deterministic.

So I built an n8n workflow that runs each morning, exports the images scheduled for that day out of Canva, and drops them into Google Drive. I don't open Canva and I don't export anything by hand. The files are just there, ready to publish.

What made this possible was the data design. The design file link and the slide number, recorded back in stage 2 when they looked like unnecessary detail, are what the workflow uses to find the right image. Without them there's nothing to automate — the workflow would have to guess which slide, and it can't.

The result: two to three minutes of clicking through Canva to find and export the right files, gone. Exporting is done twice every day, which means the workflow saves 2 to 3 hours every month.



(The workflow that grabs today's pins from Canva and uploads them to Drive)

Stage 5 — Adding AI

Writing pin titles and descriptions is the opposite kind of step. There's no correct answer to compute, so no automation can produce it. It's judgement, which makes it the natural place for AI.

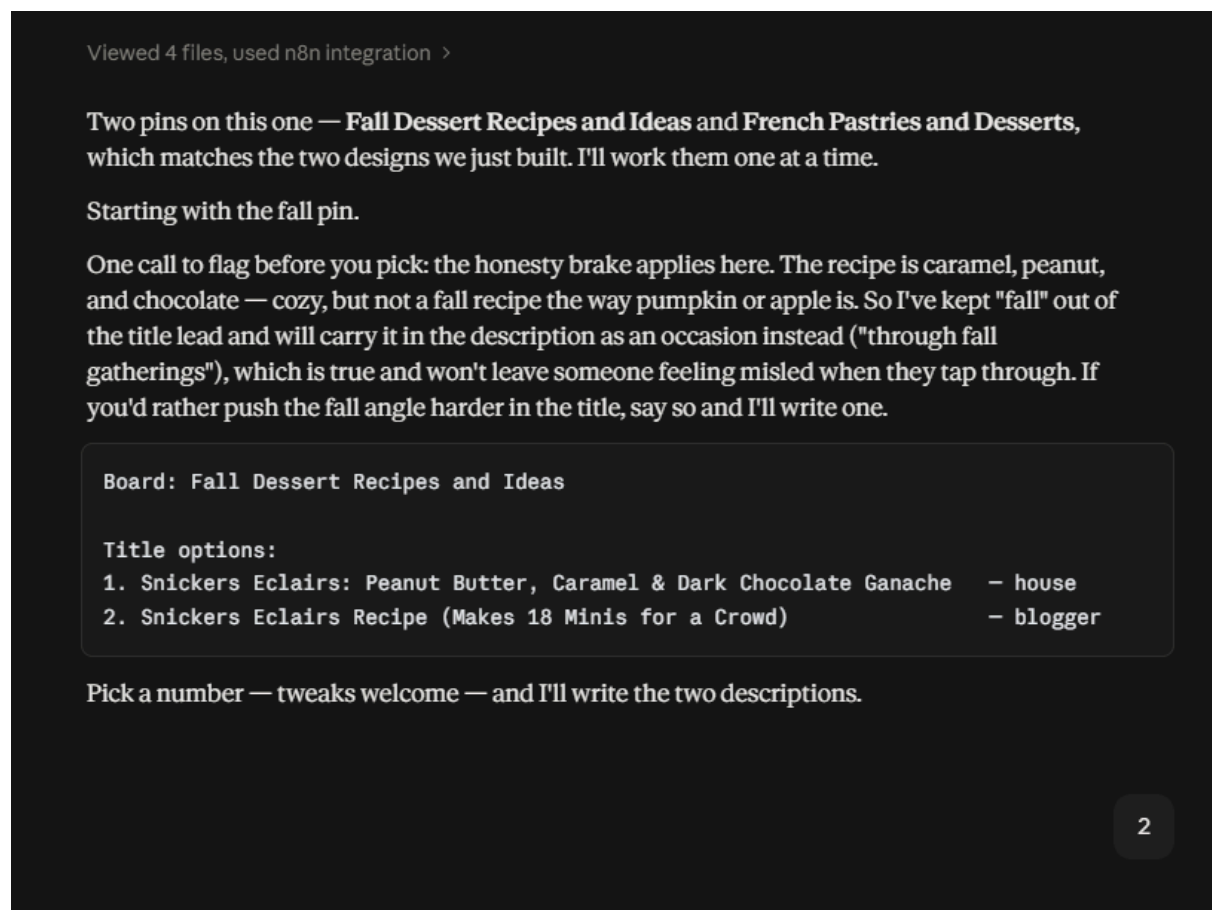
I was already using Claude for it. The problem was everything around it. I'd copy a prompt template, then go and collect the post URL, the board name, the board's keywords and the recipe's keywords: four places, about three minutes, and easy to get wrong. Paste the wrong board's keywords and the output comes back as confident as ever, and completely off.

So I automated the assembly.

Now:

1. I point Claude at a piece of content.
2. An n8n workflow pulls the pins, their boards, the keywords and the URL out of Notion in one go.
3. Claude drafts title and description options against the rules I've written down in a Claude skill.
4. I read them and pick one.
5. When I approve it, another workflow writes everything back into Notion, attached to the right pin, ready for its publication day.

Again, no copying and pasting.



(The Claude skill guides the pin titles and descriptions conversation based on my instructions.)

I went with the chat version rather than an API call in the background because I want to see the options and choose between them. It's called human in the loop, and it's the right shape

whenever someone needs to check the output, or steer it somewhere else, before it counts as done.

The result: roughly three minutes of collecting data from four places and filling in a prompt, replaced by pointing Claude at one Notion entry. Minutes of tedious work saved every time, and copy-paste errors gone with it. The workflow runs 60–90 times a month and saves somewhere between three and five hours total. It took about two hours to build, so it paid for itself after a couple of weeks.

The process today

The daily publishing process now takes about three minutes. The images are exported to Drive automatically and ready for upload, and the today view has the board, title and description already written. It's just copy, paste, upload.

No decisions to make, and everything on a single screen.

Plenty of the Pinterest process is still manual, and that's by design. I schedule pins by hand, I choose between the title and description options Claude offers, I make the images myself. Those steps involve judgement calls that I wanted to make myself instead of handing it over to a machine.

The goal was never to remove myself from the process. It was to remove or simplify the parts where I'm only moving information around.

What that leaves is a process somebody else could run. Every piece of information has a defined place, so an SOP for scheduling pins, writing titles and descriptions, or publishing the day's pins is a short checklist with no ambiguity in it.

Writing the titles and descriptions is the clearest example. The old instructions would have run to a page: open this Notion page, copy the URL, open the board, copy its keywords, open the recipe, copy those keywords, paste all of it into this template, then run it. The new version is open Claude, run this 5-word prompt, and pick the option you like best. The skill handles the rest and saves the results back into the system.

Good data design, plus automation and AI where they earn their place, saves 5 to 7 hours a month, removes a few of the ways this could go wrong, and makes the whole thing much easier to hand over.
