

CRE Brokerage in 2030

Why the administrative half of the job is going away, and who captures the gains

Prepared by CRE OneSource · 2026

WHAT'S IN THIS PAPER

- **The Administrative Half** — an itemized inventory of a broker's week
- **What Past Technology Waves Fixed** — and what they left untouched
- **Monday Morning, 2030** — the broker's week, hour by hour
- **Who Captures the Gains** — how the recovered time gets divided
- **On The Record** — eight dated predictions

This is an opinion paper. The research is real, sourced, and dated. The conclusions drawn from it are ours, and we have tried to make them specific enough to argue with.

A full-time commercial broker spends about 24 hours a week producing documents. Proposals, flyers, tour packages, prospect reports, abstracts, comp sets, call lists. Section 1 itemizes all of it. That is more than half the working week, spent by the most expensive person in the building, and almost none of it is the highest and best use of their time.

We believe that work has about four years left.

It goes gradually, one document type at a time, and only at firms that pursue it. By 2030 we expect a broker on modern systems to spend two hours a week on administration and forty in front of clients. The gap between that broker and the one still building flyers by hand will be the widest competitive gap this industry has seen in thirty years.

What follows is the case for that, the best case against it, and eight dated predictions.

WHERE THINGS STAND

24 hours

of document production in a full-time commercial broker's week. Our itemized inventory, Section 1

\$115K – \$575K

that time valued at the \$100–\$500 effective rates we see for broker and operations work

66% / 5%

CRE professionals using AI weekly or daily, against those who trust it with a deal decision. Same survey, April 2026

40%+

of agentic AI projects Gartner expects to be canceled by the end of 2027. The technology is real. Many deployments still fail

The work is enormous. The tools are now good enough to remove most of it. Most attempts will still fail, for reasons that have nothing to do with the models.

Why This Sounds Like Every Other Technology Promise

The case against all of this is strong. Here it is in its strongest form — the arguments we hear most often from brokers who expect little to change.

- **Brokerage is a relationship business, and relationships do not automate.** A tenant rep broker is retained for judgment, discretion, and relationships built over years. None of that is documentary work.
- **The industry has bought this before.** Brokerages have been sold CRMs and deal-management suites for twenty years, each promising to give brokers their time back. Broker hours have not yet meaningfully decreased.
- **Unsupervised AI has no place in a live deal.** Letting automation answer a client or move a transaction forward without a broker reviewing it is not something this business should accept today, and the professionals using AI daily are right to withhold that trust.
- **The technology is improving too fast to commit to.** Whatever a firm adopts this year will be outclassed next year, so the rational move is to let it settle first.

Three of these are true right now. Brokerage is a relationship business. Unsupervised AI has no business touching a live deal. And twenty years of software did not meaningfully reduce broker hours. The disagreement is not about the present. It is whether the next four years look like the last twenty.

The last one is where we push back hardest. The models will keep improving, and that is exactly why waiting costs something. Capability gets cheaper every year, but the record a firm needs in order to use it does not build itself, and the brokers who start now will have four years of practice their competitors do not. Neither of those can be bought later.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE HALF

1. What the 24 Hours Are

Every promise to give brokers their time back runs into the same question: which hours? So we itemized them. This inventory comes from working closely with thousands of brokers over the past five years, and from our founder's forty-year brokerage career. It is an estimate rather than a survey, and it is here to be checked against your own week.

Work product	Cadence	Hrs / wk	Where we expect it to land by 2030
Drafting email — introductions, prospect follow-up, sending articles to clients	Continuous	3 – 4	Drafted from context. Broker edits and sends.
Proposals, counteroffers, LOIs / tenant-rep comparison spreadsheets	Per deal	2 – 5	Drafted against the firm's prior deals. Broker sets strategy and terms.
Prospect reports for listing clients	Per listing	2 – 3	Generated on schedule from activity already recorded.
Email blast preparation and send	Recurring	2 – 5	Segmented and drafted. Broker approves list and message.
Tour packages for tenant and buyer clients	Per requirement	1 – 3	Assembled from the tour list.
Property flyers, re-entered across every listing platform and the firm website	Per status change	1 – 3	Propagated from one status change. Not re-entered or re-formatted anywhere.
Weekly and monthly call lists	Weekly	1	Prioritized from recorded activity and ongoing deals.
Comps analysis	Per deal	1	Assembled and cited. Broker judges relevance.
Booking packages	Per closing	1	Produced from the executed legal documents.

Work product	Cadence	Hrs / wk	Where we expect it to land by 2030
Business plan — writing, review, action items	Weekly + quarterly	0.7 – 1.1	Drafted from actual pipeline and production data.
Listing presentations	When pitching	0 – 1.3	Assembled. Broker builds the argument.
Offering memoranda and executive summaries	Episodic	0 – 2	Drafted from the property and financial record.
Social media posts	Episodic	0 – 1	Drafted from listing and market activity.
Lease and NPV analysis	Per deal	0.3	Modeled from the terms. Broker interprets.
Marketing brochures for larger properties	Weekly	0.3	Generated to template.
Lease abstracts	As received	0.25	First-pass abstraction. Broker verifies.
Broker opinions of value	Weekly	0.25	Drafted from comps. Broker sets the opinion.
Average week		24	

Across 48 working weeks, 24 hours a week is about 1,150 hours a year.

THE SAME WORK, THREE WAYS

1,150 hours

the administrative and production load in a full-time broker's year

\$115K – \$575K

that time at the \$100–\$500 effective hourly rates we see for broker and operations work

28 weeks

more than half the working year spent on non-revenue-generating administrative work

There is a second price on the same work. The Bureau of Labor Statistics put the median wage for secretaries and administrative assistants at \$48,310 in May 2025, about \$60,000 fully loaded. That is what the labor market charges to have a person do this instead.

So 24 hours a week prices three ways: half a broker's year, \$115,000 to \$575,000 of the firm's most expensive time, or a \$60,000 hire. Which is why the right comparison for software that absorbs this work is an assistant, not a CRM. A CRM is a filing cabinet with a monthly bill. This work, at this level of output, carries far more value than that and should be measured against labor.

2. Why the Hours Never Moved

Technology has changed this business, repeatedly. Listing and ownership data moved from private files into searchable national databases. Email replaced couriered packages. Signatures went electronic. Marketing moved online. Anyone who worked a deal in 1995 would not recognize the mechanics of one today.

Two things were true of every one of those waves. Each fixed a single slice of the job, and each took ten to twenty years to spread, because each needed the whole industry to agree on something first — a shared database, a legal standard, a common file format. Adoption happened slowly, and in many cases brokers moved only because their clients had started expecting it.

And none of them reduced the hours a broker spends producing documents. They changed where the work happened and how fast it moved, not whether a person sat down and did it. The reason is a design choice, not a failure of execution.

Almost every system this industry bought was built as a system of record. Its job was to hold information accurately so it could be reported on later. That makes its core interaction a form, and a form is a request for labor. Every field is an instruction to the broker: type this in.

THE BLANK FIELD

A system of record asks the most expensive person in the building to do data entry, then reports back to them about it. The subscription did not remove the work. It moved the work onto the firm's own payroll.

Which explains the industry's chronic complaint about adoption. Brokers were not resisting technology out of temperament. They were declining to do unpaid clerical work for a system that handed them a dashboard in return. Every brokerage leader who has tried to keep a team current in the CRM has run this experiment.

What is arriving now differs on both counts. **It is software that does the work and records it as a byproduct, so the broker decides and approves instead of typing.** And it needs no industry-wide agreement to arrive. There is no standard to ratify and no shared database to build. It installs against a firm's own records, which means it spreads at the speed individual firms decide to move rather than at the speed the industry converges. That is why we expect this wave to land faster and wider than the ones before it.

3. Why This Time Is Different

Look again at the table in Section 1. None of that work is hard. A flyer update is minutes. A tour package is an hour or two. A prospect report is a couple of hours. An LOI drafted against three prior deals is an afternoon.

The models can already do all of it. That is not a forecast. The length of task an AI agent completes on its own, timed in the hours a skilled professional would need, has doubled every seven months for six years,

and work measured in minutes and hours sits well inside what these models handle today.

BY THE NUMBERS

~7 months

the doubling time of the length of task an AI agent completes on its own, measured across six years and confirmed on a rebuilt benchmark (METR, 2025 and 2026). Nothing in the Section 1 table is a long task.

So why has the industry not felt it? Because today the work happens one task at a time. A broker opens a chat window, pastes in the context, describes what they want, reads the output, corrects it, and moves on. The gain is real and it is small, because the broker supplies the context every time — and assembling the context is most of the work.

The next evolution is not a better model. **It is putting these capabilities inside the systems that already hold the context.** The operating system a brokerage runs on already knows the property, the availability, the deal history, the client, and the terms of the last three comparable transactions. When the work happens there, the broker stops supplying context and starts approving output. CRMs and brokerage operating systems are the ones positioned to close that gap, because they are the only place the data already lives.

THE CONTEXT TAX

Every time a broker uses AI task by task, they pay the same tax: assembling the context again from scratch. That tax is most of the work, and it is why the gains have stayed small. A system that already holds the context does not charge it.

Trust is the second half of it, and today, it is not high. In a survey of 255 commercial real estate professionals fielded in early April 2026, 66% used AI weekly or daily and 5% trusted it with an actual deal decision. That gap does not close by asking brokers to be braver. Trust is a byproduct of architecture: build the checkpoint into the workflow, so every output shows what it drew on and waits for a person to approve it, and trust follows.

Two things have to be true before any of this works inside a firm, and both are within a brokerage's control today.

1. **A workflow has to exist before it can be automated.** AI cannot automate a process nobody has written down. Define the workflow, run it manually until it is genuinely efficient, and automate it only once the firm understands it end to end. Firms that skip to automation automate their own confusion, which is a large part of why more than 40% of agentic AI projects will be canceled by the end of 2027.
2. **Bad data scales.** A model fed incomplete or stale records does not produce incomplete work slowly. It produces confident, wrong work quickly, across every deal at once. Clean, complete, current data is the single highest-leverage move a brokerage can make toward being ready for any of this.

BROKERAGE IN 2030

4. Monday Morning, 2030

The call list is built before the broker opens it, ordered by which conversations matter this week. It draws on lease expirations, recorded activity, and who has gone quiet.

Three properties changed status Friday. The client-facing flyers already reflect it, on the website and every listing platform. The status changed once and propagated.

A landlord's monthly prospect report went out Friday, assembled from tours and inquiries as they were recorded. The broker read it first and added two sentences no system would have known to write.

A requirement came in over the weekend. The tour package is already drafted: properties matched to the criteria, availability current, comps attached with sources. The broker spends twenty minutes cutting two buildings that qualify on paper and are wrong in practice.

The LOI is drafted against the firm's last three comparable deals, terms populated, deviations flagged. The broker changes the structure. The structure is the strategy.

By ten, the week's production work is done. What is left on the calendar is people.

Now picture the first time a client is on the receiving end of that week. The turnaround, the accuracy, the attention. That broker gets hired. Then retained. Then referred. And within a cycle or two, that level of service stops being remarkable and starts being what every client in the market expects from every broker they talk to.

5. What Appreciates

Relationships, communication, trust, negotiation, storytelling, and deep market expertise are not just surviving this. As AI adoption increases and information becomes commoditized, they become the only things that differentiate a broker in 2030, which raises their market value. Once document production is universally available it stops being a service and becomes table stakes. What is left is the part that was always the job.

THE HUMAN PREMIUM

As the automatable half of brokerage gets commoditized, the unautomatable half gets more valuable. Anything a machine can do stops being a differentiator the moment every competitor has it. So the advice to a broker is the opposite of defensive: double down on what makes you human, because that is the only part of your work becoming scarce.

The information that closes deals here is also private. What a landlord will actually take, why the last deal on that floor traded where it did, who is about to lose their space. None of it publishes. A model trained on everything public knows the least about the part that matters.

The work	Who does it in 2030	Why
Producing the document	Machine, human-approved	Well-specified, repetitive, verifiable against a record.
Assembling comps	Machine, human-judged	Retrieval is mechanical. Which comps are <i>relevant</i> is not.
Updating listings and marketing	Machine, human-approved	Executed end to end by software once the broker approves the change.
Reading the room in a negotiation	Human	No record contains it. No model has access to it.
Knowing which tenant is quietly out of space	Human	Private and unrecorded.
Telling the client something they don't want to hear	Human	Only lands coming from someone the client already trusts.
Structuring the deal	Human, machine-assisted	The structure is the strategy.
Being accountable for the outcome	Human	Licensure and fiduciary duty. Not a documentation problem.

6. What a Top Producer Does With Twenty Hours

Recovered time can be spent badly, and some brokers will spend it badly. But the bar here is low. **If a broker gets twenty more hours a week and cannot make more money with them, we have bigger problems.**

The producers who compound it will spend it three ways.

1. **More clients**, served at the same depth as their current book.
2. **More depth per client**. Personalization stops being a marketing word and becomes something a client can feel — a market read specific to their portfolio, arriving monthly without being asked for.
3. **More time in the market**, which is how a broker acquires the private information that is actually their edge.

The advantage was never the documents. It was knowing things. Knowing things means being in front of people, and that takes hours most brokers do not have.

7. What This Is Worth

The number that matters is not what a system costs. It is how many of the seventeen line items in Section 1 it removes, and how many it merely relocates.

A tool that generates a flyer but needs the property record typed in first has moved the work. A tool that drafts an LOI from a deal history the broker still has to assemble has moved the work. The distance between those tools and the ones in Section 4 is the whole distance between the 2026 week and the 2030 week. It does not show up in a demo. It shows up in the hours.

Closing that distance is not a feature. It requires the system that already holds the firm's properties, deals, contacts, and terms to be the same system that produces the work, which is why CRMs and brokerage operating systems are where this gets solved. A tool bolted on beside them will always be asking the broker for context the operating system already has.

THE SORTING

8. Who Captures the Gains

Twenty-four hours a week, freed across an industry, is a large amount of value. It does not all go to the broker who freed it. It gets split three ways.

Clients take a share. When one broker returns a full tour package in an hour, an hour becomes the expectation for everyone in that market. When one broker sends a portfolio-specific market read every month unprompted, quarterly on request stops counting as service. Capability that becomes widely available turns into a requirement, usually within a cycle, and **the client gets more for the same fee.**

Top producers and their firms take a share. The ratchet only competes away what every competitor can match. A broker with real differentiation keeps the rest and converts the hours into volume, retention, and income. This is the share the industry underestimates, because it accrues to the people who were already good.

The companies building the tools take a share. Software that removes 1,150 hours of broker time a year — \$115,000 to \$575,000 of it, or a \$60,000 hire if you put a person on it instead — gets priced against that problem rather than against a CRM, and that is the economics that funds it being built at all.

THE RISING FLOOR

AI will make the average broker better. It will also raise what clients accept, faster, because clients compare across every vendor they deal with rather than just across brokers. Improving at the same rate as everyone else is how a broker stands still.

How the three shares divide is not fixed. In a commoditized market where every broker offers the same thing, the client takes most of it. Where the broker has genuine edge, the broker keeps more. The variable is differentiation, and it is the one the broker controls.

9. The Training Problem

A junior learns this business by building the comp set, abstracting the lease, and assembling the tour package. The exact work in our table. That was never busywork the firm tolerated. It was the training mechanism, and it is the only one the industry has ever had.

Which is the part of this transition the industry is paying least attention to.

BY THE NUMBERS

19% fewer

young workers employed. Among 22-to-25-year-olds in the occupations most exposed to AI, employment ran about 19% below where it would have been if those jobs had tracked less-exposed work. Nobody was laid off. Firms simply opened fewer entry-level roles (Stanford Digital Economy Lab, U.S. payroll records through June 2026; the finding is contested).

Nothing about brokerage exempts it from that pattern. The firms automating fastest are the ones with the most to lose from it, because they are removing the training ground before they have built a replacement.

THE BOTTOM RUNG

The tasks AI absorbs first are the tasks juniors learn on. A firm can automate them and recover the hours, or rebuild the junior role around verifying and directing that output, which teaches the same judgment faster. What it cannot do is automate them, skip the redesign, and still have a trained senior broker in 2032.

We are firmly in favor of automating this work. We are also saying that training has to be rebuilt alongside it, and that what it gets rebuilt around is the human half of the job — relationships, negotiation, market knowledge, the judgment to know which comp actually matters. Those are what is left to teach, and they were always the harder half to learn.

What this looks like in practice is undramatic. Not mass layoffs. Fewer openings, slower hiring, and a narrower path for the average entrant, spread over years. Federal projections still show employment of real estate brokers and sales agents growing 2% from 2025 to 2035, and we think that is approximately right through 2030, because headcount is the last thing to move. Composition moves first: who gets hired, into what role, doing which work.

After that we expect the direction to reverse. Automation on this scale does not produce more brokers. It produces fewer, and between 2030 and 2040 we expect the total number of working commercial brokers to decline.

Young people will keep entering this business, and the ones who do well will do very well. What goes away is the era when an average entrant could build a career on effort and availability alone. Relationships matter more now, not less.

10. What to Do About It

You can buy the AI. You cannot buy your own data.

The models get better every month whether a brokerage does anything or not, and they cost roughly the same for everyone. The record of your properties, availability, deals, contacts, and terms only gets better if someone in your firm makes it better, and that takes years. Gartner reported in February 2025 that 63% of organizations either lack AI-ready data practices or do not know whether they have them.

THE DATA LAG

The tools will be ready before your data is. A brokerage that waits until the technology is obviously ready, then starts cleaning up its records, is beginning a two-year job at the moment it needed to be finished.

The work of getting ready is concrete, and a brokerage can start it this quarter. Four steps, in order.

1. **Define the workflows.** Write down what actually happens on a listing, a requirement, a closing — step by step, as performed, not as imagined. A process nobody has written down cannot be automated.
2. **Define the data sets, where they live, and who can see them.** Properties, availability, contacts, deal history, terms, commissions. For each one, name the system of truth and the person responsible for keeping it current. Then set the permissions. A large share of what a brokerage holds is confidential by contract — landlord positions, client financials, terms under NDA — and confidentiality has to be designed alongside the data rather than added afterward. Any system handling it should be able to tell you where the data sits, who can reach it, and whether it is used to train anything.
3. **Define the desired output.** For each workflow, specify exactly what good looks like — the finished tour package, the prospect report, the abstract — so the standard is explicit rather than living in one broker's head.
4. **Define the human verification points.** Decide in advance which steps a person approves before anything reaches a client. This is what makes delegation safe, and it is what turns trust from a hope into a property of the system.

None of those four steps requires buying anything, and all of them are worth doing even if the technology stalls. They also happen to be the exact prerequisites for the 2030 week in Section 4.

ON THE RECORD

Forecasts without dates are opinions that cannot be graded. These are ours.

Year	What we expect
2027	First-draft generation of the standard broker document set — LOI, proposal, tour package, flyer, prospect report — ships inside CRMs and brokerage operating systems, priced at a premium over the record-keeping software it replaces.
2027	Machine-produced, human-verified lease abstracts and comp sets become standard practice at firms of every size, not only at the national platforms.
2028	Maintaining property marketing separately across each listing platform and the firm's own website is understood as a defect rather than a chore. One status change propagates everywhere.
2028	The brokerage support role shifts from producing documents to verifying them and handling client contact. Firms employ fewer of these roles and pay the ones they keep more.
2029	Client turnaround expectations compress from days to hours for tour packages, BOVs, and prospect reports. Brokers who cannot meet it begin losing pitches on responsiveness alone.
2030	An adopting broker's administrative load is two hours a week or less, against 24 today. A non-adopting broker's is unchanged. None of this happens to a firm passively.
2030	Top-quartile producers handle materially more volume per broker than today, at greater depth per client, and their income reflects both.
2031 – 2040	Hiring slows and the number of working commercial brokers declines. Not because the job disappears, but because the bottom of the market cannot clear the new client floor.

Conclusion

The administrative half of commercial brokerage is going away for the firms that pursue it, gradually, between now and 2030. The broker survives. This is a relationship business and it stays one, and the human parts of the work get more valuable as everything around them commoditizes. The gains get split between clients, the brokers and brokerages who move first, and the companies building the tools. The top of the market does more volume, serves clients better, and makes more money. For the bottom of the market it is slower and quieter than it sounds: fewer openings, slower hiring, a narrower path, and clients rather than technology setting the pace. We may be wrong about the dates. We do not think we are wrong about the direction, and the direction is what brokers and brokerages have to act on.

Sources

1. CRE OneSource internal inventory and observations. The itemized administrative and production workload in Section 1, the effective broker and operations rates of \$100–\$500 per hour used throughout, and the adoption patterns described in Sections 2, 3, and 10 are drawn from CRE OneSource's own observation of brokerage operations, built on five years of close work with thousands of brokers and on the forty-year brokerage career of the firm's founder. In the inventory, proposals and tenant-rep comparison spreadsheets are counted once rather than twice, being the same hours in different specialties, and quarterly and episodic work is converted to weekly equivalents. A light week totals near 16 hours and a heavy one near 32; 24 is the average. The inventory is an estimate offered for the reader to test against their own week, not a survey result.
2. First American Data & Analytics and DealGround — “CRE Industry Pulse Check” (May 2026). Online survey of 255 qualified commercial real estate professionals across brokerage, lending and capital markets, development, and asset management, fielded March 31 – April 8, 2026. Source of the 66% weekly-or-daily usage and 5% deal-decision trust findings.
3. Model Evaluation and Threat Research (METR) — “Measuring AI Ability to Complete Long Software Tasks” (March 19, 2025). Source of the 50% task-completion time-horizon metric and the approximately seven-month doubling time measured across 2019–2025.
4. Model Evaluation and Threat Research (METR) — “Time Horizon 1.1” (January 29, 2026). Benchmark expanded from 170 to 228 tasks; tasks requiring eight or more human hours increased from 14 to 31; re-measured doubling time of 196 days.
5. AI Digest — “Time Horizons” (2026). Analysis fitting a four-month doubling time to the 2024–2025 data against the seven-month rate for the full 2019–2025 period.
6. Gartner — “Hype Cycle for Agentic AI” (2026). Agentic AI at the peak of inflated expectations; 17% of organizations have deployed AI agents; more than 60% expect to deploy within two years.
7. Gartner — “Gartner Predicts Over 40% of Agentic AI Projects Will Be Canceled by End of 2027” (June 25, 2025). Cancellations attributed to escalating costs, unclear business value, and inadequate risk controls.
8. Gartner — “Lack of AI-Ready Data Puts AI Projects at Risk” (February 26, 2025). 60% of AI projects unsupported by AI-ready data projected to be abandoned through 2026; 63% of organizations lack or are unsure of AI-ready data practices.
9. Deloitte Center for Financial Services — “2026 Commercial Real Estate Outlook.” Survey of more than 850 C-level executives and direct reports at commercial real estate owners and investment firms with at least \$250 million in assets under management, across 13 countries, conducted June – July 2025. Source of the data-quality finding cited in Section 10.
10. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics — *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, Secretaries and Administrative Assistants. Median annual wage of \$48,310 as of May 2025; employment projected to decline 2% from 2025 to 2035.
11. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics — *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, Real Estate Brokers and Sales Agents. Employment projected to grow 2% from 2025 to 2035, with approximately 40,400 openings annually, most from replacement need.
12. Stanford Digital Economy Lab — revised analysis of U.S. payroll records through June 2026. Employment among 22-to-25-year-olds in highly AI-exposed occupations approximately 19% below the less-exposed trend, driven by reduced hiring rather than separations. Federal Reserve and academic commentary contests the attribution, arguing the same gap is consistent with interest-rate-driven hiring freezes and general payroll cooling.
13. Strada Education Foundation — “Entry-Level Hiring in the AI Era” (2026). Senior talent leaders expecting AI to increase entry-level hiring outnumbered those expecting a decrease by 2.7 to 1; more than 40% reported AI had increased analytical responsibilities assigned to entry-level employees.

This is a perspective paper. Its conclusions are CRE OneSource's opinion, stated as such, and are argued rather than balanced. The evidence supporting them is cited above and was current as of September 2026; where it conflicts with our position — as the agentic project cancellation rate, the federal employment projections, and the contested entry-level payroll findings do — it is included rather than omitted. Survey results, benchmark measurements, wage data, and employment projections are measurements as published on the dates cited. Everything in the "On the Record" section, the 2030 week described in Section 4, and all statements about 2027 and beyond are projections, not measurements. The workload inventory in Section 1 is CRE OneSource's own estimate and is offered as an illustrative model rather than an industry benchmark; individual brokers and specialties will vary materially. No vendor, platform, or competing product is named anywhere in this paper, and no product comparison is intended or implied.