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THE FUTURE OF *NO* WORK

Master AI, Gain Superpowers,
Earn More and Live by Your Own Rules

Filip Drimalka

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NOWORK.AI
publishing

THE FUTURE OF NO WORK

*Master AI, Gain Superpowers,
Earn More and Live by Your Own Rules*

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How was the cover graphic created?

First, I asked ChatGPT:

How would a ten-year-old child draw: Work in the Era of AI (Chapter 1).

I took the resulting verbal description and attached it to a prompt purchased on PromptBase.com thoroughly describing the neo-expressionist style made famous by my favorite painter, Jean-Michel Basquiat. With the prompt, I continued to the Midjourney application, which instantly generated several beautiful variations for me.

F.D.

*Dedicated to those who think differently.
To creators, innovators, and corporate rebels.*

*To all those who embrace change
as well as those who fear it
yet refuse to sit on the sidelines
and instead choose to actively shape their own future.*

*To people who believe in the power of the AI revolution
and in its potential to empower us to live by our own rules.*

This book is packed with tips on digital tools and thought-provoking reads. Since digital content can move and new, smarter apps emerge, I keep an updated version of the links at www.nowork.ai/resources.



Scan the QR code with your phone to access this website. And if any app catches your interest, explore it or use AI to brainstorm and refine your ideas related to this book.

No Work is...earning money by recommending things you enjoy.

If you like this book, join our ambassador program at www.nowork.ai/partners. You'll get discounts on all book formats for your friends, and you can earn commissions as an affiliate partner by recommending the book to others.

If you believe in the principles of our movement, we would love to have you on board.

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No Work

(noun and verb)

1. Doing something enjoyable and meaningful that doesn't feel like work
2. Work that smart technologies do on my behalf

Everything Is Going to Change

I'll never forget the day I realized that AI could replace me too. I'd always thought that my line of work would be the last to go. I train, consult, lead and write: things that need years of experience, eloquence and empathy. All soft skills where even the smartest algorithms have traditionally fallen short.

Until one day in 2022, shortly after OpenAI launched ChatGPT.

That day, I was preparing a presentation for a key client when I received a message from one of our customers—a logistics firm's manager who asked me for a consultation. Since Christmas was coming and I didn't want to start anything new, I began writing that I could only dive in after the new year. But then I decided to try something different, and I asked him exactly what kind of help he needed.

"I need to find online stores that are using our competition's services."

Normally I'd pass this sort of query on to one of my colleagues. But this time I simply pasted the question into ChatGPT and watched the magic happen. An answer started jumping onto the screen within seconds. Word by word, sentence by sentence. I was astonished. All the recommendations made sense. And what's more, they were really good.

But it didn't stop there. After a few more questions and answers I asked the app for a tip on how to turn these recommendations into an automated process. The AI leaped straight from the role of a *consultant* to that of a *programmer* and created an automation code. I fed it some more tasks and sent the answers straight to the customer.

"Great, thanks a lot. You've really, really helped me!"

And that's when I realized—these apps would soon replace my work too. Work that I'd always thought was so sophisticated and special. And that gave me so much joy and such good pay that I thought I'd be sticking with it for the rest of my life.

I knew it would happen eventually. But I definitely didn't expect it so soon.

The Power of Tech

This moment—one of my first experiences with truly intelligent AI—completed a puzzle that had been assembling before my eyes for almost fifteen years. That's how long I've been helping organizations adopt and use digital productivity tools. Thousands of people attend my lectures every year, from top managers to government officials. The companies I founded have helped with digitalization at hundreds of businesses of all sizes, so I've personally seen what people who have mastered these tools can do. I myself have so many projects going on that I can't imagine how I'd handle it all without the help of modern technologies. And the best part is that I work remotely most of the time—from Spanish islands, Austrian peaks, or any place with good waves or opportunities to dive.

I'm not writing any of this to brag. I didn't found Apple, Tesla, or any other billion-dollar company. But my projects make money, I can spend every summer with my children, and in the winter I have no problem taking a couple weeks off and spending them all skiing. And above all I find my work incredibly fun.

Long ago when I read things like this in self-development books, I just laughed at them. I thought a life like this was only possible for a tiny elite. But the world has changed, and this kind of life is attainable for more people than ever.

Why Now?

One of the reasons for this shift is that skilled employees now have way more flexibility to design their work and mold their jobs to suit their lifestyles. There are also a lot more opportunities to make a living or earn some extra cash from pretty much anywhere. But here's the most important thing: The rise of artificial intelligence has blown the door wide open in terms of what we can achieve. And the following story is a perfect example of this.

A couple weeks before ChatGPT's first anniversary, I received an email from the Harvard Business Review about a generative AI survey. That sparked an idea: I should conduct a similar survey in my own country. Quality data is always valuable, and it could generate good publicity for our projects. Plus, it would be an interesting experiment to see how much AI could help us. It was also a glimpse into why I believe we're entering into a golden age of creators, as well as a free-for-all era for copycats.

I started by summarizing the email into ChatGPT and asking it to generate a title, description, and structure for the survey. I liked the first suggestion, "AImpact 2023," so I started working on it. Although, "working" might be too strong a word. The first thing I did was use a tool that creates a form based on a single instruction (or as you already might know—an AI prompt). I had the first version of the survey ready in a matter of seconds and sent it to colleagues and clients for feedback.

Next, I created a website about the survey using—as you might have guessed—another AI tool. It generated several versions of the website, which we used as a source of inspiration for how the website could look like and what information it could contain. We then dropped these suggestions into our company template, and voila—we went live!

As soon as we shared the survey on social media, it gained a lot of attention. Within a few weeks, we collected data from 658 organizations of all sizes, from multinational corporations to small nonprofits. This brought us to the final phase—the evaluation and analysis of the results. Again, you can probably guess what my first steps were. I couldn't have started anywhere else but with ChatGPT, which offers a slightly hidden "code interpreter" function, acting as your personal data analyst and programmer all in one.

I had the results processed and gradually asked for the information I was interested in. The most time-consuming part was making sure that the AI processed the data correctly. Once I had checked it, I made the draft of the presentation and fine-tuned the slides. Since I also use AI in spreadsheets (where you use prompts just like functions in Excel), I played around with analyzing longer answers, sentiment, and performing other operations that would have required data analysts and tools costing thousands of dollars only a year ago.

When I presented the results, I was asked if I had used AI and how much time this work took. I answered truthfully and said that I had done the entire survey with the help of AI. Then I looked at my time tracking app and I couldn't believe it. This entire project, from the initial idea to the final presentation, took me 4.5 hours. Yes, *four and a half man-hours*. And that's a perfect example of what AI has enabled us to do in just one year.

By the way, the survey revealed two interesting things. When we asked people about the barriers to greater AI adoption, for the first time in my career finances appeared in last place. Do you know what was first? "We don't know how." As in, we don't know how to work with it. We don't know where to start. We don't know what we don't know. And that's great news for me. Because this means it's about skills. And if something is a skill, then it can be learned. And that's precisely why I decided to write this book.

This and many other examples have shown us that the new generation of digital tools has made AI accessible to everyone. As a result, the line between professionals and the rest has begun to blur. It has also become clear which direction the world of work is heading. One tech-savvy individual can now do the work of several people, sometimes delivering even better quality work in a fraction of the time.

Thanks to AI, you can translate texts without translators, create videos without actors, design interiors without designers, and of course automate *nearly every routine task* as well as many tasks that have always required thought and those we rightly call creative.

Some studies¹ suggest these tools will put almost 300 million people out of work. And some others² say it's not just the unskilled professions that are at risk. Far from it. Bankers, lawyers, graphic designers, salespeople, consultants—all of them need to watch out.

Average workers won't be able to compete with AI, nor with people who excel in their profession and know how to use the right tools. That's one reason I believe AI won't immediately replace us, but will instead supplement and greatly expand our capabilities. And even though pessimists might add in "*for now*," I believe that we'll be seeing more opportunities ahead than many people think.

This book is not just about smart apps. Many of the ones you are using today will be gone in a couple of years, or you'll be working with them in a completely different way. My goal is to show you something far more important: How to navigate this brave new world and to use new smart tools to do more of what you love—and leave the rest to computers.

We Need More Speed

In 2022, I began cooperating with a television station network in the CME media group. My task was to show them today's trends and spur their team toward innovation. To do so, we held workshops with the stations' managers where we went over options for using AI in each department. One of the directors opened the meeting by telling the participants they should be really creative and present even their wildest ideas. By the time the workshop ended, things that would have seemed insanely expensive (or just plain crazy) only one year before, had come up: virtual announcers, auto-generated studios, real time analysis of all the news. I loved it. Especially when I revealed to them that the tools needed to make these ideas a reality already existed.

What's changed in the year since then? For one thing the AI models are constantly getting better. They have also learned to work with everyday language so they can converse with you well enough that you'd think they were human (and they can do this in almost any language). Also, there's a boom in *generative AI*, which can create, analyze or enhance digital outputs of any kind—such as pictures, videos, music, presentations, or 3D models. It is precisely these applications that have put AI in the limelight because they produce incredibly realistic and often breathtaking outputs.

In one of my early presentations on the Future of No Work, I predicted that in just a few years we'd be able to assign tasks to computers using voice commands and they would perform them obediently. Three days later ChatGPT had its public premiere and could do just that. I had to get back to the drawing board. It was clear we were now talking weeks, not years.

I immediately changed my own approach to work. I had previously planned to create my own digital twin—a virtual avatar that would help my companies find new clients and create training programs in various languages. Originally, I estimated I could look forward to having this done by around 2025. With new apps³ for video generation, we had it available at the beginning of 2023.

In short—we're living in a period where last year is *old news* and next month is the *distant future*.

Are You Ready?

Unexpected events can force us to change gears, no matter whether it's a pandemic, a supply-chain crisis, or the war in Ukraine. These events often show us that innovating actually doesn't have to be hard. I've spent my whole career explaining to companies that they should let people work remotely. This didn't go over well everywhere. But where I failed, one little virus succeeded in just a few days.

Even big changes can go through far faster than we think. My clients include a bank that was planning to roll out online calls between bankers and clients. They gave themselves five years. In the end they did it in just one.

Artificial intelligence will bring even greater changes, so the key question is: Will it catch us unprepared or will we be ready? The world around us is accelerating, and that means only one thing—today is as slow as it will ever get. That's also precisely why now is the best time to do something about it.

~~_____~~


The world is moving faster and faster, which means only one thing – today is as slow as it will ever get.

~~_____~~

Calling All Creators

People often feel anxious about the uncertainties of the future. If that's you, don't worry, you're not alone. But try to look at this from a different perspective, because this new world offers lots of ways to make work easier and to pursue opportunities we've only dreamed of up to now.

So yes, maybe people will turn to AI for advice instead of me, and so I won't be doing consulting anymore. But at the same time, AI allows me to create my own avatar and use it to offer different services, but on a much larger scale and worldwide.

Nearly everyone has opportunities like these today. And that's why I think this book can serve everyone. However, I wrote it mainly for people who want to shed their usual expectations of work and design an approach they'll enjoy.

1. For those who live for innovation

If you're someone constantly thinking about how to do your job better, you're in the right place. For me, an innovator is anyone with a constant itch that drives them to improve the world around them, as well as the kind of person who is eager to grasp every chance to get more done in far less time.

People like these can arrange their work exactly how they want, including the freedom to work from anywhere or to discover new sources of income. The barriers to entry in many attractive fields are lower than ever, and there have never been more ways to make good money. This book offers you specific advice on how you can benefit from all of this.

2. For creators

I think of "creators" as more than just "creatives." I mean all professionals offering their expertise, such as educators, consultants, architects, and entrepreneurs. They all can increase their capacity, be more creative, and achieve things that would have seemed impossible previously, often at a much lower cost.

I'll reveal how to offer your services in dozens of foreign languages, automate routine work, provide your services to many more customers, and how to get a virtual personal assistant that can help you with creative ideas 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

3. For leaders and managers

Modern leaders should create an environment where people can apply their strengths without drowning in paperwork. However, many managers stumble here, and now other challenges are piling up too. Will your people have access to AI, or will you demand good old-fashioned blood, sweat and tears? How will you explain a ban on new tools when your competition is already using them? Will you admit to your customers or colleagues that AI is behind your outputs? And what will you tell your people who suspect that sooner or later AI is going to take their jobs? Managers should be the first to have clear answers to these questions.

This book will equip you with the tools you need to prepare your team for the future. And that's not all. You'll master new smart tools, broaden your reach, and best of all create systems designed to eliminate most forms of busywork.

4. For everyone who wants to live differently

School → work → the corporate ladder → off to retirement: that's yesterday's news. People no longer just care about earning more and more and working from dawn to dusk. Less is starting to mean more. Much more.

If you want to free your thinking from the traditional eight-hour workday and five-day work week, this book will help you do that. In it you'll find specific examples of people who, in a tenth of the time, can handle just as much as people who work full-time.

But I'm also writing this book for those of you who feel threatened. Although data from countries like Singapore and South Korea is showing that a high degree of automation doesn't have to mean high unemployment, that may not always be the case. Everybody will have

to change their approach to work. And many people will need to find a new job or form of employment. A 2023 OECD report⁴ predicted that technology would impact 1 billion people, with over a quarter of all jobs at a high risk of automation. With the rapid advancement of AI, I believe the number will be even higher.

If you're worried about this, I have good news for you: This book isn't just about new opportunities, but also about the skills to help you grasp them. And as I already said—if something is a skill, then it can be learned. I'll show you how.

The Future of No Work

I won't be wandering off too much into the ethical, legal, or security aspects of AI. They're ingrained in every page, but they're also broad enough to deserve a separate, more comprehensive discussion elsewhere. I also won't be making detailed predictions of changes to the labor market and society. We all know how such predictions turn out.

Instead, I have different ambitions. I'd like to show you new ways of working and provide you with plenty of advice, tips, tricks, and to help you make the most of these opportunities successfully. All these insights stem from our research and, more importantly, from my hands-on experience with hundreds of companies, both large and small. While many of my competitors were still figuring out AI, my companies were already pioneering programs for ambassadors, discovering opportunities for generative AI and adopting them in all of our teams. And that's precisely what I want to share with you.

You may be extremely curious as to why I've frightened you in the title with the words "No Work." Don't worry, you'll soon understand. But I can already tell you this book isn't for people looking for miracle shortcuts. I wrote it for people who *enjoy* work and who are always seeking new ways to do it better.

I've divided this book into four parts. In the first, we'll explore ways to utilize new smart tools powered by AI. In the second, we'll dive into the most critical requirement for success—a shift in mindset. That is, how

to upgrade your perspective on work and discover new opportunities for growth. In the third, we'll explore skills that will help you leverage these opportunities. And in the fourth and final part, we'll focus on new ways of working. You'll look at your work through fresh eyes and learn how to achieve better results in far less time.

They say the best way to predict the future is to create it. So let's get started.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. AI is rapidly advancing and starting to transform or even replace many types of human work, including jobs once thought safe from automation such as those requiring creativity, experience, eloquence and empathy.
2. AI based smart tools enable you to create enormous value quickly, experiment and iterate—essentially to repeat and improve a process—even faster.
3. The line between experienced professionals and curious amateurs is blurring. Tech-savvy individuals can now do the work of multiple people at a higher level of quality and in less time, significantly expanding human capabilities.
4. Digital AI tools make it easier than ever for people to achieve impressive results and a lifestyle that was previously extremely difficult to attain—all you need to do is adopt an opportunity mindset, build relevant skills, and pioneer new ways of working.
5. Harnessing the power of AI is a learnable skill, and this book aims to show you how to do it.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Check out the resources website for this book at www.nowork.ai/resources. You'll find links to the apps and extra tools that we'll be covering in the coming chapters.
2. Think about your goals—if you're serious about getting the most from this book, set aside time not just for reading, but for putting these concepts and ideas into practice.
3. Subscribe to ChatGPT or Poe.com, if you haven't already, for at least a month. Add it to your browser's main toolbar to make sure it is easily accessible and play with it on a daily basis.



The New Reality

How AI Is Transforming the Way We Work

1. Work in the Era of AI

I'm fascinated by all things digital, so I closely followed how the traditional educational firms dealt with the online transition forced by the pandemic. One renowned agency handled matters by simply producing a series of three training videos and providing them to their clients. Why not—there's power in simplicity, right? But one "behind-the-scenes" photo from their social media caught my eye. I counted seventeen crew members. *Seventeen* people to film *three* videos. It immediately made me wonder—what the hell were all those people doing?

I'm not saying that one YouTuber could have done it better. But did it really take so many people? While so many companies are boasting about taking on new employees, I'm thinking of doing the opposite. Isn't it time to start demonstrating how we can get the same results with fewer people and less effort.

Allow me to use myself as a good example. Over the last few years, I've been holding down several roles at once. It wasn't that I couldn't bring myself to delegate certain tasks, but rather that I've automated almost all the work in these roles. Also, I enjoy experimenting with just how far technological outsourcing can go.

It all started with my minor work crisis back in 2020. I was finishing my first book right when the lockdown forced office workers to work from home, which made the demand for our services skyrocket. These were tough times for me and the whole team, so after a while I was itching for a change. I ramped up my search for a new CEO as my replacement so I could take a break and start something new. But I didn't want to keep trading time for money, I wanted to create my own product, something clearly defined, easy to explain, and scalable.

That's how the Digital Leadership Masterclass¹ program was born. Instead of one-off workshops, I prepared a two-month development program with lectures, regular meetings for participants, and knowledge sharing sessions. I decided to run it all online to eliminate venue constraints and scaling issues. But first, following the "Sell First, Build Later" rule,

I organized an online webinar to gauge potential interest. It turned out to be a bullseye.

I began approaching potential clients using a bot, an automated software program that sends out messages indistinguishable from what I would write. I had it set up in minutes, but spent several hours preparing contact lists and tweaking my outreach messages. It paid off big time. The first round sold out quickly, and I started working on the product itself. To minimize my workload, I made use of low-code apps, which can create digital systems without actual programming. Working like this, I fine-tuned the registration process, communication, content sharing, and everything in between.

This masterclass saw hundreds of participants over its first three years. We launched dozens of runs as internal development programs in companies like T-Mobile and RE/MAX. It earned me several hundred thousand dollars, operating essentially as a one-man show. A colleague did invoicing and organized some of the activities, but with each new run we automated more and more aspects, so that today almost the entire program runs on autopilot.

Based on this experience, I began asking myself new questions:

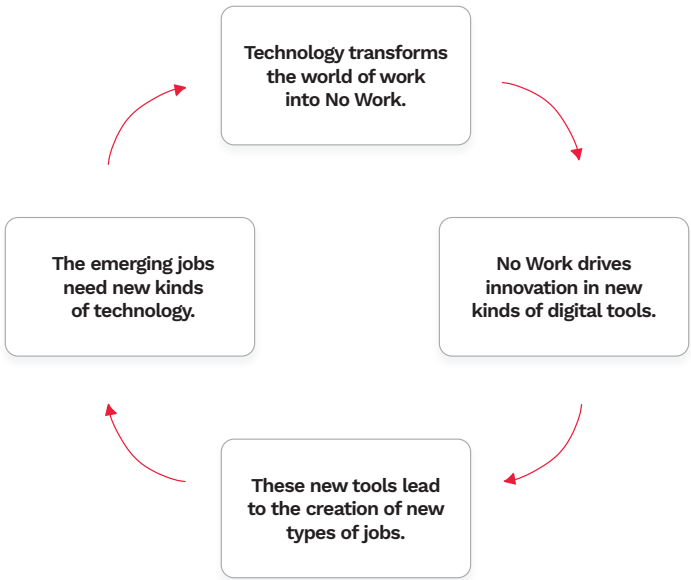
- What will work look like once technology gets even smarter?
- What might organizations look like if everyone could use technology this way?
- And once machines are doing most of the work for us, what we will consider to be actual 'work'?

The Endless Game

The intertwining of human labor and new technology is fascinating. Humans are after all born *tool-users*. Whenever they discover something handy, they immediately start seeking its uses for a simpler life or to make their work easier. Or at least they *should* start, but some of us can't be bothered with this and have no ambitions to change anything at all. In the age of AI, these people could soon be in trouble.

Then there's the opposite: those who are always testing out something new, either because of a constant desire to improve things, or because they are lazy. I don't see this type of laziness as anything bad; it's often the engine of progress. That's one reason why companies have thriving "shadow IT" ecosystems—employees turn to unauthorized tools simply to be more productive.

In an endless dance, technology allows us to discover new ways of working, which then fuel the creation of new technologies. But the thing is that we're currently moving from a slow waltz to a salsa—and things won't stop speeding up.



We already see the impact of this cycle everywhere around us. On the one hand, as you will soon discover, we see individuals or small teams using AI to create impressive large-scale projects. Sam Altman, the co-founder of OpenAI, even said in an interview² at the beginning of 2024 that "it is only a matter of time until there is a one-person billion-dollar company." On the other hand, the same principle inevitably leads to companies replacing certain types of workers or entire departments. The Swedish fin-tech company Klarna implemented³ AI for its customer support and

replaced the equivalent of 700 full-time employees (not to mention that it responded much faster and better to such an extent that repeated inquiries decreased by 25%).

While this may raise some questions, it inevitably leads to a simple conclusion: With the right technology, one person can do the work of several, or maybe even dozens of people. And the best part is that this person could be you or me.

Who Benefits?

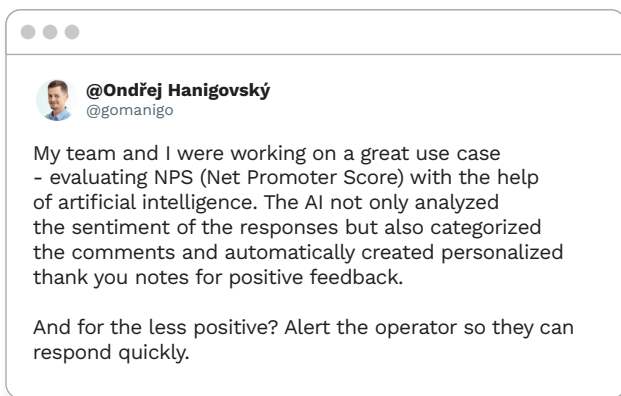
Who is gaining the most from the rise of new technologies? The creatives and innovators who are using them to simplify their work? The entrepreneurs who see them as a new source of income? Or those of us who've managed to break free from the confines of the office and can now spend most of their time as they please?

Freelancers and people working in small teams are almost always a few steps ahead. They can use nearly every app right away because they're not tied down by any rules or rigid processes. Pieter Levels is one great example. He came across image-generation AI, and after a few weeks he'd used it to build services⁴ for creating personal avatars and interior designs, making tens of thousands of dollars a week on them. If someone at a large architectural firm had this idea, they'd first have to put their current projects on hold, "sell" the development of these services to their management, and endure endless meetings about how this-or-that feature must be added and how the result must be flawless before the release.

On the other hand, bigger companies have more money, more data, and more experts, but also far more bureaucracy and security requirements. Some companies' employees can't even use basic digital tools—or even register anywhere—without their superiors' approval. When we launched registration for our Digi Challenge⁵ where participants do a series of digital exercises, a worker at one major consulting firm sighed: "It looks interesting, but it'd take a year before I'd get permission." When I mentioned this to a client from a large bank that also doesn't exactly make their employees' lives easy, he answered: "Those guys are even

worse off than us. But honestly, I hardly use my work laptop for anything anymore."

With the arrival of AI in modern office apps like Microsoft 365 and Google Workspace, employees of any organization now have the chance to fine-tune their processes and leverage AI. If they learn this and also have the courage to advocate for the use of tools that allow for experimentation with AI in a corporate environment, amazing things can happen. We witnessed this firsthand at a hackathon we organized for a major European banking group. In just one day, a team built an AI-powered system that could analyze customer feedback, figure out if it was positive or negative, and then either suggest a personalized reply or send it to the right person to handle it. And it was all done by business people, no IT guys were involved at all.



Unfortunately, most people still lack the skills to fully utilize these systems. Whenever I ask if their office apps save them a significant amount of time, they usually shake their heads.

The key problem of traditional enterprise software is, as always, that they improve work efficiency only slightly: video calls instead of conference calls, chat instead of email. But AI is changing the nature of work itself. In fact many people can't even begin to imagine how much. Why bother with a presentation? I'll jot down a couple of key ideas⁶, or even just the topic and I'm done. Why draw up a contract line by line? I'll enter its key

parameters⁷, wait a minute, and then check the output. If I want an ad campaign, I don't have to send the work off to the marketing department. Instead, I can simply describe⁸ what I need and watch as the concept, script, and complete video take shape right before my eyes. Do you think I'm talking about the far future? Think again. *All these tools exist today.*

The key question is whether larger companies are capable of responding to this. Will they allow their employees to use AI? Will they pay for the costs of using the best models? Will managers be capable of hiring experts for AI training and development?

If you work for a company that has a problem with this, don't worry. Organizations that don't want to invest into new technologies—or even make them available—will come under tremendous pressure. As soon as the first firm in a field puts their foot on the gas, the rest will have no choice, either because they'll be far less productive, or because good people won't want to work there. The gap between those who can adopt new technologies and the rest will widen more and more.

As always, the biggest benefit will go to people who can quickly find their footing in new situations, aren't afraid to try new things and learn how to work in new ways. People who don't wait for someone to tell them what to do. People who are bold enough to venture into the lawless wilderness between innovation and regulation. Between "*I should*" and "*I can*."

I recently heard an interview with a renowned psychiatrist where he talked about how important it is to find meaning in one's work. He mentioned an office worker who spent two weeks creating multiple spreadsheets for her company. When she finally showed it to her husband, he scoffed, saying that their IT guy could have done it in minutes by automating most of the work. My thought was that if she could have done this automation herself, or sold this solution to her bosses, she could have spent her time doing work that was much more meaningful to her.

For some people, such a significant increase in efficiency may seem like a kind of fraud. It doesn't seem right to have something done in a matter of minutes that would have taken someone else weeks. However, it is precisely the opposite. It is our *responsibility* to seek ways to achieve such breakthroughs.



Most of us are not working on an assembly line any more. We have the freedom to choose our own path for reaching our goals, and there are plenty of ways to do it.

Hopefully, the era of being paid for merely occupying an office space instead of delivering results is over. ←

The Good News Comes When...

The robots work for you. The bad news comes when they work instead of you. This is how economist Noah Smith describes⁹ the difference between utopia and dystopia: "Dystopia is when robots take half your jobs. Utopia is when robots take half your job." I am an optimist, and that's why I see the potential for this utopia to come true.

However, we shouldn't blindly trust ads claiming that "you'll save 20 hours per week using ChatGPT." That doesn't mean we should trust any ads making these kinds of claims. It's simply not that black and white. Yes, ChatGPT and other tools will help you. They enable you to do more. But at the end of the day, it's still you who is playing with the technology. So at this moment it is somewhat true that AI may take your job, but as long as you don't put your head in the sand, this is more likely to mean taking in only to the next level.

People are afraid AI will replace them. But I think it will be slightly different. The people who are able to work with AI will replace those who won't. But the ultimate advantage will go to those who can do a little more. Find customer needs and come up with ways to meet them. Go the extra mile. Experiment with ideas that might seem crazy. That's why it's time to stop and think about what skills we're going to need. And how, with their help, we'll work our way up to work that doesn't look like work at all.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. AI isn't just improving efficiency; it's fundamentally changing the nature of work itself. AI enables individuals and small teams to achieve results that previously required many more people and resources.
2. Creatives, innovators, freelancers and small teams should be the quickest to embrace new AI tools to simplify their work and create new sources of income.
3. Large companies often face more bureaucracy and limitations, but since AI is now integrated into widely-used office applications, employees at companies of all sizes have the opportunity to leverage its power as well.
4. Companies that don't invest in or encourage their employees to use the latest AI tools will face a widening productivity and talent gap compared with early adopting competitors. However, individuals can and should learn how to use AI on their own regardless of where they work.
5. If we want a future where AI and robots take over many of the most annoying and time-consuming parts of our work, freeing us to focus on more meaningful and fulfilling tasks, we must embrace these possibilities rather than fear them. That's the promise of AI, but we need to be proactive to make it happen.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Start paying greater attention to what you do at work, what tasks you perform repeatedly, or what consumes too much of your time. These are exactly the kinds of tasks where AI and other smart tools can be incredibly useful.
2. If you're part of a larger company, find out which AI tools are available to you. Alternatively, reach out to your IT department and inquire about the possibility of testing out some of these tools at work.
3. Check if there are any interesting AI adoption initiatives happening in your area, such as ambassador programs or workshops. If so, consider signing up for some of them.

2. Tomorrow's Innovations, Today

Back in 2009, Apple predicted the future with their slogan: "There's an app for that." They even got it trademarked. It's no wonder, because it perfectly sums up the wealth of apps we had available even back then.

Two years later, tech investor Marc Andreessen published his legendary article¹ *Software Is Eating the World*. Andreessen looked at the fact that not only is there an app for everything, there are more and more business sectors built around smart software, from tech startups to traditional companies like Walmart and FedEx, which leapt ahead of their competition through flawless logistics management. Fast forward to today, and it's clear that Andreessen was right—new platforms have eaten the world, and most companies are becoming de facto tech firms.

However, the reality in many organizations is quite different. Andreessen predicted software would eat the world, but in fact software is eating us.

We have so many project management tools available, and yet people are still asking how they can manage their projects. There are literally hundreds of smart note-taking apps, but people are still emailing things to themselves. Just ask yourself: How much time do you spend answering emails or searching for information buried *somewhere* in your company's systems? The worst part is that we constantly have to copy, paste, click, and type. Again and again. And because we all do it all the time, it doesn't even seem strange to us anymore.

Thanks to the slogan of the process automation company, UiPath, "We make software robots, so people don't have to be robots," it dawned on me that we've been voluntarily reduced to being the servants of our tools when it should be the other way around.

The moment you start to notice this, you will see waste everywhere: Wasted time, wasted energy, wasted focus. Luckily, there's a new generation of tools that can finally do the work for us if we let them.

The Big Bang

When I used to talk to my clients about the impact of AI on the job market, the question of endangered professions always comes up. Sometimes I'd direct them to a website² where you can select a job, and it assesses the likelihood of it being replaced by automation. For some professions, like phone operators or supermarket cashiers, the threat of automation has been present for decades. But when we got to the professions that aren't so sure to go, I always heard the same: people in design, coding, writing, and similar fields are safe. As we've seen with the rise of generative AI, it is precisely these professions that are coming under intense pressure.

In 2022, OpenAI released DALL-E, an app that uses AI to generate images from a text description. The outputs were "photographs" so unbelievable and detailed that it created a sensation. People shared their creations on social networks and AI began winning artcompetition awards. What was once a field for experts and individual talents became one where everyone was having fun.

DALL-E was one of the first major examples of "generative AI." This type of service can turn text prompts into video, music, interior designs, entire websites and much more. At first they had a complicated interface and you needed advanced technical skills to use them, but soon after we started to see apps that were far more user-friendly. All you had to do was sign up, write something and voilà—you were an artist. But the real excitement was yet to come.

In late November, ChatGPT appeared and immediately became the talk of the town—and the watercooler. In just five days, over a million people had tried it. For comparison: Spotify hit that milestone after 150 days, and Instagram after 75. One reason for ChatGPT's success was its simple interface—you just wrote some text, and it answered like a real person. This was nothing like the old-school chatbots that hardly understand anything. Its answers were often more thought out and thought than those of most people. Some people started writing articles with it, others used it to craft Tinder pickup lines, and students immediately told it to crank out assignments.

And me? I was enjoying one of those once-in-a-lifetime moments when it was clear to me this would change *everything*.

Within a matter of weeks, ChatGPT had passed the bar exam for lawyers and a medical license exam, scientists had started listing it as a co-author, and Salesforce co-founder Marc Benioff had made³ it a consulting member of his team.



ChatGPT wasn't perfect, of course. Its texts sounded generic, it wasn't aware of current events, and sometimes it managed to answer even simple questions with nonsense. And it also occasionally made things up, although it at least then stated them confidently. But it brought to our attention the kinds of tools we'd all soon be using daily.

More advanced applications came soon after that. The You.com search engine delivered up-to-date information into its replies. Perplexity.ai provided thorough citations into its outputs. Microsoft introduced Bing, which offered both and added other features on top. Google shouted "all hands on deck" and launched its own system, Bard, later renamed Gemini. But ChatGPT was the first truly smart tool that really caught the world's attention and captured the public's imagination.

Soon AI models were popping up everywhere. Meta released a model called Llama, which was open source, and people began modifying it for their own needs. Anthropic launched an advanced model, Claude, that outperformed most of them and enabled me to even upload this whole book and chat about it there! Europe didn't lag behind this time thanks to the French startup Mistral. I could go on and on.

If you think there are already too many of these models, try exploring the HuggingFace platform, where you'll find a vast catalog of AI models and other data sources. As of spring 2024, they've hosted over 600,000 models, and they're expecting to hit two million by 2025. Two million! This just proves my point: the future of AI isn't about the technology itself—everyone has access to that now. It's about what we choose to do with it.

That's where all these apps and smart tools powered by these models come into play.

The New Smart Tools

Why do I use the term *new smart tools*? In some cases, experts fight over whether it is correctly called AI, machine learning, or some other kind of emerging technology instead. Honestly, I think that for us everyday users it doesn't matter at all. Some tools don't even need AI and can replace your work even without it.

I classify apps among smart tools if they meet the following criteria:

1. They are easy to work with

They have a simple interface so you don't have to wonder where to click or how to navigate them. That being said, you need to learn how to work with them because there is still a learning curve. The quality they produce reflects the effort you put in.

2. They save significant amounts of time

They truly work on your behalf. They can either handle tasks you'd normally do yourself, or you can take advantage of features like templates, automation, and app integration.

3. They are like magic

As Arthur C. Clarke famously stated in his work related to the future, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from

magic." Smart tools paired with AI are exactly like that. The first time I showed ChatGPT to one experienced programmer, we started by arguing for several minutes as to whether or not it was AI. A few hours later he called me, "This is the most amazing thing I've ever seen."

4. You wonder if you're cheating

One of my clients started using AI for coding and just a few days later he confessed, "I feel like I'm cheating." I got the same message from a CNN reporter who'd attended one of my workshops. I'd suggested he ask ChatGPT to draft a news piece for him, and he did. So yes, it can feel like cheating, but isn't that exactly what we come to expect from technology?

The digital tools in this book are available to everyone, small entrepreneurs as well as corporate employees. They can be used by people in every department, field, and profession. But anyone who speaks of them with contempt or with their eyes full of stars is missing one key point: These are still just tools, just like the internet or computers, and although they're great, they're not important on their own. Our creativity and our ability to recognize the opportunities where and how to use them are still more important.

We can divide them into three main categories based on how they help us and in what ways:

Knowledge AI

Generative AI

Copilots & Agents

1. KNOWLEDGE AI—WORK WITH INFORMATION

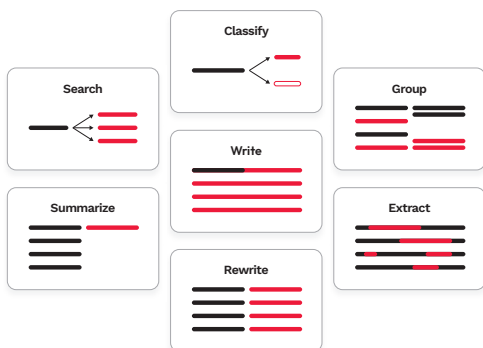
The first time we went over the uses of AI at an insurance company, one of their staff members made a sarcastic comment, "It probably won't be helpful when it comes to workplace standards training, right?"

I immediately seized the opportunity and took the wind from his sails—this wouldn't be a problem at all:

If you already have a recording of a training session about these standards, we can easily turn that into a transcript. Then we can add some links to articles about the topic and let AI create a training outline and prepare the study materials (texts, presentations, and scripts for video lessons). Then it can generate a quiz and exercises to verify what the attendees have learned. In the end we could upload all these materials as a knowledge base into a chatbot, which could serve as an assistant to all employees in the company.

It doesn't matter if you are preparing training, creating price quotes, or analyzing your customers' inquiries. It's all just a game of information and knowledge.

And we're *all* dealing with information, almost *all the time*. Whether it's the ideas we carry in our heads, the messages we write to colleagues, or the things we discuss in meetings. New smart tools can help us with all of this. After all, they're built on large *language* models. And they understand both individual words and the abstract concepts behind them.



Here are a few examples of tasks new smart tools can help you with:

- Answer a question
- Translate text into any language
- Shorten or rewrite text so a fifth-grader can understand it
- Think up a name, structure, or the whole text for a lecture

- Read a conversation and suggest a reply to our customer
- Make a table with an overview of our products and add detailed descriptions
- Find information in our company's documentation
- Come up with three strong arguments against my idea
- Mine data and create charts with key insights
- Suggest some hypotheses based on data

These examples are simple, but you can expand on them in countless ways. When I started to work on the translation of this book, I used ChatGPT to analyze reviews of various books on AI and personal productivity. This simple step provided valuable insights into the minds of potential readers, revealing what they like (stories that are inspiring and specific examples from everyday practice), and what to avoid (passages that are way too technical). During the research, I often came across interesting videos on YouTube. With a single click, I could obtain summaries⁴ of these videos, extracting the essential information I needed.

Furthermore, I spent a lot of time in Poe where you can use different AI models and compare the results. I mostly worked with Claude and Gemini using complex prompts such as instructing the AI to help me refine the text or adapt the tone for a specific audience. It may sound simple, but it was genuinely hard work. I wasn't just copying and pasting. However, without these tools it would have taken me much more time, and the result would have been far inferior (at least in my opinion).

You might be wondering why I used more than one tool. The reason is each model excels in different areas, much like human talent—some individuals are naturally creative, while others possess strong analytical skills. The same applies to AI. In my case, Gemini worked best for translation, Claude for fine-tuning the text, and of course ChatGPT for any kind of analysis.

This experience again proved that if organizations want to get the most out of AI, they can't rely on a single model. Instead, they should use multiple models depending on their "competence," speed, the quality of outputs, and of course the price. Not to mention that some models, especially from large providers, sometimes refuse to answer because

it goes against their community guidelines if you even just mention a competitor's app.

Another major area going through a huge transformation is how we communicate with each other and our clients. For example, here's how Intercom integrated AI into their customer service platform:

- When I'm sending my communication with a customer to the rest of the team, I can create a summary in one click so they don't have to read the whole thing.
- When I want to answer a query quickly, I write a few points and my whole message is generated.
- It pulls the most relevant information from our knowledge base and generates the answer automatically.
- It can determine next steps, troubleshoot issues, and answer follow-up questions without the need for human intervention.

We can find similar features in apps like Poe or ChatGPT, but they are increasingly appearing in specialized tools designed for individual company departments. Our CRM and Pipedrive uses them as well to suggest personalized emails based on just a few keywords, summarize email threads, and even help our salespeople find new leads.

I could go on and name smart tools for all departments, from purchasing to human resources. But for most people, what matters is that AI is becoming part of the apps they use all the time—the office apps, such as email⁵, forms⁶, documents⁷, presentations⁸, and sheets⁹.

Spreadsheets can even use AI as part of their formulas now, which is like having those smart features on steroids. Imagine you're creating a survey to be filled out by hundreds of people. If you want to turn the answers into categories, you just need to create them for the first few lines by hand and tell the AI to do the rest of the table the same way. Or you can have a customized answer created for each question in the next column, regardless of how many rows you have. Before you'd have had to spend several hours on this, but today you're done in a few minutes.

DESCRIBE THE FIRST FEW LINES
AND AI WILL TAKE CARE OF THE REST.

CATEGORIZE OR ANALYZE BY SENTIMENT?
NO PROBLEM.

D3	=AI("write a one-sentence reply to this feedback"; A3)			
	A	B	C	D
1	Feedback	Category	Sentiment	Draft response
2	The coffee maker is broken.	Coffee machine	Negative	Thanks for the heads up, we'll take a look at the coffee maker.
3	I really appreciate people's openness.	Culture	Positive	=AI("write a one-sentence reply to this feedback"; A3)
4	We need to get a faster internet connection.	Internet	Negative	

HOW ABOUT HAVING AI SUGGEST
A RESPONSE RIGHT AWAY?

Thanks to smart spreadsheets you can use the power of AI at scale.

2. GENERATIVE AI—CONTENT CREATION AND ANALYSIS

Apps that turn text prompts into images have opened many people's eyes and showed them what AI can really do. Nowadays, we can create so much more—videos, music, interior designs, even entire songs! Just as digital cameras replaced traditional photography, with the arrival of AI, creative people have even more powerful tools for even more attractive projects.

But generative AI isn't just being used in art. New smart tools are able to produce a business presentation, a model for a 3D printer, or a video with a realistic avatar of the sort that's now representing me at events that I can't or don't want to go to in person.

They typically work from similar inputs, a written command, i.e. a prompt¹⁰. With the advent of more advanced models, they have learned not only how to create content, but also to analyze it. It's as if AI has gained eyes and ears, along with a host of other capabilities.

The possibilities of generative tools are getting broader and better, they can now create and analyze all different types of content:

- Images and photos (text-to-image)
- 3D models and animations (text-to-3D)
- Voices (text-to-speech)
- Videos (text-to-video)
- Music (text-to-music)
- Presentations (text-to-presentation)
- Websites (text-to-web)
- Interiors (text-to-architecture)

Generation of Content

Besides images for presentations and infographics, I probably use video generation the most. We use my avatar to create invitations for our events, personalized videos when reaching out to new contacts on LinkedIn or via email, and even to film short online courses. Right now, we're using Heygen and Rask, which keep adding cool new features so we're having fun trying out all sorts of things.

Rask is capable of dubbing videos in any language into 130 other languages, so when I was speaking at TEDx or on TV, we translated short parts into English. It even makes lips move like you're really speaking, so you can barely tell it's translated. In Heygen, we are exploring the "streaming avatar" feature that allows real-time interaction with my avatar. It uses an uploaded knowledge base (in my case the book and lecture transcripts) so people could have a conversation with "me".

Besides that, all of these apps offer a bunch of marketing features, such as "website to video ad." You just put in a website and in a couple minutes you have a video of a real person talking about it, such as an influencer describing their experience with your services (which, of course, also means that soon we really won't be able to believe almost anything we see on the internet).

Analysis of Content

Companies are using photo¹¹ analysis to automatically transcribe invoices for their accounting systems. Meanwhile audio¹² analysis is finding uses in factories where unusual rattling in production machinery can signal a coming breakdown. Video¹³ analysis technology is able to detect objects in photos and videos and can be used in construction and industry, or to make life easier for blind people¹⁴ by describing what's happening in front of them using their phone camera.

I leverage this feature for learning...a lot. Whenever I come across a cool tweet or presentation, I simply take a quick picture and paste it into ChatGPT. Then, AI creates a description of that content, so I can save it to my notes. But that's not all. It also makes it super easy to provide feedback and instructions to my team. I take a screenshot of an email or a draft, add my comments in red (even handwritten notes on an iPad), and AI transforms it into clear, actionable instructions. All I use is this prompt: "Analyze this image and my red comments, and based on the context do what it says or transform it to a written assignment."

Enhancing of Content

We can also *improve* almost any existing content, such as increase a photo's resolution¹⁵, make ourselves more attractive in video calls¹⁶, or clean up audio recordings¹⁷ so they sound like they're from a podcast studio even when we're recording in a café.

New smart tools can take all these features and combine them together. You can create a description of a person in one AI tool, generate their photo in another, and animate it in the third. Or you can integrate this into your company's processes, just like we did at an event where 250 top executives experimented with interacting with AI.

I kicked off the whole event and my team took care of supporting the participants. Unfortunately, I was unable to stay until the end, so during the event we gathered insights, automatically generated summaries from them, and then created a script. My avatar then delivered the closing remarks using that script in my absence. At the time, I was in a completely

different city, but I received a photo of my virtual self on stage with the caption "you're speaking right now."

When somebody tells me they "don't know what good generative AI could do for them," I hear, "I have no idea what AI can do today, so I can't imagine how I can utilize it." But the possibilities for using it are so broad that if someone can't imagine any uses, they probably just don't understand the technology and should begin exploring it as soon as possible.

Popular AI content creation tools of 2024:

- Creating images and photos: Midjourney, DALL-E, Stable Diffusion
- Creating voices: PlayHT, ElevenLabs, Speechify
- Creating videos: Heygen, Runway, Sora
- Creating music: Suno, Udio, Aiva
- Creating presentations: Tome, BeautifulAI, Copilot
- Creating websites: Framer, Wix, Relume
- Creating interiors and exteriors: InteriorAI, ReRoom

To explore more options, check out the links page¹⁸ for this book or visit [Theresanaiforthat.com](https://theresanaiforthat.com).

3. AI COPILOTS AND AGENTS

Marvel Comics fans will surely know J.A.R.V.I.S.¹⁹, the artificial intelligence created by eccentric billionaire Tony Stark, i.e. Iron Man. J.A.R.V.I.S. helps this superhero solve complicated problems and thinks up improvements for his smart suits, and it's all around his right and left hand. And yet it's really nothing more than a voice-operated conversational interface. It's only a matter of time before a "rather very intelligent system" starts helping you too. People who have had mixed experiences with early versions of Siri or Alexa might be skeptical—and I get that. But when the first smart tools capable of understanding prompts arrived, computers finally started doing what we told them. Literally.

When would we actually use these copilots and agents?

- For office work: Assisting with office related tasks
- For programming: Assisting with writing code
- For document creation: Drafting documents or contracts
- For everyday inquiries and brainstorming: As part of ChatGPT, Gemini, or Claude
- For web browsing: Web browser extensions
- On our devices: As part of their operating systems
- For building automations: As part of apps for automation

Tools for programmers such as GitHub Copilot and Replit Ghostwriter were among the first virtual assistants. As their names imply, they really do work like a co-pilot in that they do what they're told by the captain: you. In one sentence you write what the code should do, and the copilot generates it. The first studies²⁰ have shown that not only are copilot-using programmers more productive, they also have more brainpower left for greater challenges as they don't have to do mundane tasks. The people at GitHub have calculated that for some projects a copilot can write up to half the code.

Copilots also began to emerge in office apps, processing meeting minutes, searching for appointment slots, and assisting with other activities that had previously consumed valuable time. Microsoft just went with 'Copilot' for their office apps too. In one of its first videos it showed the Microsoft Copilot analyzing a spreadsheet in one click and then answering questions on what could be done with the data. When I showed it to my clients, the sales manager began imagining what his people could use it for: "It will pick out customers we haven't visited in over three months, who bought these types of products from us, and had a turnover of more than a million last year." Naturally you could do this kind of analysis pre-AI, but you'd all have to know how to work with data. Once it gets this simple, it's a whole new story.

Copilots for now are still just co-pilots, but the next generation of virtual assistants will be flying solo, without any help from you, just your instructions. These are called *agents*. They might actually be the biggest thing since the invention of the computer. Investor and brilliant writer Evan Armstrong describes agents in his article²¹ *What Are AI Agents—And*

Who Profits From Them? as follows: "The AI we started with formulates an answer and returns it... And every time you want a new output, you have to provide a prompt... Agentic workflows are loops—they can run many times in a row without needing a human involved for each step in the task...What makes agentic workflows so powerful is that because there are multiple steps to accomplish the task, you can optimize each step to be more performative."

Imagine AI agents as independent workers: You give them a goal, and they'll work on achieving it. Let me give you an example with an AI agent that is helping us find interesting startups for marketing collaboration. It searches the internet and when it finds a good fit, it tracks down the right person and sends them a personalized message about how they could use this book as part of their content marketing strategy.

Agents will use skills similar to other AI tools as well as the ability to search for information, communicate with others, learn, and even constantly improve themselves. When they reach a point where they are unable to proceed, maybe, just maybe, they might hire humans to complete the task, either in your company's internal marketplace, on freelance hiring platforms, or within specialized tools developed for this purpose, such as PaymentAI.

Copilots and agents aren't just useful for individuals, they're also great for communicating with the outside world, and they can do pretty amazing things. For example, they can negotiate²² a lower price when purchasing materials, arrange a tax discount, or resolve a legal problem, like the first robot lawyer DoNotPay. This robot negotiates discounts from phone operators for its clients and can handle more and more complicated legal situations. It culminated with an attempt to completely replace a lawyer before the bench: A human was only there as an interpreter rattling off the suggestions from the AI. Now the American Bar Association did step in here, but as you are reading this you may be in a future where AI has emerged victorious in yet another field where it seemed unthinkable just a few years before.

How may I help you?

-  Schedule a meeting with @Elon Musk
-  Draft an email to  Jeff Bezos
-  Book a flight to Copenhagen for me.
-  Add Richard Branson as a new contact in our CRM.

This is what the work of the future looks like: Copilots doing what we say.

AI as a Virtual Coworker

I wrote most of this book in Las Palmas in the Canary Islands. I wanted to enjoy warm days, go surfing, and above all have a few weeks of uninterrupted work. Since this is a popular destination for digital nomads, I thought I'd hold at least one meetup to organize my thoughts and see how people reacted to them. So I started writing an email to my colleague asking her for a list of suitable locations and proposing collaboration with them. I also wanted her to document the whole process because I want to repeat it on all of my future "workations" (a.k.a. working vacations).

But then, right before I was about to hit that *send* button, I stopped. Why? Because I realized new smart tools could do this for me too. In a few minutes, I had a spreadsheet with a list of coworking spaces and a draft email, including a greeting, which I then pasted into the actual email. Naturally addressing everyone by name. In the end, I asked the AI to document the entire process as a checklist for the next time.

When you start to see tools as virtual coworkers, you realize you have a truly capable team around you:

- Assistant: Find a list of coworking spaces in Las Palmas.
- Marketer: Think up how to approach them.
- Copywriter: Write a nice email.
- Graphic designer: Create an invitation design.

- Salesperson: Send personalized emails to each contact.
- Operating manager: Turn this into a process and a system for next time.

Get to know them—these are your new coworkers. They can help you 24/7/365, even while you are doing something else. Unlike your human coworkers or suppliers, you see the fruits of their labor right away, and they don't get irritated when you want the same thing over and over again.

Once you start using your virtual coworkers 100%, you can spend your time on the things you enjoy and really want to do. In my case that meant just coming in and enjoying the meetup.

Do You Have Your Virtual Team Yet?

Once I began playing with copilots and agents (and in this book you'll learn how to build them), the outline of the future became clearer to me. Everyone will create a team of virtual coworkers to suit their needs. You will tell them exactly what to achieve and how they should behave. The better you describe your goals, job, and way of working, the better results you'll get. Naturally you shouldn't forget to train them too. If you create several of them, they can start cooperating, checking each other's work and improving each other's outputs. And by the way, the first platforms²³ offering purely virtual coworkers are already here.

 **Filip "Phil" Drimalka**

 **Email Responder**
Task: Summarize received emails and draft responses.

 **Finance Manager**
Task: Track budgets and flag unexpected costs.

 **Sales Representative**
Task: Contact 10 new prospects on a daily basis.

That's what the virtual "team" of the future looks like. And you can have not a couple, but hundreds or even thousands of virtual teammates.

Does this remind you of anything? Of course: That's how teams already work today. The behavior of a virtual team is not going to differ much from a real one. Your role is to find what you want to do with them and how to constantly improve them.

Jensen Huang, co-founder and CEO of Nvidia, revolutionized the GPU industry and led the company to the forefront of AI development. He describes²⁴ artificial intelligence as intelligence without specific skills, as if you had a bunch of clever graduates who have read every book but don't have any real-world skills. Once you train them and they have gained the skills needed to do their work, they will be able to work for us or in our place. When you teach them to drive a car, you have a self-driving car. Teach them to answer customers and you have customer service. Since more and more new tools are being discovered to give AI more and more useful skills, the concept of virtual coworkers is taking on a whole new dimension.

In one of his interviews, Huang shared the story of Doctor Chang, a scientist whose son showed him he could use readily available graphics cards with artificial intelligence for his calculations instead of a traditional supercomputer. To his astonishment, these calculations were even faster. It was like having several lab technicians with the best computing equipment at his disposal. Chang summarized his gratitude in these words: "Mr. Huang, because of your work, I can finish my life's work in my lifetime."

Innovation Everywhere You Look

As you can see, new smart tools aren't just helping businesses. They can speed up scientific research, make life better for people with disabilities, or help save lives when doctors use them to analyze X-rays²⁵.

I've had a rare chance to observe such innovations firsthand. As a steering-board member for an association²⁶ that helps nonprofits digitize, I see lots of stories where nonprofits are able to accomplish great things with the help of technology. Often limitations, whether they're financial or in capacity, are precisely what pushes us to find new ways to do our work differently.

That's one reason why this is a topic for everyone: independent professionals, companies, schools, research institutions, and government workers despite the fact that these tools are still far from perfect. Fixating on their imperfections would be short-sighted because millions of people are working every day to perfect them.

One of my clients put it even more plainly: "If I put these tools on the back burner, I'll probably end up there too."

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. New smart tools with AI are easy to use, save significant time, and can produce impressive, almost magical results. There are three main categories of AI tools:
 - Knowledge AI for working with information.
 - Generative AI for creating and analyzing content.
 - Copilots and agents that help us complete digital tasks.
2. Knowledge AI excels at tasks involving language and information—writing, analysis, research, and communication. There are many AI chatbots available, but remember that different models have different strengths and it is important to play around with them to determine which is the most suitable for the task at hand.
3. Generative AI can create all types of content from text prompts—images, video, audio, interior design, and 3D models. Not only can it generate content, but also improve and analyze all kinds of digital content.
4. Copilots and agents are like virtual assistants that can be instructed to complete our tasks or work autonomously. We can create our own virtual coworkers or entire virtual teams to augment our capabilities.
5. AI is becoming integrated into the software people use every day. It is accelerating innovation in business, science, medicine, and more. That's why people and organizations of all sizes should focus on adopting AI as soon as possible.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Play around with different scenarios and tools. Give the same task to a few different AI apps and see which one gives you the best results.
2. If you have access to an AI copilot, use it extensively for a variety of tasks to assess its strengths and identify its limitations. Share your findings with your coworkers.
3. Explore some of the platforms for AI agents and see how they have been instructed through prompts. You can give them a try or use them as inspiration on how to prompt your own AI.

3. Destination: No Work

My dad¹ is a wonderful man. I've always admired him for his loving nature and eagerness to help—but above all for his work ethic. He took on a job at a chemical plant in high school, stayed at it through college, and worked his way up from an entry-level employee to financial director. Then he stayed with that company for a remarkable fifty years. But that's not all that fascinates me about his relationship to work.

My parents spend each weekend at their summer house. As soon as they arrive, my dad puts on his overalls and dives into DIY projects that keep him busy until it's time to head back home. In the past my brother and I sometimes had to join in, and as you can imagine we were less than excited. But for my dad it was different. He loves the chance to get his hands dirty so much he doesn't even think of it as work.

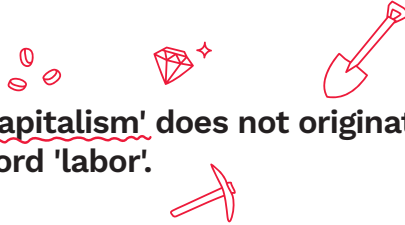
For me, it's the same, just with a different type of work. When I'm preparing a presentation, coming up with new services, or conversing with clients—is it work? Definitely. Does it feel like work? Hell no.

So the question is, why are you really working? To pay off a mortgage? Or to fulfill bigger dreams that require more money? Or to find your calling and improve the world around you? No matter what your job is, you likely spend a significant amount of time on tasks that are completely unrelated to what truly motivates you. When I ask people how they imagine their ideal job, nobody mentions endless meetings, pointless reports, or cleaning up their inbox. A teacher wants to focus on educating students, and a human resources manager wants to develop talents. And yet people spend nearly half their working hours on things they don't enjoy, not to mention the things that create zero value or make no sense at all.

We'll never completely get rid of things like this, but there simply doesn't have to be so many of them. The cost of allowing these tasks to consume our time, energy, and joy for work is simply too high. They keep us from

¹ You're great too, mom, of course! I'm glad to have both of you. And I love both of you a lot.

thinking about important things—like how to work better and how to turn less effort into more value. And yet that's what this is really all about.



The term 'capitalism' does not originate from the word 'labor'.



One of my mentors liked to repeat that "the root of the word 'capitalism' is not 'work.'" Meanwhile, we're sometimes so overworked that it never crosses our minds. That's one reason why I believe that as our calendars constantly get busier, it's increasingly important to pause and ask ourselves: "What needs to change?"

Artificial intelligence is giving us a chance to return to the very essence of what we do, how we do it, and above all, *why* we do it: To rediscover the meaning of our work which, with the use of new smart tools doesn't have to feel like work at all.

New Opportunities for Everyone

It was my father who once told me about a man who advised people on how to work just four hours a week. That's how I discovered Tim Ferriss and his book *The 4-Hour Workweek* (4HWW). Many people think this book is about how to work just half a day a week, but in reality it's about getting the most value out of every hour you put in. So I began focusing on exactly that: using virtual assistants, buying services on freelancing portals, and employing digital hacks for almost every task.

In many ways, this book builds on Ferriss' ideas, partly in how it prioritizes the value we create over the trading of time for money. And partly in how it lists the opportunities of modern technology, which are much more appealing today, years after 4HWW was written. But unlike

Ferriss, I don't want to focus on people who want to leave the corporate world and radically change their lives. Quite the opposite.

The reason is that new opportunities are also opening up for people who genuinely love their work. And it doesn't matter whether they're working for themselves or as employees. The option of working from anywhere gives them far more freedom by letting them reconcile their career with their personal needs so they're not sitting in the office all day while their friends send them enticing messages from their ski trips or bike rides.

But if you happen to have the ambition to do something more, unbelievable opportunities are opening up for you. That might be one reason why most of my colleagues have at least one side project. Some want to earn a little extra cash, some do it to spice up their work, and some are hoping to achieve their dream of having their own business. The world of No Work is made for all of this.

Work. But Work Better

The idea of No Work starts from the assumption that AI will end up leaving a number of people without work as we know it. For many others, it will add to their workload. In both cases, it will significantly change *how* we work. I'll show you how we can harness this to reach our main goal: Doing more of what we want and spending less time on the tasks that AI smart tools can do in our place.

No Work is:

1. When I'm doing something enjoyable and fulfilling.
2. When technology is working on my behalf.
3. When I'm intentionally not working.

1. WHEN I'M DOING SOMETHING ENJOYABLE AND FULFILLING

As soon as I started working on my digital avatar, special things began happening. People asked whether it was me or my digital twin answering

them, or whether they would ever see me "live" again. I even received an invitation to do a TEDx talk² where the organizers wrote that I could also send my avatar. But I love talking at conferences, so I want to do that in person. It's precisely what I consider to be an example of No Work.

By the way, I think the ability to speak engagingly before an audience will remain high-value even in the age of AI. It might become even more valuable *precisely because of* artificial intelligence. People will want a break from it sometimes. That too should be a part of how we think about what skills to develop. But I'll get into this later.

Let's try something: scan your calendar or completed tasks. Which activities filled you with energy? Which ones drained you? It's one thing to talk about productivity, business, and results, but enjoying our work is at least as important. Or isn't it actually *even more important*?

When you enjoy your work, little miracles happen. You learn faster, you get more things done, and you fall more often into a flow where you're submerged in your work and forget about the world around you. Your brain is running on all cylinders, you can take on far bigger challenges, and you're enjoying how you're applying your talent, knowledge, and skills.

Yes, there's no direct connection between how enjoyable your work is and the value created. But life is too short to focus on just getting results instead of doing what truly fulfills us. Ideally the goal should be to combine the two so that you're able to look forward to going back to work, even during your day off.

2. WHEN TECHNOLOGY IS WORKING ON MY BEHALF

Replacing human labor with technology has been my focus throughout my career. And I'm increasingly convinced that the tools themselves are becoming less and less important. Far more important is the way we work. Why should I waste time constantly explaining my services when I can record a short video and use it repeatedly? Why should I write the same texts over and over when I can set up a keyboard shortcut to write them for me?

It starts with tiny tricks in my phone and ends with the automation of everything I do on my computer—from simple tasks to complex processes. Today software³ can do work that once would have taken hours in just a few seconds. And that's still nothing compared to what AI can do.

When one of my clients asked me to speak at a meeting for German-speaking customers, I had to say "no" for lack of time. But I decided to take my avatar on its first trial run. I recorded a few ideas and let AI turn them into a script and translate it into German. Then I just copied it into a video creation tool⁴, and I was done in a few minutes.

But it doesn't stop there because AI can do more than just what you explicitly tell it to do. As you'll see in the following chapters, it lets you create virtual coworkers that quite literally work for you, including communicating with each other, learning, and suggesting what you could be focusing on. At this point your job is to figure out what you want to do with them.

3. WHEN I'M INTENTIONALLY NOT WORKING

The last important element of No Work is to decide where to focus your attention. We all have limited time and energy, and not only must we consider whether we're working with the right tools, but also whether we're working on the right things.

This is not only about prioritizing tasks; It's also about eliminating non-essential things, simplifying, and changing our approach to work overall. The approach I propose in this book is based on three ideas:

- A. Don't go to work to be *at* work, but rather to work *on* how you work. That means building a system that works for you.
- B. Different tasks don't have the same effect. Imagine you have to produce a presentation. An hour spent on its preparation lasts just as long as an hour spent preparing a template that will allow you to prepare every future presentation faster. Same time, far greater impact.

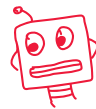
C. Not everything has to be perfect. Each of us has to learn when it makes sense to strive for top quality and when "good enough is good enough," so we don't waste energy in the wrong places.

The AI boom brings with it the need to embrace *deliberate imperfectionism*, not just because AI's outputs may not be absolutely flawless. Will we toil for hours polishing the details, or settle for what we get? We know this dilemma from elsewhere: Do we make our homes spotless before the holidays, or simply enjoy the festive season amidst a bit of cheerful chaos? With many things, we can use them even when they're only good enough. It's just our internal perfectionist that convinces us we have to fine-tune them just a little more.

That's why we should think about the different kinds of work: work that we want to do in person; work that we're doing ourselves for now but which could be made easier by using technology; and work that we'll completely leave to AI.



**Some people worry
that AI will take our work.**



And to that I say - it's about time.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Too many people waste precious time on unfulfilling work that doesn't align with their true passions or contribute meaning to their life. Unfortunately, the cost of squandering our limited time and energy this way is simply too high.
2. AI isn't about the tools—it's about transformation. It's an opportunity to return to the essence of why we work and refocus on the kinds of work that truly matter.
3. This book builds on ideas of prioritizing value creation over trading time for money enabled by advances in technology. It emphasizes opportunities for people who are passionate about their careers rather than simply escaping corporate life or seeking miraculous quick fixes.
4. No Work is not about not working. It's a concept that refers to:
 - Doing work that is enjoyable, fulfilling, and that doesn't feel like work at all.
 - Work that is done by technology on our behalf.
 - Work that we intentionally decide not to do.
5. No Work is about making conscious choices with your time and energy. It's about designing systems that work for you, focusing on high-impact tasks, and embracing the freedom of "good enough" over striving for an impossible level of perfection.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Think about what this conception of No Work could mean for you regardless if you are doing some of this already or if you have only started to dream about it.
2. Try making a list of your tasks, projects, and the people you did the work with and then divide them into two columns: positive and negative. Which ones give you energy and which ones drain you? This should help you clarify your focus and goals.
3. Thinking about what *not to do* and giving yourself permission to be imperfect is equally as important as listing what to accomplish. Start small: Hit send on that AI-written email without overthinking it; free up some time by canceling a meeting; or remove a few less important tasks from your list.



A New Mindset

**How to Recognize and
Seize Opportunities**

4. A World Full of Opportunities

As far back as 2017, renowned historian Yuval Noah Harari warned the revolution associated with artificial intelligence would create a *useless class*—a part of the population with no meaningful role in society. People who are not only unemployed, but also *unemployable*. According to Harari, artificial intelligence will handle the vast majority of activities more quickly, cheaply, and what's even worse (at least for people), better than any of us. Perhaps we can also extend this concept to useless products and services. An app¹ that cleans up noise in recordings can somewhat replace professional microphones, while a tool² that creates video avatars may bring some worries for TV studios. For services, that goes double—even this book is about how a single person or a small team can do the work of dozens of people. So what will these people do then?

The rich history of the adoption of new technologies offers an optimistic answer. Human society has always adapted to them, and these disruptors ultimately created far more jobs than they replaced. The entrepreneur and author of several bestsellers Scott Galloway illustrates³ this with the example of the automobile: "A technology is introduced—say, the car—and an existing sector is made irrelevant overnight (e.g., horse and carriage). In the short term, we're fixated on how many horses will be out of a job. Harder to imagine, however, is how many jobs the car will create—as well as the different kinds of jobs it will create. It's hard to envision radios, turn-signal lights, motion sensors, and heated seats, let alone NASCAR, *The Italian Job*, and the drive-through window. In other words, disruptive technology results in demand for things we never knew we wanted."

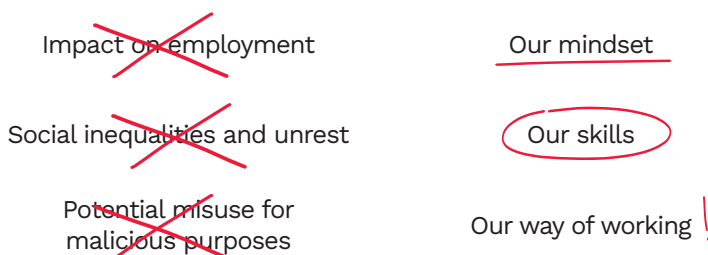
The economist Noah Smith goes even further⁴, reminding us that without new technologies we simply will not be able to remain competitive. Other countries will continue to invest in their development even if we don't. Studies predicting the number of automated jobs are, according to Smith, often nonsense because they explore only individual steps and don't deal with how work itself is changing and what people could do if they didn't have to waste time on pointless tasks or things that can now be done easily by existing technology.

Let's also remind ourselves again that the countries with the most robots per person, like South Korea and Singapore, aren't plagued with high unemployment.

In short, technologies have been replacing labor for hundreds of years, and yet we all still work. So let's not underestimate human adaptability. Even though we sometimes need a strong external impulse, such as a global pandemic or the arrival of AI, in the end we always get used to the new normal.

The key thing is to understand that dramatic prophecies also distract us from what's most important—the things we actually can control and influence.

What Can We Actually Influence?

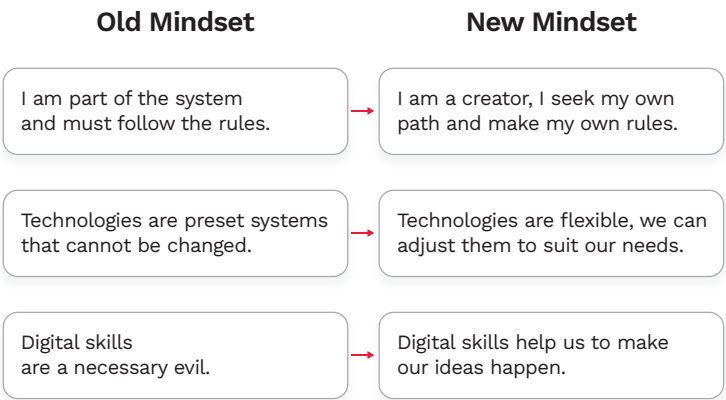


Setting Your Mindset

In my workshops, I always ask people what prevents them from making better use of digital tools, and I've noticed something interesting: The most common obstacles aren't related to IT at all. Instead, they're connected to things we can control ranging from not knowing how to use the tools to lacking time, fearing mistakes, or being stuck in our own habits and routines. But these are all things we can work on. Or to put it better—things we *should* work on.

After all, we can all educate ourselves, and we can all plan a team discussion on making better use of technology. We can even just take some time once in a while, find a new useful tool, and study a few tips on how to use it more effectively.

These discussions have always strengthened my conviction that having the right mindset is the foundation for everything.



Adopting the right mindset is an essential prerequisite for being able to adapt and stay relevant as we enter the age of AI. It is directly tied to a "growth mindset"⁵—and the arrival of AI is a good test of whether we really have it or just like to say we do.

Where Are the Opportunities?

When a client of mine decided to leave a large manufacturer and find a job in a small tech company, I gave her one simple tip: She should write a list of companies she admires, connect with their employees on LinkedIn, and speak to them about possible cooperation. She looked at me with surprised eyes, "I can do that?!"

Yes, you can! Because while it may sound like a cliché, you really can do anything. You're only limited by your imagination and the courage to

leave the beaten path. Meanwhile, off the beaten path is precisely where the most attractive opportunities lie.

So let's start with imagination. In the previous chapters, we looked at the development of AI tools. Now it's time to put them into specific situations—opportunities where you can use them and where they can bring you value.

I advise you to look at the prospects for using new smart tools in two ways: through the lens of opportunities (*"where can they help me"*) and the viewpoint of risk management (*"where can they threaten me"*). The two are more closely connected than one might initially realize: In instances where new technologies are able to replace us, we can potentially make use of them now. When I found out AI can replace our instructors, we quickly began scaling up our training programs by filming lessons with the help of virtual avatars. Similarly, something that is an opportunity for one person (an app that generates cover letters for job seekers) can be a risk for another (the HR department that has to sift through those letters).

That's why it's important to broaden our knowledge so we can imagine as many scenarios as possible and apply them to our situation. Now we'll explore some of them by looking at practical examples from several types of companies and professions. But remember—you can easily apply the same principles, no matter what you do.

Opportunities for Consultants and Trainers

For knowledge workers and people who market their own know-how, the new tools are a blessing. My friend Hana Jadavan, an expert on agile working, is a good example. Hana uses digital tools intensively for her freelancing and for creating educational programs, even though she's not a tech enthusiast at all.

Where can new smart tools help Hana?

- With creating a digital platform for running online courses.
- With translating her educational materials into any language.

- With producing professional videos and podcasts without her own studio.
- With creating social media posts automatically.
- With producing top-quality graphic educational materials.
- With creating an avatar that can guide clients through her courses.

When you combine these tools with a new way of working, you can significantly increase the value of your work. Imagine an expert on presentation skills who, instead of limiting herself to hourly lessons, offers companies a large-scale project for improving their employees' presentation skills. She could create a series of video lessons and prepare a simple website with recommended resources and apps for training presentation skills⁶. She would assign people to use these apps and organize meetings for sharing their progress.

Instead of just leading individual lessons, she would design the system and facilitate the sharing sessions. This means it could take as long to prepare as several traditional lessons, but it could be sold for several times the price.

This is precisely what we're doing today in our development projects. We're not trying to sell hours of our work, but instead a system that has far more value for our clients.

Because No Work is definitely not about the number of hours you work.

Opportunities for Lawyers and Attorneys

If I had to guess the number of lawyers out there based on their participation in our innovation programs, I'd consider them an endangered species. I sometimes joke that when a lawyer catches a whiff of innovation, they pretend they didn't smell anything. I can afford to make these jokes because I'm a trained—though not practicing—lawyer myself.

But to be fair, the amount of interest in digital innovations in law has increased a lot with the arrival of AI. One of the most active participants in my programs is Dalibor Kovar, a partner at the largest Czech legal firm

Havel & Partners. He is pushing for the introduction of new technologies and for the drafting of legislation enabling us to make better use of digital tools and e-government. That's precisely the kind of lawyer I'd like to work with.

Where can new smart tools help modern lawyers?

- With drafting and improving contracts.
- With brainstorming and thinking through arguments and counterarguments.
- With researching and automatic processing of large amounts of information.
- With summarizing documents and converting legalese into plain language.
- With creating robo-lawyers able to help with simple cases.

The arrival of new technologies also brings a major opportunity: helping with their implementation because each one leads to many issues that need solving ranging from compliance with intellectual property laws to cybersecurity.

Attorneys today also work on far more than just law. They have to understand their clients, sometimes serve as therapists, communicate superbly, and of course they need to know how to sell their services. They might take inspiration here from one developer who approached clients with an offer for his services in a very non-traditional but innovative way. He downloaded a list of potential clients and had AI produce an idea for a customized app for each client.

What if our lawyer created a similar system that would occasionally approach their clients with an automatically prepared consultation proposal?

PROMPT: ADD A ONE-SENTENCE SUGGESTION
ON HOW THE GIVEN FIELD CAN USE AI.

Field of Activity	Possibility for using AI	Legal Aspect
Software Development	AI can help write and detect errors in code, significantly improving developer efficiency and software quality.	Issues regarding potential copyright infringement and licensing terms.
Mountain Bike Manufacturing	AI can analyze designs and materials to optimize mountain bike frames for strength, durability, and weight.	Determine liability for product safety and meet all safety regulations.

ADD RECOMMENDATIONS ON WHAT TO WATCH
OUT FOR FROM A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

But these kinds of apps aren't just helping lawyers. One of my clients runs the purchasing department for a large energy company. In one of our discussions, she mentioned that she uses an AI tool for legal research to be better prepared for discussions with her colleagues in the legal department.

Opportunities for Workers in Manufacturing Firms

When we opened the topic of AI at several workshops for Bosch, one of the largest global manufacturers, we also spoke about copilots and smart voice assistants. One attendee instantly came up with a great idea: Can't they replace the tedious typing of data in our production line? Of course they can. We also found a number of other things you can do with new smart tools in manufacturing:

- Create a copilot to enter commands for machines more easily.
- Automatically generate notifications of important events.
- Analyze videos and sounds, alerting you to problems with machines.
- Prepare training videos for foreign workers.
- Develop a chatbot that can quickly find information within operating manuals.

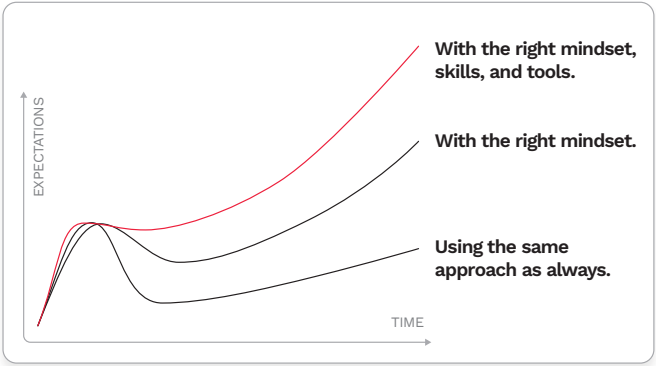
In several ways, modern production and manufacturing firms have outpaced offices. There's even a term, *dark factory*, designating factories that are so automated they can stay completely dark. How about taking some inspiration and bringing more automation into our offices too?

We could go on like this and find further attractive opportunities—for accounting professionals, salespeople, operations managers, and company directors because there is no profession that couldn't profit from the possibilities AI brings us.

Do you see the opportunities now? And what about the people around you? Naturally everything we've talked about doesn't just apply to you, but also to your colleagues, suppliers and partners. The new mindset also means starting to choose partners whose minds are set up to support your digital efforts and maybe even take them to another level.

If you're familiar with the Gartner Hype Cycle, you know that each technology goes through a phase where early buzz generates hype, followed by a dip due to unmet expectations. However, I'm convinced that AI will disrupt this pattern. At the peak of the hype, those who are actively working on changing their mindset and embracing AI tools will separate themselves from the rest of the pack.

Hype Cycle in the AI Age



Create Your Own Digital Vision

The future of your work is defined by the decisions you make today, and a *digital vision* can help inform those decisions. Imagine having no restrictions, access to any digital tool you need, and the ability to train AI to do anything you want. What would your work look like? What would change and what would remain the same? What would you be doing and what would technology be doing in your place?

Write down your ideas and be as specific as possible. Don't focus just on *what* you'll do, but also *how* you'll do it.

My digital vision might look like this:

- I'll have a virtual assistant to help me approach potential clients on LinkedIn.
- Automation in tandem with AI will propose an answer to any email I receive.
- Thanks to my avatar, my online courses will be available in over 100 languages.
- All documents for my accountant will be automatically pulled from my inbox.
- I will only work for digital ambassadors and company leaders who truly want change.
- I'll only have to work four days a week.
- I'll work remotely for at least two months a year.

Why is writing down a vision like this important? Because the road to its fulfillment is the road to No Work. That's why it should become your priority and part of your main strategy. Only after you know where you want to go can you work on getting there.

How to Have the Courage to Overcome Challenges

When I was preparing to earn my first diving license, I was lucky enough to be instructed by a former member of the Coldstream Guards, an elite British army unit. He gave me advice I've learned to use everywhere, not just in underwater crisis situations: Stop. Breathe. Think.



Stop.
Breathe.
Think.



Whenever you feel overwhelmed by new technologies or you're starting to fall prey to the kind of cynicism that came with the arrival of AI, follow this advice precisely: Stop, take a breath, and think about what you can control and therefore take action on right now. Whether your ultimate goal is to simplify your work, get a new job, or start a new business, the key is to identify at least one step and then, take that step.

No matter what your idea is, it will probably require the courage to try new things; to delve into things that might not work or that might seem strange to you. That will be misunderstood by others or that may even make you feel like a cheater: Who ever gave you the right, and what if people find out how much AI is doing for you?

But maybe we shouldn't call it courage. Entrepreneurs show courage when they bet all their savings on one card. Soldiers show it by leaving to fight on the front. Ultimately the actually brave—and risky—thing to do today is to do nothing and expect that the digital revolution isn't coming after all.

Let's talk about *desire and determination* instead. Trying out a new app. Telling your customers you'll send a video instead of having a meeting. Proposing to your boss that you will try working from another country for a month. Sitting down with a younger colleague, watching how they work with AI and learning from them. That doesn't sound that bad, does it?

Overcoming challenges works similarly to building up muscle—with every challenge you overcome, you get stronger. Soon you'll also discover that even when you fail or get stung by rejection, nothing actually happens. On the contrary, it can teach you a lot, and it may be precisely thanks to these

rejections you'll ultimately achieve far greater success. The same applies for mistakes and our fears about how others perceive them. People think mainly of themselves, so don't get preoccupied that they will focus their attention on you.

The determination to overcome challenges has opened many doors for me. I asked Seth Godin, one of the world's most successful authors, if I could translate articles from his blog for my website—and within a few minutes I'd received a "Yes, you can translate up to six per year." Similarly, when I wrote to Chinese company Alibaba asking if I could help them fine-tune one of their services, a couple weeks later I was sitting on a flight to Xiamen. These all were priceless experiences, inevitably accompanied by hundreds of missteps and rejections, but those helped me to grow as well. Making mistakes and swiftly learning from them is, after all, the foundation of the real *digital mindset*. And that's precisely the mindset you need if you want to use new smart technologies to their fullest extent.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. AI and automation are likely to make many jobs, products and services obsolete. However, history shows that new technologies ultimately create more jobs than they replace by enabling new kinds of work and satisfying demands we didn't even know existed. This demonstrates human adaptability to technological change.
2. There are significant opportunities for using AI and digital tools across many professions. The key is to imagine the possibilities on both sides; the opportunities and threats. Both of these are closely related so it is important to be aware of them.
3. The biggest obstacles to taking advantage of new digital tools are often not technical but mental: not knowing how to use the tools, lacking time, fearing mistakes, and being stuck in old habits. That's why you should mainly focus on what you can control and influence—having the proper mindset and developing your skills.
4. Have the courage and determination to try new things even if they seem strange or you're worried about what others will think. This is essential for taking advantage of these opportunities.
5. If you're worried about missing out or you feel the opportunity train has already left the station, relax. Everyone is at the same starting point. What matters most is taking action today, even through small, incremental steps.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Think about what could replace you or threaten your competitive advantage in the future. It is highly likely that you could be using that same technology today to simplify your work or expand your capacity.
2. Create a digital vision for yourself or for your business. If you work in a team, meet with your coworkers, look at the possibilities of AI and discuss what your work might look like in the age of AI. This will provide strategic direction for what to focus on.
3. Choosing to work with partners who share a digital-first mindset can accelerate your own transformation. Talk with some of your suppliers or business partners about how to leverage AI together.

5. The Foundation of the **Digital** Mindset



Back in the old days (by which I mean 2010), when I was preparing my first training course on digital productivity apps, it wasn't as easy as it is today. The business world was just discovering smartphones and many companies considered "cloud" to be a dirty word. I had to spend my days googling, browsing forums, and traveling to startup events around the globe. But I was rewarded with happy customers who left my sessions with whole pages of tips for useful apps and online services they had never even heard about.

A few years later, I simplified my research using platforms like Upwork and Fiverr where I could hire freelancers from around the world. Sometimes I only needed to send them a picture with an overview of startups in a given field, and for a few dollars they would go through websites and provide me with all the important information. I usually hired Filipinos or Pakistanis as they had the best rates, but when I needed something the next day, I took advantage of time zone differences and hired someone from South America instead.

These days I don't have to hire anyone at all. During my research for this book, I used an online service that identifies companies' logos, an AI app that looks up their info online, and a spreadsheet add-on¹ that then filled in all the information I needed. After a couple of months, when I was finishing the book, I simply had to ask AI, and it prepared everything on its own.

The trouble is that many people still work in a way that's far different from how I or my colleagues do, not to mention that most of them are also oblivious to the even smarter services that are available to us right now.

So the question is: Why do people cling to old ways of working? Why are they choosing not to make life easier with all the amazing tech out there? The answer is simple: They lack a digital mindset.

What Is the Digital Mindset?

Having a digital mindset doesn't mean you know about every app out there. Nobody does and nobody can. You don't even have to know how each piece of technology works.

What you do need is the ability to envision how you can use these tools and to what purpose. We saw this during the pandemic when companies and schools were scrambling to go remote. Some teachers merely started sitting in front of a camera instead of standing in front of a blackboard, then they read off the bullet points on students' screens one by one. Boring! Others took a different approach: They came up with new assignments, tried out online learning games, and let their students cooperate in shared docs. Guess which method worked out better...

You can see the same in companies where lots of people "don't know what they don't know." Sometimes they aren't even trying to find new ways to work smarter. They don't realize that they're working in an unnecessarily complex way and that there's a lot that could already be automated. At the same time, they constantly wonder why they're always *so busy*.

Having a digital mindset is important, even if you're lucky enough to have someone helping you, whether that's a relative, a geek on your team, or a whole IT department. Because if you don't know what's possible, how can you ask for it?

The Principles of the Digital Mindset

1. There's an app for that

People who follow this principle recognize that there are apps that can assist us with nearly any task. Often it's not about specific apps, but more about how they leverage technology to solve a given problem. That's why you shouldn't limit your inspiration solely to the tools that you currently use or that are approved by your boss.

Additionally, because instead of "app" you could also use "*information*" or "*people*", all of this is available anytime, anywhere. When it comes to

finding information, you're no longer limited to Google. AI is here for you too, and not just for advice. These days AI can also code quite a bit all on its own—from spreadsheet formulas to whole programs.

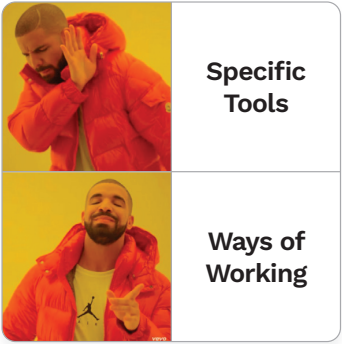
Likewise, don't be afraid to ask other people. When starting to work on my digital twin, I noticed Sahil Lavingia, the founder of the e-commerce platform Gumroad, was aiming to do the same. After just one message we were eagerly interacting and exchanging experiences with each other.

I advise the same to my clients: Don't hesitate to reach out to someone outside your company and share know-how. It's an often overlooked option, despite the growing openness to knowledge and experience sharing in recent years.

So one more time, whenever you start working on something new, remember: There's an app for that.

2. It's not about the tools

If you're constantly searching for new apps to solve all your problems, I have some news for you: There isn't a fix-it-all miracle app out there. Yet. The good news is, it usually isn't about the apps. What's more important is trying to work differently.



When a colleague of mine complained about being swamped with work, I took a look at his calendar. He spent so many hours in online meetings where he explained to potential customers how our marketplace worked.

All it took was one simple tweak: setting a regular "open-house hour" in his calendar and inviting everyone to that event. Eight hours a week spent in meetings became just one.

As you'll see in the chapters to come, modern digital tools can be used in many different ways. We just have to keep thinking about what the best way is to fit them into our work systems or how to use them to make those systems better.

Let's take the popular Microsoft OneNote or Loop as an example. You can write yourself notes in it. Or... you can make it a place where teammates can find all their guides and processes. Or you can fine-tune meetings in it like one of our teams did. Every week a note was created for the upcoming meeting automatically, with the names of all participants and three questions: What were you working on? What will you be working on? What's slowing you down? Three days before each meeting, the note was automatically sent to all participants, reminding them to fill it in. That way they didn't suffer needless downtime at the meeting. They could quickly skim their teammates' info and then focus solely on essentials.

You see? One app, many different uses.

3. Done is better than perfect

Some of us like to go from zero to a hundred. We used to manage everything by email, but now suddenly we need an app for everything. Sometimes our inner perfectionist wins out in the desire to fiddle with something until it's flawless, from videos for customers to podcasts or process automation. You can fiddle as much as you'd like, but it's better to just get started, like the old adage, "done is better than perfect."

This approach has one big advantage. In the chapter "Use Technology to Your Advantage," I will show you some of the super agile tools you can use to prepare a first version of almost any system in just a few hours. Then you can immediately see how to fine-tune it. But when you "must have it all perfect right from launch..." you may never reach the launch. Or maybe you'll launch and only then realize just how much you hadn't yet thought through.

To avoid endlessly repeating myself in countless meetings, I began recording short videos instead. Some people liked these so much they wanted to try it themselves. Several people asked which app was better, what camera I used, whether it was better to screen share or not... but all I could think about was: Who cares?! You've got a camera in your computer, your phone, and who knows where else: Just make it, send it, and see how it goes.

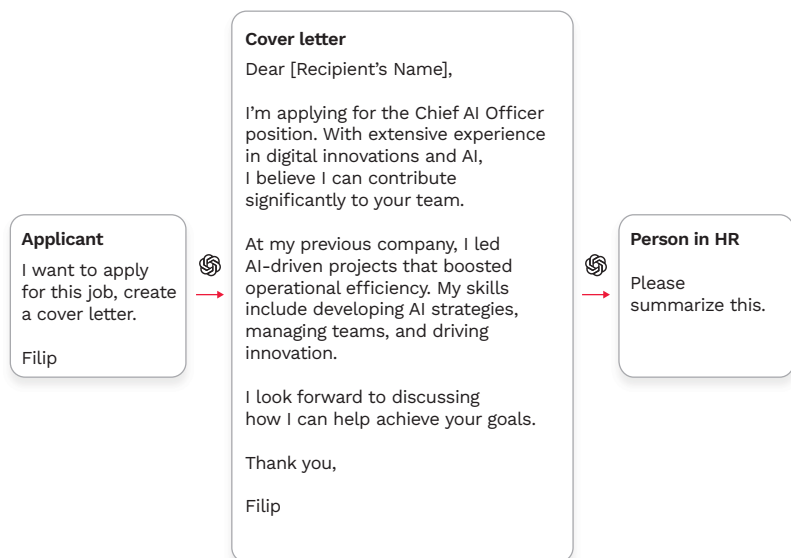
Don't paralyze yourself by obsessing over "how." Just get started and learn by doing!

4. Work means a system

Whatever kind of work you're doing; you should view your *work as a system*. All the activities, processes, and tools you work with fit within this system.

Long-time Intel CEO Andrew Grove describes² his approach to work organization similarly, "We found that all our employees 'produce' in some sense—some make chips, others prepare bills, while still others create software designs or advertising copy." I too believe everything we do is in some way a system of production. No matter what we do, we're assembling individual parts of activities and processes to produce something bigger. And when something's a system, it can be improved, automated, and fine-tuned either in parts or as a whole.

This approach is absolutely crucial because in the age of AI designing systems will be one of our most important roles and goals. There is a meme where a job applicant asked AI to write a cover letter, and the HR person then used AI to summarize it.



This is no longer a joke, but an everyday reality. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are apps that can create cover letters and even tweak resumes to make a candidate's experience look like a perfect match for the job. People are already using them, so HR needs to catch up and develop systems to effectively filter and evaluate applicants, identifying those who are truly worth interviewing. Whether we like it or not, almost all of us will have to deal with similar challenges.

In the coming chapters, you'll learn to fine-tune your system so that it works for you. But you can start right away with a bird's-eye view of your work. Think about what you're doing, how, and what you could improve.

You can use the "No Work Navigator³" for this. It will help you set priorities for immediate improvements to your system, develop strategies for learning skills that will help you fine-tune it in the medium term, and create a long-term vision that will ultimately lead to No Work.

No Work Navigator Ideas and priorities leading to No Work.			
Goal	Short Term: Improve	Medium Term: Master	Long Term: Transform
Question	What can I do today to make my work easier tomorrow?	What should I learn to get more work done with less time, effort, or money?	What could my No Work look like, and what do I need to do to achieve it?
Your ideas	<i>I often refer to our website; I should create a keyboard shortcut with the link.</i>	<i>Learn to improve my prompts and create a library of prompts for the entire team.</i>	<i>I want to have a digital twin that will guide people through our educational programs.</i>

A key aspect of the digital mindset and part of the system's continuous improvement is maintaining a continuous feedback loop among team members, as well as between the company and its customers. That's one reason why I've put our team on the BHF diet: *Brutally Honest Feedback*. Some of my friends are calling it a BFF—Brutally Frank Feedback. And you know what? They're right. Because this kind of feedback really is your best friend. If our meetings are too long or our customers are dissatisfied, I want to know about it. Without the freedom to speak completely openly, you're holding back the best ideas. And this freedom must be there, not only from top to bottom, but also from bottom to top. In fact, the latter is the more important direction.

Rediscovering and improving your work system isn't just an option, or even a choice. It should be a responsibility. Some people are sometimes scared and wait for authorization. I always tell these people two simple axioms of management:

- Ask for forgiveness, not permission.
- Authority isn't granted. It's taken.

If you believe your company should be paying more attention to AI, say it. If something's being done the hard way when it could be done the easy way, say it. Nobody's listening? Say it again. And again. Or just simply do it yourself. Every company needs rebels who push things forward like this. And if they don't appreciate it at your current company, don't worry, with this approach you'll be able to find work anywhere.

We Need an AI Mindset

The digital mindset is about more principles than just this, of course. It is the ambition to handle the same amount of work with fewer people, a focus on a superb customer experience, or even the ability to stay cool when technologies break down. At the same time, all of these principles are timeless and have helped people get ahead during the rise of every breakthrough technology: computers, the internet, and now AI too.

AI differs from earlier inventions in important ways. It learns on its own, adapts, and evolves. It completes tasks—and in unbelievable volumes—without direct human intervention. Not even the people behind it can imagine all its possibilities. That's just one more reason why we need to expand the digital mindset to fit the AI age.

We have to consider this even if only because of how incredibly attractive AI is. People started using it en masse immediately. Any sort of head start can be lost quickly. You might need to find a new, original path. As it gets harder and harder to set yourself apart, you can simply go back to the timeless values and keep from getting tempted onto the same wave everyone else is riding.

To adopt an AI mindset, we need to *think differently* no matter what department you work in. Once, when I was showing a management team of a large technology company the possibilities of using AI, they brought in some of their IT staff. I was unpleasantly surprised by their ignorance. They didn't use AI at all and worried that new programmers would be cheating by using a copilot during hiring tests. I immediately recommended they could integrate that same copilot right into their tests. How about tasking candidates to build a program with help from two different copilots⁴ and then discussing their advantages and disadvantages? That's exactly what the new mindset looks like, incorporating the possibilities of using AI into anything you're working on.

Unlearning our way to No Work

Embracing a new way of working requires a certain amount of unlearning. It pushes you to stop and think before simply doing something the same old way for the umpteenth time. I realized this thanks to an eye-opening moment I experienced while working on a system for personalized recommendations for our clients. We were fine-tuning the process using automation and AI.

When my colleague sent me the first version of the generated documents, I wasn't satisfied with their appearance. It was just a plain white document with black text in a default font, so I asked him to tweak it with our new graphic designer. But before I could even finish my email in which I wanted to describe my ideas about the design, I received an updated draft perfectly aligned with our visual style.

Do you know how he did it? Using a true AI mindset he simply tasked the AI to *"analyze our website's style and apply it to the PDFs"*.

We all still have a lot to learn. Or rather, unlearn.

The digital mindset doesn't mean becoming an expert in every new trend, or using technologies everywhere and at any price. Quite the opposite. The digital mindset is about consciously developing the ability to assess when it's the right time to reach for them and when to focus on creating value without technology.

The important thing is to stay open to new things, be unafraid to try them, learn to use them properly, and know how to adapt to the changes that are going to be arriving even faster.

Remember: Things will never be as slow as today. And that's precisely why right now is the best time to get started.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Having a digital mindset is about learning how to leverage technology and tools to work smarter, not just knowing about every app or tool available.
2. The key principles of a digital mindset include:
 - Recognizing there are apps and people to help with nearly any task.
 - Focusing on new ways of working, not just on the tools themselves.
 - Taking an agile, "done is better than perfect" approach to trying new things.
 - Viewing work as a system that can be improved and automated.
3. In the AI age, we need to expand the idea of a digital mindset to an "AI mindset." This means proactively considering how to incorporate AI's capabilities into anything we're working on. The goal is to decide when to strategically leverage technology versus focusing on value creation without it.
4. Adopting a new mindset requires unlearning old habits. In this way you can stay open to new approaches and tools, don't be afraid to experiment, learn to use them well and adapt quickly as the pace of change accelerates.
5. Technological changes will only continue to accelerate. Don't wait. Be proactive since things will never be as slow as they are today.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Think of your work like a system. When you work on a project or a task, break it down into individual steps. Then see if you can use AI to handle some of those steps.
2. Think about the task ahead of you and try to find an app in one of the AI catalogs that could help. If you have a larger project coming up, try to reach out to someone who may have dealt with this and share your experiences.
3. Start living by the BHF principle—Brutally Honest Feedback. Ask others for honest feedback on your work. And if you work in a team, openly tell each other what can be improved.

6. How to Upgrade Your Potential



"It all starts with a change of mindset."

This is how I open most of my workshops, because I need the participants to start seeing things like creative thinkers and not like cogs in a ruthless machine. I want them to grasp the source of their work's real value and to see new technologies as a chance to significantly increase that value. There is a reason why the most dangerous words in business are: "But we've always done it that way."

When a new client reaches out to us, they usually fall into one of two categories. Either they're a company that needs some fresh air and a shift in its operations, or they have a request that follows this pattern:

1. I work in industry X.
2. Technology Y has caught my eye.
3. I feel that a lot of my work can be automated or improved.
4. I don't know where to start. / I got lost in the process. / I can't do it on my own.
5. Can you help?

I received a similar email from an architect who wanted to take advantage of new technologies and didn't know where to start:

"I'm interested in AI and virtual reality and their use in architecture. Every day, I'm repeating the same types of manual work, so I'm certain there's room for automation. I've already come across a few tools, but sadly they weren't anything I could use in practice. I'm not an IT expert, so I can't really say if this would work with the apps we have today. Can you help?"

It doesn't matter if you can handle such challenges on your own or with some help from experts. Once you upgrade your mindset, you will be able to broaden your horizons and clearly see what to focus on and who to collaborate with.

How Do You Do It?

Changing your mindset isn't a one-time thing. If you're serious about it, a structured and systematic approach is essential. You might try my "IES" framework, which is currently being used by many of our clients to broaden the mindset of their teams:

Inspiration

Experimentation

Sharing

1. Inspiration

Most of our thoughts and opinions are shaped by what gets into our heads, from books, news, social media, and educational events to everything else we consume. This is one more reason to carefully choose who and what we follow. Every minute you spend curating your content diet today will influence your ideas in the future. And it doesn't stop there.

Ever had an *aha moment*; the kind where things just came together and made perfect sense? Thanks to science¹, we know this isn't just a random flash of inspiration. It's the result of assembling bits of information and experience in our subconscious. That's why exposing ourselves to diverse sources of inspiration, reflecting on them, and integrating them into our workflow is crucial for cultivating fresh perspectives.

There are several simple aids for this. First, write down your ideas and reflections on the lessons you've learned. This is now much easier thanks to AI tools² that can transcribe voice notes. Next, use recurring calendar notifications to remind yourself of thought-provoking questions. You can use some of the questions laid out in the "No Work Navigator" like: "What can I do today to make my work easier tomorrow?"

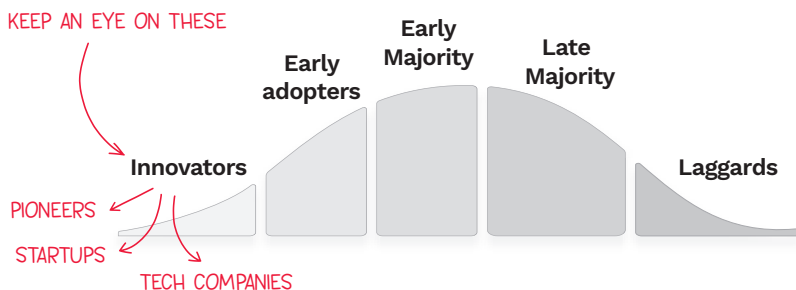
Finally, and this last step is the most important, make sure to seek out a steady stream of inspiration:

- See yourself as a curator. Choosing your content isn't a form of procrastination; it's serious work. And it's not just a one-off. It's like

running a gallery. You have a permanent exhibition, but you still have to change things out from time to time.

- Education is a part of inspiration too. Invest in the right courses and training. You'll learn more about this in the "How to Learn (Almost) Anything" chapter.
- Sign up for newsletters³ that provide concise updates on the latest AI news, tools, and product launches, especially ones that are connected to your particular field.
- Consider and select keywords and topics that align with your interests. This might be a combination of technical terms (for our architect perhaps *generative AI in architecture* or *text-to-architecture*), specific scenarios (*generative AI for building design and construction*), or your preferred tools paired with terms such as automation or AI (*automation in X app*).
- Search for these keywords on Google or chat with AI about it by asking something like, "How can I use generative AI for building design and construction?" Also, don't forget to visit app catalogs such as *ThereIsAnAIForThat* or *GptsHunter*.
- Explore the apps and online services for your field, not just the well-known ones. Often the biggest innovations come from go-getter startups.
- Follow startups and tech firms related to the topics you care about. You'll find many of them produce better content than the media in the field.
- Find a few people at these firms and follow them on Twitter or LinkedIn, ideally the founder, the head of product, and other public figures. You'll often glean information that's as detailed as if you were sitting in a meeting room with them.

Earlier in this book I mentioned Intercom, which was among the pioneers in integrating AI into its customer support tool. This gave their product a head start and simultaneously inspired everyone working in customer service, thanks to their consistent updates shared on social media. This is just one more reason why a smart media diet is key for every employee in every division.



But let's go back to our architect. After just a few minutes of searching, I discovered a startup⁴ specializing in *text-to-plan* technology, which turns a text prompt into an interior layout design. I found their founder's LinkedIn profile⁵ and discovered that he publishes great articles on the use of AI in architecture. Jackpot. I started following him, and that rewarded me with a growing collection of information on this topic.

However, don't rely solely on social media algorithms—start exploring the world outside your social bubble too. Historically, many important inventions have come from seemingly unrelated forms of inspiration. Grape presses led Gutenberg to the idea of the printing press, while London's Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children reduced the error rate at its intensive care unit by copying techniques⁶ from Formula 1 pit stops. New smart tools can likewise find uses across fields and divisions. For example, someone in industry can easily take inspiration from a copilot for programmers and come up with a way to use it in manufacturing.

As the writer William Gibson famously put it, "The future is already here—it's just not evenly distributed." This means that by observing pioneers and innovators, you can catch a glimpse of the future and find ways to get there faster.

2. Experimentation

Inspiration alone isn't enough. To truly understand the possibilities for using new digital innovations and their (sometimes temporary) limits, you have to pull up your sleeves and get your hands dirty.

When the HR division at one of the Volkswagen brands and I were brainstorming how to introduce advanced data analytics to their team, we decided to hold our first hackathon—a popular event where participants create prototypes within a short time. This was long before smart business intelligence tools became widespread, so even though everyone was talking about data, most people really didn't know what to make of it. We invited a couple of startups, provided the available data, and gave them one single day to mine it for valuable insights.

While most teams tackled specific issues, one focused on showcasing an actual modern analytics app replete with cleaned and formatted company data. During the final presentations, a manager raised her hand and requested a specific report she'd previously worked on. With a few follow-up questions, the results appeared in a matter of seconds. I don't know if she was more excited or angry, but she was definitely surprised. Why? Because a week before she'd spent several hours on the very same report, but thanks to this experience, she immediately understood what working with data could look like.

Experimenting is key, even with AI tools. In fact, *especially* with AI tools. They're in the news everywhere, but we only "get" their potential when we try them ourselves. And unlike traditional apps, they don't have a clear-cut route from prompt to payoff. Sometimes, even when two people enter the same prompt, the AI generates different results.

That's why it's important to keep playing with them trying out different types of prompts and models to figure out how to obtain the best possible output. The good news is they're so user-friendly you just have to log in and voilà—the playground is open.

A few tips for your experiments:

- Start with small, achievable challenges: Try out a new app. Fine-tune a couple of prompts. Try talking to AI instead of typing.
- You can also start with things as small as shortcuts on your phone. Once you're sick of rewriting the same text, set it as a shortcut.
- Try mapping some of your processes or workflows. Use modern diagram makers⁷ or describe them in step-by-step lists. Choose at

least one spot you'd like to fine-tune with AI. Try using the apps you already use or one of the new smart tools.

- Experiment with automation apps⁸ that let you harness AI. Don't wait for someone to spoon-feed it to you; try it on your own. Pick a task you do often. It might be a bit tough at first, it might be a little clunky, but you'll still find your bearings *here and now*.
- If you're not feeling up for any of this, you can find yourself a digital coach⁹, invite an experienced colleague, or ask your friends if they'd like to experiment along with you.
- You can also organize a hackathon focused on applying AI or creating automation. It doesn't have to be too serious. You can try a *prompt battle* and see who can "rap" the prettiest pictures or other output with AI.

Our architect and his team could invite automation specialists, split up into teams, and compete to see who manages to automate the biggest part of their work in a day. Some of their people could hire a digital coach to help them fine-tune their workflow. In collaboration with their IT department, they could compile a list of suitable AI apps and give access to anyone interested in trying them. Once a month, they could share experiences at a digital breakfast and think about how to leverage the new smart tools even more.

All these activities help to develop a new mindset with minimal costs. It just takes a little time and initiative. But sometimes, organizations are "too busy" to innovate, and that is something you need to fight. In one insightful talk¹⁰ on creativity in management, the legendary comedian John Cleese precisely described how creativity isn't about talent, but attitude. If you want people to come up with good ideas, they have to first go into "open mode" where they're not under pressure and they can experiment and brainstorm idea after idea. And something like that can't happen in the hour between "important" morning and afternoon meetings.

Hack your mindset

Organizing or participating in a hackathon, an informal event where individuals collaborate intensively on small projects, is the perfect way to

become more familiar with AI and see what it can really do. We call it a "fast track" approach because you can see amazing results in just a few hours of focused teamwork. Here's how to organize a hackathon for everyone, even non-programmers:

1. **Form a team:** Even a single team is a great starting point, but more teams mean more fun.
2. **Pick the right tools:** This is your chance to explore the best AI models and experiment with low-code tools that make it easy to build automations with AI. Fortunately, this book is full of great examples.
3. **Start with simple tasks:** Try playing around with prompts or mapping out a process and figuring out where AI could be useful. Or brainstorm a wild project and build it from the ground up—from the logo to the website.
4. **Dive into more complex challenges:** As your team gets more comfortable, explore automating tasks, using AI on company documents, or creating a bot that suggests replies to incoming emails. Of course, don't forget about IT security.
5. **Mix and match your teams:** This helps people collaborate and learn from each other. Having a few experts around to lend a hand is always a good idea.

If you're not part of a company or larger organization, look for "AI or low code hackathons" in your area (as most hackathons are aimed at IT professionals) or organize one yourself. It doesn't have to be complicated. Remember, the goal is to explore the potential of smart tools, learn something new, and, of course, have some fun.

3. Sharing

Don't worry, just shoot the breeze about what you've tried, what worked, and what didn't. If you have tech-savvy people around you, don't be afraid to call them. Ask your colleagues and friends, connect with someone on LinkedIn, knock on the door of the IT guys.

One key idea I enjoy writing about is that if you spend time with innovators, you'll become one. That's why I recommend meeting with like-minded individuals and starting to swap experiences with them. You can invite startups, join communities of digital productivity fans, or set up a group chat for sharing links to exciting innovations.

How should you approach knowledge sharing?

- Sharing can take place at the level of a team, a whole company, or a community of people from different companies.
- Take the first step actively: Organize a meeting, sign up for a presentation at a company event, or start posting on your company's internal chat platform.
- Although you can definitely organize these meetings yourself, I recommend regularly inviting innovators and tech enthusiasts from other institutions, and even other fields. Talk to them not only about innovations, but also about their methods of working.
- At the end of each of your regular team meetings, spend ten minutes sharing the interesting things you all ran into in the last week.
- Introduce Brutally Honest Feedback (BHF) into sharing sessions too. Don't be afraid to share your screen and show a pro how you work. Let them advise you on how to work smarter. It's the best way to take your game to the next level.
- By sharing, you're passing on your experience. When you discover an interesting innovation and you've had good experiences with it, sharing it lets others learn about it too. If you work in a large organization, this should be one of the main reasons for actively supporting sharing of this kind.
- Share not only what works but also what doesn't. Don't give up, try to figure out why things are going wrong and how to fix them.

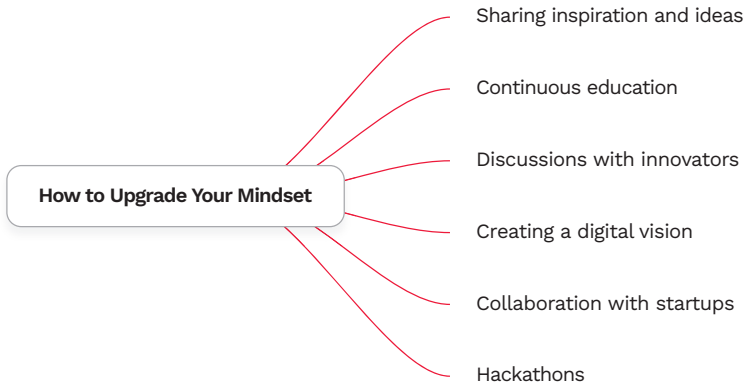
And now for the most important thing: Share both your digital vision and small tricks.

Why share this vision? Only by showing where you're aiming can you get feedback, gain support from those around you, and spot new shortcuts you might have missed. That's why I recommend sharing your vision for the future. Ideally, you'll have written it down or created a digital vision document and can simply share that.

Why the small tricks? Because they let people discover new ways of working and bolster each other's imaginations. A principle inspired by the American manufacturer FastCap¹¹ helps us a lot here. They call it the *2 Second Lean*: when someone simplifies their work, the rule is to share it with others, even if it only saves two seconds. Your colleagues probably

have no idea what kinds of everyday tasks you find banal. It doesn't even matter if it's not directly related to other people's work duties. In one situation, the mention of automating kitchen coffee orders led to the automation of information gathering for financial reporting across an entire company.

Regarding the previously mentioned architectural studio, I would set up a group chat where anyone can share ideas or links to interesting innovations. I'd regularly invite in experts in automation—not just those specializing in design and graphics programs. I'd try inviting in startups and software makers from abroad. All online, of course, so that the whole company can participate and use the recorded content afterwards. I'd also open up a discussion with architects from other companies and exchange experiences with the use of AI and other technologies. At least once a year, I'd organize a strategy meeting purely about the future where we would pick out the most noteworthy innovations and then invest energy and money into these.



Once you start talking to people who live for innovations, tools worth your time will start to pop up in these discussions again and again. Don't wait to understand every last detail. Pull up your sleeves, start playing with them, and figure out if they can be useful for you right now.

Even though the road to fulfilling your dream of No Work might seem complicated, it all starts with your first few steps. And those don't have to be hard at all. Inspire yourself. Experiment. Share. IES!

Is Everyone on Board?

Managers often turn to us when they need to motivate their superiors, subordinates, peers, or even the entire company. In these cases, the IES framework may not be enough, especially if you're working in a large organization. However, the principles for implementing change apply everywhere, so it's always good to start with the leaders. These are the very people who first need to understand the changes AI can bring and then future-proof the company accordingly.

In his autobiography¹², Robert Iger, who served for many years as the CEO of Disney, describes his idea of dedicating one of their yearly meetings to discussing the future: "We decided to spend the entire 2017 session talking about disruption, and I instructed each of our business leaders to present to the board the level of disruption they were seeing and what impact they predicted it would have on the health of their business." Based on this meeting and more, the decision was: speed up all their activities in streaming services. Above all, they moved to purchase BAMTECH, on whose platform they then launched their Disney+ service. It soon became the most successful streaming service in the world.

I firmly believe every company should have similar discussions regarding the future and ideally, every department too. If people regularly update their digital vision, they know precisely where to focus their attention. For business owners and leaders, this discussion has one other important dimension related to risk management—understanding potential threats and how to mitigate them. In the previous chapters we saw how AI brings not only opportunities, but also a range of risks, and it is management's responsibility to prepare a company for these. What if your competition lets its people use better AI, and so you stop attracting new talent? What if your customers start using autonomous negotiations, erasing the relationships you've worked hard to build up—and your profits with them?

It won't be today or tomorrow, but leadership's task isn't to answer the questions of today. Businesses that want to maintain their edge must plan proactively for the next two to three years. As Amazon founder Jeff Bezos once put¹³ it: "When someone wants to congratulate me on a good quarter, I thank them. But what I'm thinking to myself is that quarter was actually pretty much fully baked about three years ago."

Pushing significant technology changes through is not a question of a few weeks, and so you should start working on it right now. If you don't have a plan yet, give people a few months to play with AI and figure out its possibilities and limits—and then have each team present a clear plan of how to deploy these technologies. How else can you transform your digital vision into a reality?

And What About People Who Are Not Tech-Curious?

Over the years, my startups have trained tens of thousands of employees. Many of them were initially apathetic at best, and yet they gradually grew into enthusiasts, and sometimes even skilled power users.

Through this process, we discovered that the most effective methods for achieving this transformation are:

- Set up IES—Inspiration. Experimentation. Sharing.
- Use the other methods and frameworks from this book: Digital Vision¹⁴, No Work Navigator¹⁵, AAAI (Author > Authorization > AI – a simple concept for considering when and how to use artificial intelligence). Introduce these tools to your coworkers, and then discuss them.
- Don't stop at just discussions. Ask your colleagues to present a plan on how to use new smart tools for your work.
- Don't be afraid of ambitious goals—How much money will they bring in? How much money or time will you save when you replace part of your human labor with AI?
- Incorporate regular completion of digital challenges into your goals and performance indicators. Two good examples are, "Try at least one AI tool a month" or "Organize at least one meeting with startups

per quarter". When people work on these and then share what they got out of them, it pushes them miles ahead.

- If you have tech enthusiasts around you, turn them into digital ambassadors and get them involved in these activities.

Some of your peers likely don't have the best relationship with technology. In that case, show them how they can make their lives easier *step-by-step*. Start with the simpler apps and move on to the more complicated ones later. If someone wants to, they'll learn it. Always.

There can be a problem with people whose attitude toward everything is: "Don't know, don't want, don't care." In this case, I recommend using a tried-and-true change management method: Showcase a specific benefit in the spirit of "What's In It For Me" and remind them that even if the changes seem risky, the real risk is doing nothing. The important thing here is to try through an in-person conversation to identify the root cause of the problem. Some people fear tech itself, others are worried they'll look foolish if they stumble at first.

Once you identify the problem, you can address it effectively. It's also effective to present people who have already started thinking differently and are using the new smart tools themselves as an example.

In the end, there's also one last option: inviting in someone with a digital mindset who works in a similar position at another company and emphasizing to your colleagues that people like this are their competition on the labor market. One time we did that for a client who wasn't satisfied with their directors' approach to digitalization. You should have seen their faces.

If none of these methods work, you'll have to either tolerate these people on your team or...you know. But above all don't forget their teammates who *do want* and who can help you to change the mindset in the rest of your organization.

A tip for parents

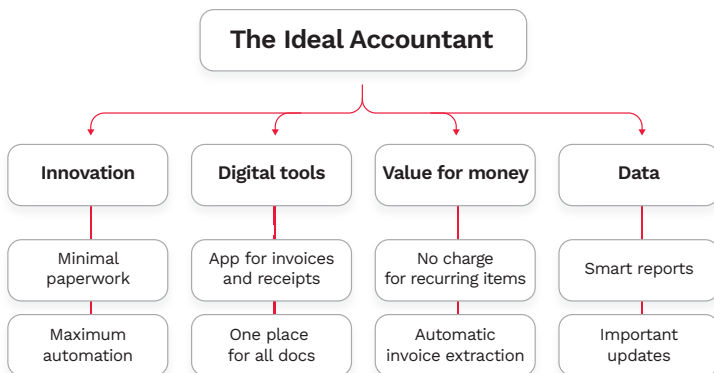
Do you have children? Talk to them about new technologies and explore them together. If they are unfamiliar with AI, show them a couple of apps and let them come up with a project for school, an afterschool program, or anywhere else. You might be surprised by what they come up with. Plus, they'll get a head start on using tools that are becoming a bigger deal every day.

Don't Forget Your Suppliers

The knowledge from this chapter applies for your partners too. If they're not coming to you with ideas for using new technologies themselves, you can ask them about this or sell them on the idea. Or just look around for new suppliers—the kind that are using new smart tools on their own. Side-by-side you can do experiments that will lead you to more value for your money.

When we wanted to change our accounting system, I dove into the dusty corners of our processes surrounding finances, and it really shocked me. All our invoices were transcribed by hand. Repeat payments had to be entered again and again every month. In short, we were the pot calling the kettle black. I tried discussing it with our accountant, showing her apps for digitizing finances, but all I heard was, "It won't work." Once I said I'd be seeking a new supplier, she started to try, but it was clear to me it wasn't going anywhere.

I thought about what services I expected, and I turned to several suppliers and went over our requirements with them. It was clear right away for whom this was uncharted territory and for whom it was their home turf. But I gave the most weight to the attitudes they showed when I stated our request.



As we all provide services to someone—some as suppliers, some as employees—we can take this as an opportunity to stand out. Companies need collaborators that think and work digitally. If you are one of them, learn to communicate that and emphasize it at every opportunity.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Changing your mindset is crucial for embracing new technologies and finding innovative ways to increase the value of your work.
2. Use the "IES" framework to develop the right mindset:
 - Inspiration – Cultivate a diverse stream of inspiration to fuel your creativity and spark innovation.
 - Experimentation – Explore the possibilities and limitations of AI through hands-on experimentation.
 - Sharing – Foster open collaboration by transparently sharing successes and challenges.

Managers should dedicate time to discuss the future impact of disruptive technologies with their teams. This can help to create a clear plan for where and how to deploy these technologies across an organization.

3. To get less tech-savvy colleagues on board, show them tangible benefits, address their specific concerns and highlight examples of peers successfully adopting new tools. Sometimes it helps to create straightforward and ambitious goals around digital upskilling.
4. The most dangerous phrase in business is: "We've always done it this way." Encourage a culture of experimentation and innovation to stay ahead of the curve.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Create a system for Inspiration, Experimentation, and Sharing (IES); independently or with your team. Subscribe to relevant sources of inspiration. Regularly experiment with AI tech and explore new workflows. Organize knowledge-sharing sessions to discuss experiences, celebrate wins, and learn from failures.
2. Organize a hackathon or workshop to experiment with AI. For beginners, focus on exploring best prompting practices, mapping processes, and brainstorming AI applications. More technical teams can dive into a full-fledged hackathon using low-code tools and AI.
3. Consider the impact of AI trends on your work or business. If you're in a company, organize discussions about this. Managers and leaders should be tasked with preparing presentations to share their insights with others.



New Superpowers

How to Harness the Power of Tech

7. Skills for the New Era

Out of the hundreds of events where I've spoken, the one that stuck with me the most was Prague's Digital Opportunities & Trends Summit 2017. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella was the main speaker, hundreds of important businesspeople were in the crowd, and I had the honor of giving the opening keynote address. I was so nervous; I can hardly remember now what I spoke about.

But I do remember the presentation by Nadella very precisely, and the idea he has mentioned¹ many times since that day: "The learn-it-all will always do better than the know-it-all." This statement resonated with me so deeply that I decided to display it prominently in my office, serving as a constant reminder whenever I start to feel like there's nothing left for me to learn.

Unfortunately, I deal with this attitude more often than I would like. It's not uncommon to come across people who think education should be handed to them without any effort on their part. When I was speaking about the importance of new skills at an event organized by a major bank, the first question from the audience was, "So when will our HR department offer us some courses on AI?" They were asking the Head of HR, but I took the liberty of replying, "You don't need any department for that!" After all, anyone can watch online classes, chat with colleagues that have more experience with AI, or dive into communities where you can tackle almost anything at minimal cost.

I was reminded yet again of the importance of taking an active role in your own development.

How would you respond if someone asked you the following questions: When was the last time you learned something new? Has this knowledge led to any tangible changes in your work habits? When did you last automate something? Or improve one of your processes? You might be inclined to answer like our customers do, "I don't know how." Or by saying "I don't have time." But if you don't prioritize these improvements

and make time for them, they'll never happen. Emails won't stop arriving, tasks pile up, your calendar keeps filling up. Only one thing will shrink: your options for planning your time, work, and living your life the way you want.

Of course, you simply may not care and you may live out your days based on what you already know. After all, even Steve Jobs stated in his famous Playboy interview², "We really want to turn over the reins to the next generation." His goal in doing this was "to grow obsolete with grace." But watch out, he said that way back in 1985. And as we know, at that time his best years were still well ahead of him.

If you still have at least a few years left in your career, you must educate yourself, otherwise you won't be able to handle new challenges or make the most of new opportunities. This is not only about us, but also about the next generation. Their world is going to be very different from today's, so to prepare them for the future, we also need to think about what skills will help them succeed.

This doesn't mean that we all have to become IT experts. Quite the opposite. New smart tools are increasingly accessible to ordinary users. We could say that everyone will be an IT expert in their own way, only their programming language will be our natural human language. The question is: What skills will be the most useful in a world where there are no longer any programmers, because everyone will be a programmer in some way?

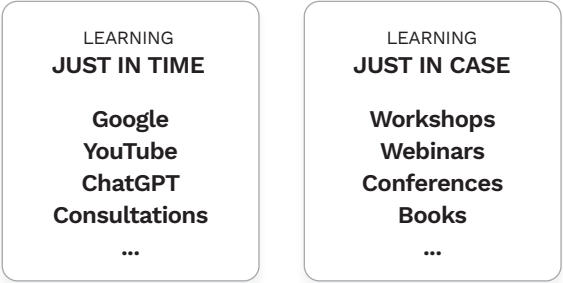
The key is to really think about your role. What are your talents and strengths?³ Where can you excel? What value can you bring your employers or customers in the age of AI?

The Good News

Most of this book is directly related to new skills, such as using technologies (digital skills), achieving something greater (leadership), and shaping your work to meet your needs (job crafting).

The good news is that if something is a skill, it can be learned. It doesn't even have to be all that hard. The less good news is that to truly learn something, you have to give it time, energy, and attention. This is because it's not just about skill, but more importantly about your ability to apply it. A few of us still believe the ads for miracle diets. However, to actually get in shape you have to change how you eat and exercise regularly. The same applies for new skills. Still, some people think it's enough to attend one course and that then everything will change. Sadly it doesn't work like that.

Fortunately, education is no longer just what we take from school or comprised of things you were told might come in handy some day, *just in case*. With new smart tools, it's easier and easier to learn whenever you happen to need it, *just in time*. Since we have access to limitless information, we can ask about anything at almost any time, and as we'll see in "How to Learn (Almost) Anything," AI lets us each create our own personal teacher and coach to advise us in any field we desire. Just as people who knew how to google were a step ahead for twenty years, today the lead goes to anyone who's comfortable working with AI.



Tomorrow's Skills Today

I've been involved in the field of adult education for nearly my entire professional career. I've set up development programs for a number of large organizations, I lead workshops for thousands of business

leaders every year, and our online platform helps tens of thousands of employees in a variety of fields develop digital skills. On top of this, with our Digiskills Assessment we are among the pioneers in measuring and weighing companies' digital skill levels.

All of this has revealed unique insights into how people work and how they learn. These experiences have led me to two clear conclusions that I call *unconscious incompetence* and *trapped by inertia*:

1. People don't know what they don't know. They often think they know how to use digital tools, but they have no idea what they can really do with them.
2. Even when people realize they need to learn something new, they often get stuck in the "wanting" phase. They struggle to find the time, doubt their ability to succeed, or hesitate to take the first step.

Some people are content with their current situation and lack the motivation to pursue further education, even those in groups facing clear threats from AI and automation. But you're different. After all, you're reading this book. And yet you might know such people, or even have one of them on your team.

The arrival of AI has gotten many people to start feeling a little uncomfortable and scared. They have finally realized that without a new mindset and skills, they won't be able to keep up with the competition. I firmly believe this is a useful feeling because it can force us to finally take action and push outside of our comfort zone. Still the question remains: What skills should we focus on?

What Do You Need to Learn?

No Work isn't just about being able to work in a smarter way with digital tools. Tools are still just tools. The goal is to do more of the things we like and are able to do well that let us create the kind of added value that will provide us with a good life. There is a word for this in Japanese, *ikigai*, which we could translate as a "reason for being." You achieve *ikigai* when you succeed in joining together the things you like, the ones you're good at, the ones that serve others, and the ones you get paid for.

As Naval Ravikant puts it in his amazing book⁴ *The Almanack*, "Become the best in the world at what you do. Keep redefining what you do until this is true." So try to focus on what will help bring you toward this goal. You can turn to our No Work Navigator, or just ask yourself the following questions:

What tools and skills will help me achieve my goals?

No matter whether you want to get a better job, make a lot of money, or get everything done in half the time, try thinking like a gamer. They know just what characters and tools they need to build another city or repel another army. Do you need one giant, or five axe-wielding dwarves? A digital business avatar, or business-process automation?

Identify the skills that truly resonate with your natural abilities and personal brand so that you can focus on developing those to their fullest potential. For other areas, aim to achieve a basic level of competence, and consider outsourcing or delegating certain tasks to AI. In today's world, success is not about being an expert in everything. Lionel Messi can't juggle a ball with his head, Venus Williams is slow at switching directions, and yet they are both living legends.

What tools and skills do I find simple, but other people often find hard?

At our AI events where people try to build automations with AI, we always ask participants about their key takeaways. Occasionally, some people say, "This is not for me. It's great that I tried it, but I probably won't be diving deeper into this."

It's true you don't have to become an expert. Nonetheless, a certain amount of effort is needed. You may *need* to overcome some slight amount of discomfort associated with learning something new because you're going to have to deal with it on some level whether you want to or not.

The best strategy is to try to find your own sweet spot between having deep technical knowledge and a basic overview of the practical use of digital tools. That way you're more likely to discover something that you enjoy learning about in the process. This is actually the ultimate life hack,

and one that can provide you with a big leg up. Once you find something you're genuinely excited to learn about, you will be more persistent in pursuing it.



Everything is hard before it is easy.



Also, remember that acquiring skills doesn't always require learning. If something proves challenging to learn, you can hire, rent, or buy that skill, either from other people or from AI. With today's access to outsourcing platforms⁵ and marketplaces for virtual workers⁶, it's easier than ever.

In order to better answer this question, it's important to consider:

1. **Technical ability and/or willingness to learn:** Do I have the skills, or am I eager to learn this?
2. **Capacity and/or budget:** Do I have the capacity, or do I have the budget to outsource it?
3. **In-house support and/or external suppliers:** Can I get assistance from my team, or do I need outside help?

These factors can help you make a well-informed decision about the best way to get the skills you need.

What tools and skills will bring more joy into my life?

The purpose of No Work is to enjoy what we do. That's why it's important to create an environment in which we're happy to work. Strive for

a fine-tuned system that reduces and ultimately frees us from annoying tasks. Learn to prioritize so we don't have to spend more time in the office than we need to. Use smart tools to replace all the activities that wear us down. That's one reason why one of my key goals is to look forward to Monday on Sunday night.

Skills for the Future

We should think about future skills the same way we consider the potential opportunities and risks of new smart tools. What is more likely to change? And what will remain timeless and retain its inherent value?

Highly competent and capable people will always be in demand. The best long-term career strategy is to focus on becoming and remaining highly competent. This may seem like a piece of general advice, but that's the point. The key thing is to be good at what you do, to know how to adapt and invest into learning new things.

That's one reason why I think everyone should try to work not only at a stable job in an established company, but to also experience the creative chaos of working at a startup, or as a freelancer, or at least experiment with some sort of side project. If you don't have exceptionally specialized work your role will change constantly, and you'll often be filling several roles at once. So every bit of experience counts.

Likewise there are skills that will increase your market value no matter what you're doing. This might be even more important than ever in the age of AI because they distinguish the people who depend on AI from those who can do far more. This includes:

- **Communication** – The ability to formulate ideas, instruct AIs, or write an understandable text.
- **Sales** – We're all selling something: work, services, or ideas. That's why we need empathy and the ability to persuade others.
- **Marketing** – It doesn't matter how great you are if people don't know about it. Marketing is everything—it's what you do, what you say, and what's said about you.

- **Psychology** – Our needs, behavior, and motivation all vary. The fundamental mechanism of how people and society work remains the same. If we understand this, we know how to negotiate better conditions and create the kinds of services people are willing to buy.
- **Decision-making** – We're making decisions all the time: about our priorities, on deploying AI, about who we want to work with. Good decisions enable us to work not just the right way, but most importantly on the right things. According to a study⁷ by IBM that focused on skills connected with AI, good decision-making is the most important skill today.
- **Digital skills** – It's always beneficial to have slightly advanced technical skills. While AI can simplify or even automate many tasks, to get the most out of it you shouldn't hesitate to use the terminal and work with the scripts. It's helpful to know a bit about websites, databases, and APIs, which essentially means understanding how to connect them to other useful apps.

Have you already mastered these skills? If so that's great. If not, what are you doing to get better at them? Think about which of them would help you progress the most toward achieving No Work. Find a webinar or online course *right now* and sign up for it.

Outputs vs. Value

When thinking about our skills and the areas we would like to develop, we have to also think about which part, or even parts, of our work could be given over to AI and what tasks we would rather do ourselves.

Do customers care about empathy and personal cooperation? Or do they just want to buy a service? I like to meet with certain customers personally, or to sit and argue with my editor, but when I want something translated on-the-fly, AI is usually good enough.

We also can't forget the question of what people can afford. Given the option of spending thousands on a professional studio's interior design or just a few dollars on an AI-created alternative⁸, the decision will be straightforward for many people.

It's important to understand the core of individual professions doesn't just lie in what they produce, but also in the roles they play in the process. You can easily create an image or design a webpage yourself, but that doesn't mean you no longer need a graphics designer. Anyone who's good in this field has insight into their clients' needs and can give thoughtful feedback on their ideas. Likewise, you can generate any text you want, but it's still good to have a talented editor at hand. The best ones will also be a sort of therapist and neutral arbiter and will take your manuscript to the next level.

That's why I'm not worried about the future of anyone who understands their field, broadens their knowledge to comprehend their clients' or employers' context, is easy to work with, and offers a bit of extra added value.

I'm sure you've run into terrible ads here and there showing too much skin, a chaotic layout, with repulsive colors and fonts. It might have been the customer insisted on these elements and the graphic designer didn't know how to say "no". They failed here in the fundamental role of all creative professions, which is to think constantly about *why we're actually doing it all at all*.

The aim of business is to sell, the aim of nonprofits is to help, the aim of education is to teach. So we have to talk primarily about what skills will help us achieve these goals.

I believe there are three general categories of skills that will help you on the way to No Work and ensure your success in any era:

- Creativity, imagination and the capability to bring ideas to life.
- The ability to use the right technologies effectively and safely.
- Leadership and the desire to change the world around you for the better.

That is precisely what the next chapters are about.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Cultivate a "learn-it-all" mindset rather than a "know-it-all" attitude. Continuous learning and upskilling is essential to stay relevant. Take an active role in your own development. Don't wait for knowledge to be handed to you.
2. The core value of many professions lies not just in their outputs but in the strategic roles they are playing e.g. designers providing guidance, elevating the quality of public spaces or editors deciding what's not worth writing about. Technical skills alone are not enough.
3. Think carefully about your unique strengths, talents and the added value you can provide in an AI-enabled world. Focus on developing skills that complement your natural abilities. Look for skills that you find simple but others struggle with.
4. Don't forget about timeless, valuable skills like empathy, communication, selling and marketing an idea, problem-solving and digital literacy.
5. The most important skills for the era of AI may be:
 - IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY: Experimenting and generating novel ideas.
 - GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: Being able to connect the dots.
 - SYSTEMATIC THINKING: Having the ability to build and improve systems.

CALL TO ACTION

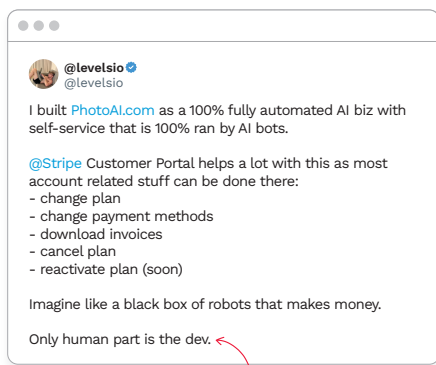
1. Focus on developing skills that enable you to achieve your broader professional goals, be it increased sales, greater social impact, more effective teaching, etc. Let purpose guide your acquisition of skills.
2. Find the optimal balance between deep technical knowledge and the practical applications of digital tools. Engage in training sessions that focus on both the business and technical aspects even if it pushes you outside your comfort zone.
3. Talk to your colleague or friend about what skills they think will be essential for future generations. Reflect on how you can contribute to equipping them with these skills.

8. Welcome to the Golden Age of Creators

Pieter Levels is a serial entrepreneur who created the Photo AI and Interior AI services as well as several other projects focused on remote work. His greatest claim to fame was his experiment¹ "12 Startups in 12 Months", where he highlighted two of the biggest struggles faced by creative professionals and others: finishing projects and the fear of failure. Our inner perfectionists often push us to endlessly fine-tune our work instead of bringing it to market and gathering valuable feedback. That's why Levels decided to sell off his property, live as a digital nomad and launch one new project every month.

While this may seem overly ambitious, a month can be more than enough time for people with enough enthusiasm thanks to new smart tools. Ultimately, Levels himself confirmed this. Even though only a few of his projects acquired paying customers², he managed to earn 2.7 million dollars in 2022 *without a single employee*.

With each new project he pushed the boundaries on what an individual can achieve when they have good ideas, the ability to connect existing technologies and build something customers want.



AND AS LEVELS ADMITS, AI IS HELPING WITH THAT TOO.

If you have ideas on how to improve your work and you know your way around the latest technologies, then you are better equipped to transform this creativity and awareness into a system that works for you. You can do this either in your work, side income, or just for the sake of creative fulfillment.

First you have to realize that you *are a creator* and you can really design the world as you need.

We Are All Creators

What's your situation? Do you think of yourself as a creator or are you running on autopilot? Commuting to work in the morning, coming back home in the evening, enjoying a few weeks of vacation, and dreaming about how things would look *if...*

It's time to wake up. Every one of us can influence the world around us far more than we think.

That doesn't mean we have to quit our jobs and head out to make our childhood dreams come true. Got an idea for a new service? Try sending it to a few people and find out if they're interested. Want to improve something at your company but you're not sure if your colleagues would accept it? Test it on a small scale and show it to your teammates. Do you believe AI could take care of part of your work, but your leadership team doesn't want to hear about it? Invest in a month's subscription to ChatGPT out of your own pocket and play with it every day until you have fully explored its potential.

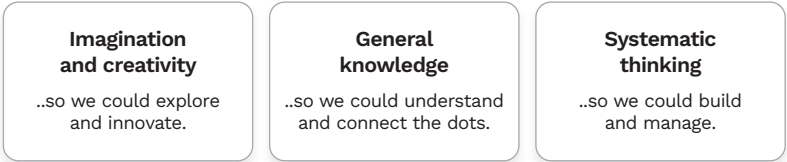
The first step towards No Work can be something simple. Approach your coworkers who are still emailing spreadsheets to each other and propose cooperation on shared documents. Or offer a client an alternative to time-consuming meetings and explore different communication options that might work better. I would say this is a hallmark of a true creator: When they see a better way of doing things, they take action. One of my favorite authors, the entrepreneur Derek Sivers, said³ it best: "When you make a business, you get to make a little universe where you control all the laws."

In our context, you can easily replace the phrase, "when you start a business" with "when you're a creator." After all, there are a number of things you can change even as an employee, either by doing them directly because you'd rather ask for forgiveness than permission, or by getting your colleagues, supervisors, or management on your side. There is no other option. If none of these methods succeed, there can only be two explanations: Either you need to step up your game, or you're working in the wrong company.

Being a creator means satisfying your need to build something while having fun doing it. After all, creative work is but at its core; play that enables us to materialize ideas, consciously improve and take joy in both the result and the process itself. That's one reason why I think of artists and people in creative professions as well as anyone working in the knowledge economy as creators. New smart tools make it possible for all of these people to do amazing things.

However, to be able to use these tools in the best possible way, we need to broaden our soft skills. I personally believe these three will be absolutely essential in the age of AI:

Skills for the future



IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY: There's Always "Undo"

Since the age of nine, my son has been learning to code in Scratch, a programming language developed at MIT. The individual parts of a program can be assembled in a simple visual editor, which enables

you to build animations, stories, and even whole interactive games. It's a great boost to creative and logical thinking, and it's also great fun.

One time I noticed he had been playing a game for a really long time, so I couldn't resist asking if he wouldn't like to create something himself instead. His answer blew me away, "But Dad, *I made this game.*" He had created the design using AI, so the result looked like it was from a professional game studio.

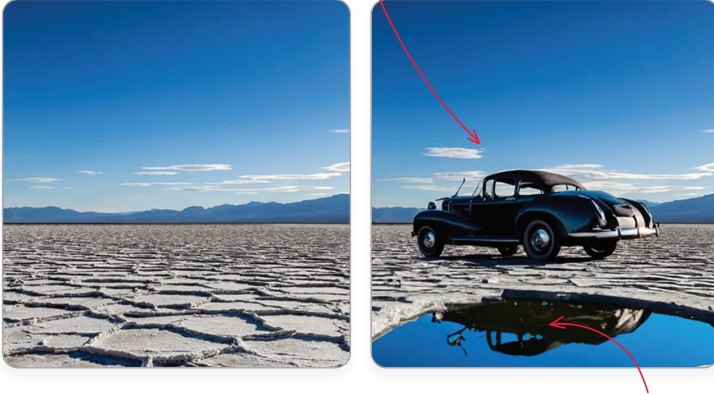
I see lots of similar examples around me because creative people have always been drawn to digital innovations, artists, designers, you name it. Professionals in marketing, largely build their work on creativity and technology. Meanwhile, nearly everybody today is a marketer of some kind: Salespeople prepare presentations for customers, experts build their personal and professional brands on social media, and managers have to be visible both inside and outside their firms.

Looking to create your own game? Not a problem.

Designer Ammaar Reshi is not a coder. Nevertheless, he created a computer game. ChatGPT advised him on how to put the game together, Midjourney created a graphic environment for him, and then he modified the 3D models in Sketchfab. He used Replit to program the actual code, and when he hit a dead end, he turned to Claude, an AI model from Anthropic, that helped him with minor fixes. Yes, Ammaar had been a skilled techie even before the emergence of generative AI, and this enabled him to work faster than most of us. However, thousands of similar stories confirm that we are indeed entering a golden age of creators.

The skill of mastering specialized tools for creative work is slowly becoming a thing of the past. Until fairly recently, having a good idea was only the first step; you then needed an expert from a specialized agency to execute it. Later, these two stages merged into one: You got an idea for a poster, and thanks to apps like Photoshop, it was all done in *a few hours*. Today it's enough to express what you want, and voilà, with apps like Canva or AI in Photoshop you can have it ready in *a few seconds*.

PROMPT: ADD A VINTAGE CAR TO THE IMAGE



PROMPT: CREATE A SMALL POND HERE WITH A PARTIAL REFLECTION OF THE CAR

That's how AI is changing the way creators work. And the same is coming to the world of office applications. Creativity and imagination are key here as well.

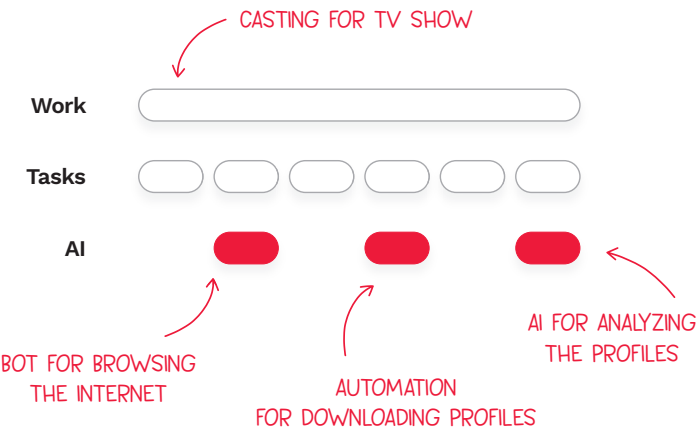
One great example of this is my friend Petr Ludwig, author of the bestselling book *The End of Procrastination*. Here's how AI helps him to prepare his podcast⁴: "As soon as I record an interview, I upload the audio and camera shots into AutoPod. It knows who's talking and auto-edits the resulting recording. It usually took me three hours; now I have it done in four minutes."

Good creators are pushing new smart tools to new heights. Even the rest of us whose talents are elsewhere are rising far above what used to be considered average in technology adaptation.

It's basically all the same whether you're creating a new TV show jingle or an analysis for a corporate client. New smart tools can almost always make it even *better*. When my client a TV production team, was exploring ways to use AI, we compiled a list of their recent projects and generated ideas for AI innovations for each of those. While all the tasks were highly creative in

nature, it soon became apparent that *whenever* you break down an activity into individual parts, you can quickly fine-tune almost all of them.

One of the ideas was to analyze social media profiles for the casting process. When you're seeking participants for a reality show or a new actress for a TV series, you spend a significant amount of time on web searches trying to identify potential candidates, explore their characteristics, and assess their compatibility. Our initial search for a tool to manage the entire process proved challenging. However, as soon as we focused on the individual steps, a whole lot of possibilities opened up.



Almost each step of our work can be improved or automated⁵. This underscores the importance of understanding the potential of digital tools and being open to experimenting with them.

The same methodology could be adopted by someone in a purchasing department who's constantly comparing new suppliers, or an HR person seeking potential employees. They only have to set their bot to a different data source and use different prompts.

Do you see what I'm getting at here? Different professions, different activities, but the fundamental principle stays the same: Look at the fragments of your work's mosaic and imagine new ways to assemble them.

Creativity isn't magic. Some people say it's a craft, others consider it a skill, and some view it as an approach to life. I take it as the ability to examine the world and discover new ideas. I often talk about how succeeding with AI means constantly trying something new. In the digital world it's even simpler since you always have that magic UNDO button at hand. This means you have countless ways to find what works for you.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: The Age of All Trades

The more I use AI, the more I realize the main constraint is the limits of my imagination. How can we train and strengthen it? The best way is by expanding our horizons. Pursuing knowledge that goes beyond our specialization is fuel for creativity. It leads to new ideas, strengthens visualization capabilities and helps us reach those "aha!" moments.

Say you want a picture in the style of Piet Mondrian in your presentation. Or you are struggling to create a text that sounds like something from a Charles Bukowski book. AI can handle both of these tasks easily. But first, you need to know Mondrian's style and how Bukowski writes. That's why general knowledge is so important. It doesn't matter whether you have it from books you've read, museums you've visited, or all those classes you thought you were "never going to use in real life."

A basic understanding of foreign languages can be a tremendous asset to your imagination. In a well-known TED Talk⁶, linguist Lera Boroditsky presents fascinating languages built upon entirely different principles than those of the Indo-European language family. These differences affect not only communication itself but also your overall worldview. My familiarity with the syntactical differences between English and Spanish, in addition to my native Czech, has influenced how I enter AI prompts and the results I get.

I've previously mentioned getting inspiration from across different fields, which I believe is crucial in business. If you have a sense of what people in other departments and companies are working on, you are more likely to be able to connect it to what you're doing and then start doing it better. For example, when Captions presented a technology that creates the illusion of direct eye contact, lots of people had no idea it could be useful.

Nonetheless, one of my colleagues instantly rejoiced that he'd finally be able to look at his notes during presentations without his clients noticing. That's the practical power of imagination. And it's another reason why it's so important to have good information sources, or better yet, to try as many kinds of work as you can during your career.

It gives you not only a better general overview, but also versatility as well as the ability and desire to do *lots of different things*. After the era of narrowly profiled specialists being everywhere, the *generalist* able to accept nearly any role and do it as well as a specialist, thanks in part to AI, is making a comeback.

Creativity and a general overview will make you a business decathlete with the ability to compete in every discipline. If you add to that an ability to build and improve your own systems, you'll become so good the competition can't ignore you.

SYSTEMATIC THINKING: The Ability to Build a System

In 2009, the entrepreneur and investor Paul Graham published an article called "Maker's Schedule, Manager's Schedule,"⁷ in which he describes the daily lives of two kinds of people. On the one hand, there are *managers* whose time runs in the rhythm of meetings and other calendar events. On the other hand, there are *makers* who need longer and ideally uninterrupted blocks for focused work. Graham used programmers and authors as the representatives of the second category, but I think that in today's reality every one of us belongs there. If we run from one activity to another, we don't have room for the most important thing, which is building a work system that will work for us or that literally does the work on our behalf.

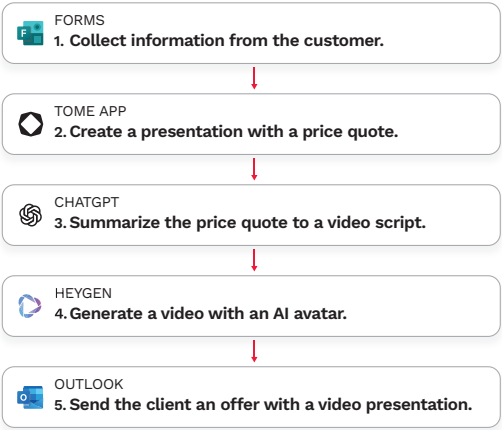
Yet this ability to optimize is one of the most important roles of today's workers. It's the same whether you're organizing a course or creating price quotes: If you learn to perceive your work as a system, you'll start to figure out how to make it better.

As an entrepreneur, I strive to build systems that run smoothly even without my constant involvement. I'm always looking for ways to

automate as much of my work as possible, allowing me to focus on tasks I enjoy or that add the most value.

Shouldn't we all approach our work like this? When one of my colleagues went on maternity leave, I took over the organizing of "Startup Days," sessions where we connect our clients with interesting startups. I found out how much time it takes to contact all the participants, to answer questions and plan dates, and I decided to do it differently. I created a shared spreadsheet with all the important information, where they could find answers to frequently asked questions and select the time slot for their presentations. On top of that, I recorded a short instructional video and set up automatic event reminders for everyone. The result? We were able to organize the whole event with a single spreadsheet and two messages.

As we'll see in the next chapter, we already have access to flexible tools that we can customize and connect, and we can delegate most of our work to them. When we add copilots and digital agents to that, our foremost task will be to build the systems in which these virtual assistants will operate. Our job will be just to coordinate them and make sure the system works as it should.



This is how a modern work system could look...

As Dan Shipper eloquently puts it in his insightful article⁸ about the future of creativity, "Previous eras of creativity have mostly looked a bit like sculpting. A sculptor takes a block of material and carves it, slowly but surely, into shape. Nothing happens without her hand. Even when an assistant is involved, the sculptor pores over the project because their human input is important at every point of the process. So too with writing, or programming, or painting. This era of creativity is going to look more like gardening. A gardener doesn't grow plants directly. Instead, she sets up the conditions for the garden to grow. She takes care of the soil, the water, and the sunlight—and lets the plants do their thing." And that's exactly what systems are all about.

Systems can simplify absolutely anything, not just work, but everything from household chores (e.g., you can split up tasks, set regular "rituals," and call in a cleaning service once a month) to regular investments (simply set up a recurring payment). And it's not important what tools you use. What matters most is looking at your work as a whole made up of parts that tie into each other, which we can constantly fine-tune for greater efficiency. Ideally, we can do this in such a way that we don't have to do some of them at all and thus, we waste less time and energy on unnecessary busywork. The goal is clear: We want to gain control over our work rather than be controlled by it.

From Chaos to Order

Our new director of corporate programs stepped in at the most challenging time imaginable. We had just opened registration for our latest Masterclass⁹ round, started work on the launch of a new initiative called Digi Challenge¹⁰, and I had traveled abroad to write this book. As a result, she had to jump onto a moving train, and I had little time to assist her. I admit I was a bit worried. I often dive into things intuitively, and my projects tend to be characterized by a kind of "creative chaos."

Despite all this, she took everything in stride. She showed that she has one rare and valuable skill: She can turn chaos into order. She just needed a little information, which once assembled she turned into a system that's a joy to work in. When I sent her the materials for our new educational program and uploaded a short video on our communication

with participants, she created a form for applicants and a page with all the important information and set up every process from sign-up to invoicing. Similarly, she introduced a new app for contact management and began implementing small bits of automation that unified our processes into a cohesive system. Now you can see why I believe this skill is priceless.


The art of turning chaos into order
is a skill that's worth its weight in gold.



**Creativity + Awareness = The Ability
to Build Real-World Systems**

Sometimes I think about making a special edition of this book, built on the visualization of key ideas and accompanying infographics. My idea is to feature the key ideas on one page and an AI generated graphic on the other. We could also print these as posters, allowing people to decorate their offices with them. Speaking of which, perhaps I'm not alone in needing a tool that effortlessly generates inspirational quotes paired with aesthetically pleasing graphics. Perhaps I could even develop this into an online service?

My list of "ideas for new business" is both unfortunately and fortunately too long, so I decided not to pursue this one. However, it can serve as an example of the power that comes from combining creativity with knowledge of the current possibilities of digital tools and the ability to connect all of this to a functional, real-world system.

So, how might it work? Maybe it could be as a simple website where you upload a document, and then an AI would generate corresponding graphics. Another AI could refine the content stylistically or even rewrite

it in the style of a chosen author. We could also add the option of automatic translation into any language of choice and, of course, then offer to record it as an audiobook. That's definitely how I'd like it, so why not build it first for myself and then immediately try offering it to other content creators?

How do you achieve that kind of result? You can go the classic route of first getting a website designed by a graphic designer and having it coded by a programmer. The other route is to build your site on a so-called "no-code" platform.

You could build the website in Webflow and integrate it with ChatGPT for text generation and Stable Diffusion for image creation. A gateway for accepting payments worldwide could be built on Stripe, DeepL could handle translations, ElevenLabs could generate the audio version, and customer support could be handled by the Chatbase virtual assistant. You could also connect all of these tools and automate the workflows using Make. If you'd like to offer printed versions of these books, you could connect everything to Cloudprinter and ship them anywhere in the world on demand.

What else can we call our era but the Golden Age of Creators? All you need is a good idea and technology will do the rest. You no longer have to invest millions just to verify whether one of your ideas will work. You can instead connect existing services and quickly find out if you've stumbled upon something with real potential, or if it would be wiser to shift your focus to a different project.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. We are entering the Golden Age of Creators where people with innovative ideas using the clever application of smart tools can turn ideas into reality faster than ever before.
2. Everyone has the potential to be a creator and influence the world around them, whether by improving things at work, pursuing side projects, or starting their own business. Being a creator means taking action when you believe there's a better way.
3. Imagination, creativity and a willingness to try new things are key skills in the age of AI. When you break down your work into smaller parts, you'll be surprised how many chances you'll find to make things better with AI. Plus, with all the digital tools out there it's easy to test your ideas and fix any bumps in the road.
4. Broad general knowledge fuels creativity by letting you blend different ideas in new ways and gives you the capacity to get the most out of AI tools. Understanding other fields and perspectives can help you see the bigger picture.
5. Systematic thinking is the last important skill that helps people thrive in the digital world. It means seeing your work as a set of parts that you can constantly improve. The goal is to build systems where technology does the heavy lifting, and your main job becomes keeping everything running smoothly.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Choose an activity or project you're working on. Try to break it down into individual steps and sub-tasks. You can write them down in a checklist or draw them into a process map. Then, try to perform as many steps as possible using AI.
2. Broaden your horizons and look at innovations from a different perspective. If you work in HR, try AI tools for job seekers. Or get inspired by another field. If you work in sales, look into how AI is being used in customer service.
3. Do you have any ideas on how to improve your digital systems? Go for it and make the change. If you're not sure how, try asking AI, doing some research or visit any online community and ask for help. Raise your hand in your next meeting and suggest a change. Remember: You. Are. The. Creator.



9. Use Technology to Your Advantage

I get the best ideas from just about everywhere—except the office. That's why having the freedom to work from different places and occasionally change my work environment is so important. Sometimes, all I need is to stretch out my lunch break and head out on my bike. Once I clear my head and free my mind from obligations, the exact ideas I'm looking for start flowing.

That's precisely how the Digi Challenge initiative was born. I had just finished a meeting with a client who was having some trouble with her team. Their projects were constantly delayed, and instead of learning how to manage them better the team just kept complaining about being too busy and overwhelmed. Even when we showed them how much of their work they could automate, they all seemed quite hesitant. It got me thinking: What's really going on here? Could it be the leader's personality, the company culture, or the tools they were using? It really bothered me, so I decided to clear my head by going for a bike ride. And right on the first hill, it struck me—Why not try to motivate the team to do some digital challenges? People could explore some new apps, fine-tune their processes, and finally try AI. And who knows, they might even *enjoy* it.

Because I like to think big, I wanted to prepare it as a competition so I could scale it and involve at least a hundred different teams. And since I had just hired a CEO for my second venture, I was free and ready to get straight to work.

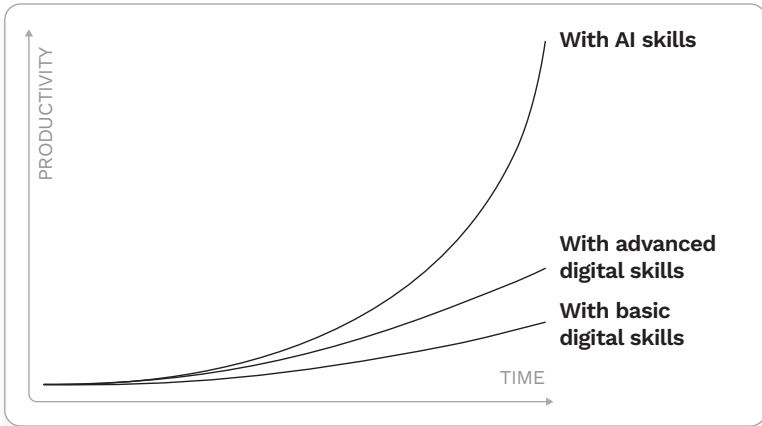
My initial plan was to introduce the competition during an online webinar. So I set up the registration landing page using a user-friendly tool called Webflow. I opted for the free version, and the flashing ads didn't bother me at all. Actually, I was proud of it. After all, I always advise my clients to test their digital projects in practice before investing their time and energy in the wrong direction. I streamed the webinar on Microsoft Teams and right after that I sent everyone a link to a survey in Typeform that doubled as the preliminary registration.

I considered it "preliminary" as I was still gauging interest, and there was a chance the project might not happen at all. I posted the questionnaire on social media and asked my followers to comment on it or share it, hoping to get the word out. In return, I offered them a recording of the webinar, which was met with a great response and essentially took care of my marketing efforts. I kept my word by setting up a bot in Dripify that reached out to everyone who commented and sent them the promised link.

The registrations piled up quickly, and I decided to dive into the project full-steam. I began by creating an attractive website. I sketched out the pages in PowerPoint, but before handing them to the graphic designer, I wanted to make sure everything was clear and easy to understand. So I created a video survey in VideoAsk explaining my original idea and sent it out to several friends asking them for feedback. Within a few hours, I was going over their video responses, which I used to fine-tune my instructions. When I received the final draft of the design, I went to Fiverr, one of my favorite outsourcing portals, and found a skilled programmer who coded the entire website. I placed the order on Friday, and by Monday, it was ready, all for less than \$100.

I could go on and on about all the useful tools I used, but they're not really the point here. My goal is to show you that you don't have to be an IT expert or have a big budget to succeed. If you are willing to keep an open mind to potential opportunities and master the right tools, you can achieve great things no matter what you're working on.

Once the Digi Challenge kicked off, I got more people involved, and we started to professionalize the whole project. But thanks to that small initial experiment, I realized once again how much all of us could achieve in society if more people were willing to learn how to work this way. I strongly believe that by doing this we could dramatically increase the productivity of the global economy.



Unfortunately, the opposite is also true. One time my children's school sent me a request for the payment of a regular fee. However, the payment instructions came in the form of an image, making it impossible to copy any of the details. As a result, all the parents had to spend several minutes manually transcribing and double-checking the information. It wasn't just a few minutes of my time, but a few minutes of *several hundred* people's time. In a single blow, they had managed to squander hundreds of person-hours. Can you imagine how much time is wasted this way by organizations simply because their staff doesn't know how to use technology effectively?

If you ever find yourself in a similar situation, don't be afraid to speak up. Offer more than just polite feedback—roll up your sleeves and write some brutally honest feedback. BHF isn't negative, it's positive—after all, it's about seizing the opportunity to make things better! This is especially true if you include your proposal for a better solution. I reached out to the school with a suggestion for a more practical way to share payment instructions, including a guide on generating a QR code for payment.

I'll say it one more time: feedback is your friend, especially when it comes to using digital tools. Where there's no feedback, there's no improvement.

How Do You Use Technology?

Digital skills are not tied to specific apps. They're far more universal. They include the ability to work efficiently but also critically with information, communicate clearly, quickly master any useful tool, calmly handle problems, and safely navigate through cyberspace.

It's long been true that these skills are useful in both our professional and personal lives. And they're becoming even more important because they include being vigilant about everything we see on the screen, having a nose for online scams, and being cautious when sharing sensitive data—whether it's customer contacts or private photos. That's why we should also discuss these things at home, with our children, parents and grandparents.

Take a moment to think, can you honestly say you can:

- Write an effective, persuasive text?
- Find any information online in seconds?
- Automate your regular repetitive tasks?
- Facilitate online meetings so that they aren't a waste of time?
- Confidently present online webinars?
- Find solutions to any digital problem that comes your way?

If you can already do these things, tools with AI will give you what in the recent past would have been considered superpowers. You can think of them as virtual coworkers who help you scale up your work well beyond the framework of personal productivity. For example, a smart graphics tool essentially serves as your *designer*, while a smart project management tool can act as your *project manager*.

Naturally, this doesn't mean they entirely replace those professions. They simply take over certain functions, helping us instantly without having to wait for someone to have free capacity. These tools are also constantly being enhanced with new AI-related features. If you set them up right, you'll profit from them more and more.

Apps as Virtual Coworkers in Our Teams

Digiskills.cz Digital Skills Training		Digitask.cz AI & No Work Adoption
 Microsoft Loop	Operations Specialist	 Notion
 GitHub Copilot	IT Specialist	 Replit Ghostwriter
 MS Teams	Communications Specialist	 Slack
 MS Lists	Database Specialist	 Airtable
 Power Automate	Automation Specialist	 Make

My companies operate using different tools. But as you'll see, the tools themselves really don't matter. What's important is what function they serve and whether you're able to use them so that they truly serve that function.

A Chief Digital Officer in Every Team

If tech isn't your thing or you prefer to focus on other aspects of your work, that's fine. You just need someone who is tech-savvy and who can assist you. Nonetheless, you should still have at least a general understanding of it. A lot of work is still being done manually just because people don't know what today's technology can do. Unfortunately, their managers often don't think of it either, so companies are wasting thousands of person-hours every week.

At one workshop, I presented the capabilities of AI in spreadsheets¹. One participant found this particularly intriguing and took the opportunity to seek advice on a task she had assigned to a colleague a few weeks before. She had wanted to summarize the most frequent problems reported by customer support. The original plan was to hire a temp who would manually go through a spreadsheet with thousands of complaints and assign each one to the appropriate category. But after the workshop, she managed to categorize all items and prepare the summary on her own in just a few minutes. Since that moment, she has been constantly encouraging people to first explore similar smart solutions before toiling

away at any kind of time-consuming assignment that has always been done manually.

I personally believe that every team should have its own *Chief Digital Officer*. That is, a person who helps others to adopt AI, use digital tools more effectively and automate the team's operations. Our company was among the first in the world to start systematically training employees in this sense, transforming them into ambassadors for a wide range of tools, from Microsoft 365 to process automation to AI. It wasn't just about teaching them to use individual apps well. It was more important to get them to understand what they can be used for and how they can pass on this knowledge to their coworkers.

By the way, when it comes to digital ambassadors (as we call them), their motivation generally isn't money, but the joy of gaining new skills and discovering innovations, and often delighting in other people's joy.

There's No Other Way

"I think we've long passed the point where an active professional can simply choose to not understand how tech works," writes Seth Godin, and he's right. The reason isn't just that these technologies help us to do bigger and better things and keep us from wasting time and energy on useless stuff.

One of the biggest benefits of new smart tools is that they enable us to turn ideas into reality much more quickly than before. This allows us to more efficiently explore new ways to do our work better.

As these tools continue to evolve, the skill level required to use them is effectively also changing:

Basic users can learn to work with nearly any app even though they'll only use a portion of its features and will sometimes need some training and practice.

Power users will discover individual features on their own and know how to set up apps the way they need and connect them with other tools. With

the development of platforms that can be customized without actual programming, the term "citizen developer" is becoming increasingly common. It's no longer the case that people have to adapt to software. Software is adapting to people.

Expert users are able to program advanced features or create scripts for automatic integration with other software. Thanks to this, they're able to connect to any online service or access hundreds of thousands of AI models² to suit their needs. However, expert users are no longer found solely within IT departments. They're often self-taught enthusiasts who discover advanced features by watching guides on YouTube or by cooperating with AI.

Where would you put yourself? And your coworkers? Organizations that figure it out and invest into the development of their people will have a huge advantage because these people have an incredible potential to kickstart an AI transformation of the whole company.

To stay ahead of the curve, focus on developing skills related to what I consider the three most important digital trends of today:

1. **LOW-CODE AND NO-CODE** – tailoring your digital systems.
2. **AUTOMATION** – removing routine work and scaling your activities.
3. **AI** – the practical uses of artificial intelligence.

All these areas are closely interconnected, and so we should have them configured well.

Without well-organized data, you can't automate. Without automation, you can't integrate AI into your workflows. Of course you can still use a variety of available tools, but it will be you who has to control them and constantly click here and there.



1. LOW-CODE AND NO-CODE – TAILORING YOUR DIGITAL SYSTEMS

Every year since 1927, Time Magazine has picked a Person of the Year. However, in 2006, the cover didn't feature anybody in particular, i.e. no individual person. Instead, we were all represented by an image of a computer with the word "YOU" shining in all caps accompanied by the caption: "Yes, you. You control the Information Age." And this was back then when our options were significantly more limited than they are today. If you didn't know programming, there wasn't much you could control.

But software creators soon came to realize that people needed simple—and more flexible—tools they can easily adapt according to their needs. So low-code and no-code platforms began to emerge, enabling users to create simple functions and whole systems without having to perform any real programming. Think of it like building with LEGO bricks: You take pre-made parts and assemble them.

We can think of Excel as one of the first low-code applications; it's so widespread today precisely because of its flexibility. It can be used for anything from calculating bonuses for the entire company to planning out your summer vacation. Over time more and more tools appeared, and

thanks to this you won't find software without a low-code alternative today. That's why my companies embrace this principle wherever possible:

Internal systems

One of my companies uses the Airtable app to keep track of nearly everything: people, finances, suppliers, you name it. Another relies on Microsoft Lists to maintain an overview of our consultants and the automations that people can use. The best thing about these systems is that they are so simple to use that all our employees are continually improving them.

External platforms

We always build the first versions of our websites in Webflow or Framer. We also use Notion to share cooperation proposals and price quotes with our customers. We enhance them with explanatory videos, which saves us dozens of hours each month because it replaces unnecessary online meetings—and our customers are thrilled about it.

Big and small things

Low-code features in office apps enable minor automations or adjustments whenever they're useful. When we needed to create a form to record follow-up information after our workshops, my colleague did it in a few minutes. When I mentioned it would be helpful to get a notification so people wouldn't have to remember to fill it out, it took just a few more minutes before she'd created a simple automation that sent me a link to the form immediately after each workshop ended. I was delighted *because that's precisely how innovations should work*.

But there are also whole firms built up on low-code. Comet—a French marketplace for independent professionals—launched its first version in a tool named Bubble and reached nearly a million euros a month in revenue with it. The startup Teal, which helps people find jobs, launched along similar lines. Its founder David Fano says he "injected a low-code approach into the whole firm's DNA," so it would be able to flexibly adapt to customers' needs and grow lightning-fast.

Low-code tools are one of the reasons why we're experiencing a golden age of creativity and creators. And not just in business: These tools make it possible to build *any kind* of system, e.g. for free-time, volunteering activities, you name it. They bring the benefits of programming to people who don't know programming. And what's more important, as all these examples illustrate they shorten the path necessary to go from an idea to reality, leading to more interesting projects arising around us.

Popular low-code tools (in 2024)

- **Smart forms:** Typeform, Videoask, Fillout
- **Collaborative workspace:** Notion, Loop, Evernote
- **Website creation:** Webflow, Wix, Framer
- **E-commerce:** Shopify, Gumroad, Stripe
- **Apps:** Webflow, Bubble, Softr
- **Databases:** Airtable, MS Lists, Tabidoo
- **Integration and automation:** Zapier, Make, Bardeen
- **Corporate systems:** MS Power Platform, ServiceNow, Retool

I could go on listing other apps, but it's worth noting that even commonly used office tools Microsoft 365 and Google Workspace are now part of the low-code world too. As a result, even employees of corporations with previously cumbersome systems can now innovate without significant investment or extensive collaboration with programmers. This only changed with the low-code approach, the greatest benefits of which are speed and more options for users.

Speed – If you choose a good low-code tool, you're not just a little faster. You can be *orders of magnitude* faster. You can set up automation or a website in hours rather than weeks. You can also remove a number of delays and unnecessary communication with developers.

More options for users – Who knows best how to fine-tune a job's system? The person doing the job, of course. Low-code lets people fine-tune their processes in a creative and innovative way. So workers at all

levels are absorbing fresh new energy. It simultaneously saves time for developers, who no longer have to handle or think of every little thing.

A Bright Tomorrow?

Even low-code systems have their limitations, risks and downsides. In the long run, managing them can be more complicated than maintaining your own systems. Users have to learn how to work with them, and they often require more technical support.

Yet people who want to quickly and flexibly fine-tune their workflows can't get by without them. In my opinion, only systems that support core competencies or result in substantial cost savings should be custom-built.

Always ask yourself these three questions: Will a custom solution bring significantly higher value? Will you gain a competitive advantage with it? And will it be significantly advantageous in the long run? If the answer is three times "no," the path is clear: Go with low-code.

And if your goal is to quickly launch and iterate on the first version of your digital solution without relying on an IT specialist, then all these questions become irrelevant.

Master your system

Digital productivity begins with mastering your smart devices. They offer incredible flexibility and are increasingly powered by AI. Here are the tricks I couldn't work without:

Keyboard shortcuts – activate text dictation, quickly launch AI, or run scripts for repetitive tasks.

Voice control – dictate instead of typing and engage in conversations with voice assistants.

Text replacements – streamline your workflows with shortcuts for prompts and frequently used phrases.

Screenshots – quickly capture and feed screenshots into AI tools for further action.

Browser add-ons – dozens of extensions and new capabilities for online work.

An advanced app launcher³ – control the entire system from one spot.

2. AUTOMATION – REMOVING ROUTINE WORK AND SCALING YOUR ACTIVITIES

At one of our workshops, a bank's deputy director proudly proclaimed they have everything "as automated as possible," so he "couldn't imagine what could still be automated." I recalled a colleague of mine who in such situations poses the question: "So why do you still have to work?"

Even though automation is the essence of No Work, many struggle to grasp its practical implications. Meanwhile, it should be a top priority for everyone. It empowers us to scale activities, saves mental capacity, and above all works for us day and night⁴. Thanks to this, people can focus on tasks they genuinely enjoy and those that generate the most value.

When I brought Jan into the Digiskills team, I knew he was an exceptional person. He was passionate about digital productivity but never came across as a techie. Quite the opposite; he had a great talent for speaking in a way everyone could understand. Jan instantly became one of our key players, leading a team of consultants and working on projects for our biggest clients. A few years later, the investment in developing his natural talents paid off, and I was happy that my partners and I promoted him to lead the entire company.

One of the things Jan brought to our team was a focus on automation as he had fully automated every aspect of his work and personal life. The moment Microsoft launched its own suite of automation tools, we started working on this topic on a large scale. And where else to start but with ourselves?

We began with frequently recurring tasks such as creating feedback forms, sending reminders to participants of our courses, and generating minutes from our company meetings. Next, we turned our attention to more complex processes: data synchronization across systems, report

generation, and our management system for large client projects. This approach allowed us to tackle major projects even with a small team.

For example, when we helped a Volkswagen Group car manufacturer adopt Microsoft 365, we created two-month development programs tailored for individual teams and departments. At one point, we had over 370 programs running simultaneously—all overseen by a single colleague. How? Naturally only thanks to full automation. Just three months after implementing the Power Automate tool, our team counted over five thousand automated tasks a month. Within half a year it had reached almost 40,000.

This experience taught me there's always room for automation in every team. The important thing is to not underestimate even minor automation tweaks as these can ultimately save a ton of work and free up loads of mental capacity. If you watch shows on Netflix, you surely know the Skip Intro button. Clicking once saves you a half-minute, a minute at most. But altogether it saves the equivalent of almost 200 years each day, because people click on it more than 130 million times.

At work it's the same. Every mouse click takes time, and if it's possible to automate it, we should try to do so.

Automation as a State of Mind

Automation is more of a life philosophy, and for this reason it's important to make it a habit. Personally, I am practically obsessed with it because I hate doing repetitive tasks. And because I know there are apps for everything, and thus it all can be automated, I try to do something about this every day.

The moment you start seeing your work as a system, you'll notice how many things there are around you that you constantly do over and over again:

- When I want to offer my services to a prospective client
- When I release a new podcast episode and plan to share it on my YouTube channel

- When I make a purchase and need to forward the receipt to my accountant

It always means that:

- An inquiry has arrived, and I start to write up a price quote. Over and over.
- I'm doing a podcast and uploading the video version onto YouTube. Over and over.
- I'm photographing a receipt, opening an expense management app and uploading it. Over and over.

Automation is not only about the tasks that we do on a regular basis; we can also automate one-time batch jobs, like editing a whole gallery of images or renaming every file in a folder.

The moment you're standing before such a task, try including words like "bulk" or "batch" when you're searching for solutions. For instance, try searching for "batch image resize" or "bulk file renaming".

Whenever you run into something like this, your first instinct should be to think about whether it can be automated.

But above all don't do it manually!

Routine Is Just the Start

Until the rise of generative AI, people generally perceived automation as a way to save time on routine tasks such as copying information among applications, entering data into systems, and creating reports. But now we can automate far more:

- Sending out personalized messages via email⁵ or social media⁶
- Creating graphics⁷ and advertisements⁸ or translating texts⁹
- Recording podcasts¹⁰ and presentations¹¹ including their translation into foreign languages
- Producing songs¹², video avatars¹³, or whole movies¹⁴

When we started to use apps for the transcription of podcasts and YouTube videos, we built a simple automation: Whenever someone shares a link to an interesting video in our company chat, the system automatically analyzes the content and creates a summary. This summary not only includes important information, but also suggests why it might be useful to specific colleagues and how they could use it. You see, this is much more than just getting rid of a routine task.

However, the fact that we *can* automate almost anything does not mean that we have to. In the next chapter, we'll be looking at a concept called AAAI—Author > Authorization > AI, which will make it easier for you to decide where automation makes sense and when it's better to include a human touch or to avoid automation entirely.

The following questions can help you:

- Is this a one-time job, or will I have to do it again?
- Can a computer do it more quickly, cheaply and better than me?
- Do I enjoy doing it? Or do I find it annoying?

The key is to stop giving priority to quick one-off solutions because then we have to deal with these problems again and again.

To Automate or Not to Automate. That Is the Question

With the development of new smart tools, the road from inspiration to automation got shorter. You just have to describe a workflow, and various AI apps¹⁵ will create an automation proposal for you. Therefore, I'd like to repeat a fundamental thing once more: Having the imagination and ability to figure out what to automate is more important than studying the guides on how to do it.

The problem is, as shown in a study¹⁶ by the automation company Zapier, a third of all employees "openly" don't understand how automation could be useful. In reality, the amount is likely to be even higher because people often don't know what they don't know.

This is exactly why it's important to constantly seek inspiration and talk about as many specific examples as you can. When we started showcasing what our bots are doing for us, people started generating more and more ideas on similar tasks they could automate for themselves.

- When one of our webinars starts, an automatic notification invites the company to watch.
- Upon closing a new deal, an automated message informs the execution team.
- As the end of the month approaches, automated billing requests are sent to external vendors.
- Events are exported from calendars daily, generating reports on tutor and lecturer workloads.

What about you? Do you have ideas on what you could automate? You'll find plenty of examples on the websites of the mentioned tools. Sign up for their newsletters and you'll have more than enough inspiration. Or start asking yourself the questions from our No Work Navigator. My favorite one is this: What can I do today to make my work easier tomorrow? Add it to your calendar to remind you at the end of each day or week. If you do that, you might face a slightly different challenge: The number of opportunities you see may start to feel overwhelming.

Semi-Automation

The first step you can take is to automate smaller tasks using shortcuts and templates.

Shortcuts and text replacements¹⁷ will save you lots of time with writing repeating phrases, sentences, or whole messages. I personally have them in both my phone and my computer so in just one click I can enter our invoicing details or respond to frequently asked questions.

Don't limit yourself to just the standard shortcut keys. You can easily create your own. For example, I had a shortcut created that takes a snapshot of a web page for me and turns it into an active link wherever I paste it. This makes it easier for me to create presentations as I can add tips on interesting websites for our workshop attendees. I had this shortcut

created for me on the UpWork portal for 5 dollars, but for me it's more like the "Skip Intro" button that saves me hundreds of clicks a month.

I use text replacements for writing AI prompts as well¹⁸. I use it when writing emails, for editing my social media posts, and assigning tasks to my colleagues; basically, for all activities I do frequently and where I don't want to waste time repeatedly entering the same prompt (you can find examples of the prompts I use here¹⁹).

Pre-made templates are another great option. For me, these are the sheer essence of No Work. In a way they are work that someone else has done for you—even if that someone was you in the past:

- **Text templates** – for everything we write repeatedly: messages, links, descriptions of our workshops.
- **Prompt templates** – frequently used commands for AI tools.
- **Document templates** – I use one master presentation and adjust it for each workshop. We prepare price quotes for our customers along the same lines.
- **Design templates** – we have professionally created templates for our social-media posts, which my coworkers adjust as needed.
- **Templates in applications** – such as checklists for organizing training classes.
- **Database templates** – at our firm these are lists of coaches, internal automations, etc.
- **Activity templates** – for example, entries for individual exercises in our classes.
- **Templates for entire applications** – pre-made apps in low-code systems.

One special category of templates is synchronized blocks, that can be used in apps like Notion or Microsoft Loop. You just paste the content of these blocks from one document into another—and then it just sits there synchronized with the original source. You just have to edit the original, and the content is changed everywhere. Or you can take a task list from one app (e.g. Loop) and paste it into an email or an MS Teams message. People can edit it right there, and the changes will show up in the original list too. It can save you lots of time while ensuring a consistent quality of outputs.

You don't have to create your own templates from scratch; you can download them for free or buy them (and as you'll see, you can even earn a nice income by creating them). And just like with apps, the same rule applies: You can find a template for everything—for documents²⁰, applications²¹, databases²², prompts²³, and team activities²⁴.

Full Automation

Basic automation based on if-then rules can be found in most modern apps. For me, this is a key factor in deciding whether to use a particular software or service. If it doesn't provide these features, I usually look for alternatives.

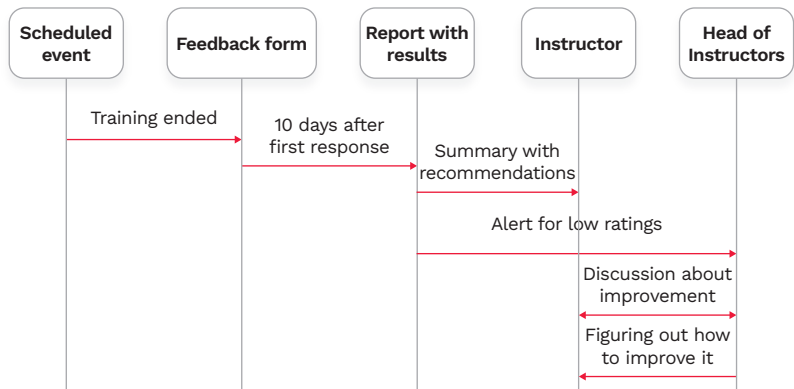
They let you automate simple tasks:

- When someone fills out a contact form, a notification appears in chat.
- When you flag an email, its attachment is saved in a designated folder.
- When you arrive home from work, your phone automatically switches to silent mode.

Advanced automation involves multiple steps that build upon each other.

- When I tap on my phone, it opens my dictation app. After dictation, the note is saved together with a task added to my to-do list, and I receive a reminder about it in the evening.
- After an online meeting, salespeople are offered the chance to save a record in the CRM system. After their confirmation, a brief summary is generated and then added into the overview of activities.
- After a training session is over, a feedback form is automatically generated and distributed to participants. Ten days after receiving the initial response, a report is produced that includes the results, a summary of the responses, and an evaluation chart. The instructor receives a condensed version of this information along with suggestions for improvement based on feedback. If the rating is below a certain threshold, the supervisor is notified allowing them to work with the instructor on making improvements for future sessions.

If your tools don't offer such possibilities, you can try connecting them with one of the universal automation services²⁵. These services can link apps together even if they don't typically interact with each other.



That's what a relatively simple process automation might look like. You can start with one step and gradually replace more and more steps of your work.

Some tools still require manual intervention, while others allow you to input a script or a piece of code, which AI can easily help you create. More and more tools simply require you to describe the problem, and they'll independently suggest ways to automate something on their own. This is why the ability to generate ideas for automation is often more important than knowing how to actually do it.

But if you don't feel up to it yourself, you should still have someone who can handle it. A Chief Digital Officer for every team, remember?

Automation possibilities		
Computer	Automation of the computer	Windows PowerShell, Apple Script
Mobile devices	Automation on mobile devices	Apple Shortcuts, Tasker

Web browser	Browsing pages, filling out forms, and downloading data	Add-ons for Chrome or Edge
Office applications	Automation of repetitive tasks in routine work	Microsoft Power Automate, Google Workspace Automation
Spreadsheet automation	More advanced automation of administrative tasks and other activities	Add-ons for Google Sheets, Automation Dock for Excel
Universal apps	Connecting various applications, automation of small and complex processes	Make, Zapier
Specialized apps	Automation of specialized activities – from graphics to communication	Canva, Mixmax, Superface
Software robot	Automation that can do everything on a computer that people can	UiPath, Automation Anywhere

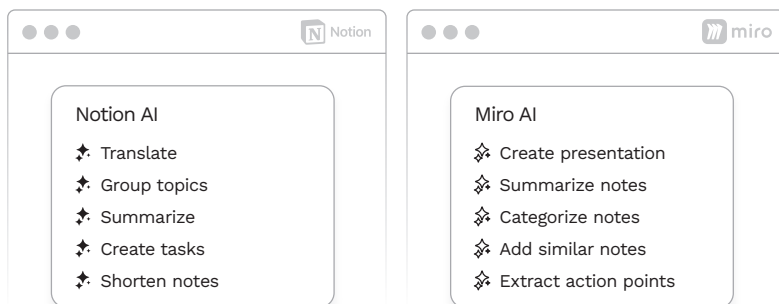
3. AI – THE PRACTICAL USES OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The fields connected with AI are developing so quickly that it's hard to speak about any guaranteed skills, at least if we're not discussing the actual technologies tied to robotics or machine learning itself. These have been developing for decades, but they relate primarily to programmers.

For most people, it's more important to understand the timeless principles, thanks to which you'll understand the possibilities for using AI and mastering the tools it provides.

1. Using AI in existing apps

Most creators of popular tools are adding AI features to their products. The Notion note-taking app lets you create, shorten, or automatically translate text. Similarly, in the Miró virtual whiteboard you can create mind maps with a single click or group ideas generated during brainstorming sessions.



Artificial intelligence as a part of the popular apps Notion and Miró.

I recommend looking out for these tools as their AI features can seriously boost your productivity and even give you ideas for improving your workflows. Productboard, one of the most successful Czech startups, has introduced AI in their tool for product managers. If you work on developing your own digital product or service, AI connects insights from your users to new features you are considering. It also automatically monitors trending feedback topics and summarizes user feedback, so you know what to work on.

Try Googling your favorite app's name along with "AI". You'll probably find a page describing its AI features or some other guide on how to use AI in that app. Try out a few of the examples and then consider if those smart features are worth paying extra cash for.

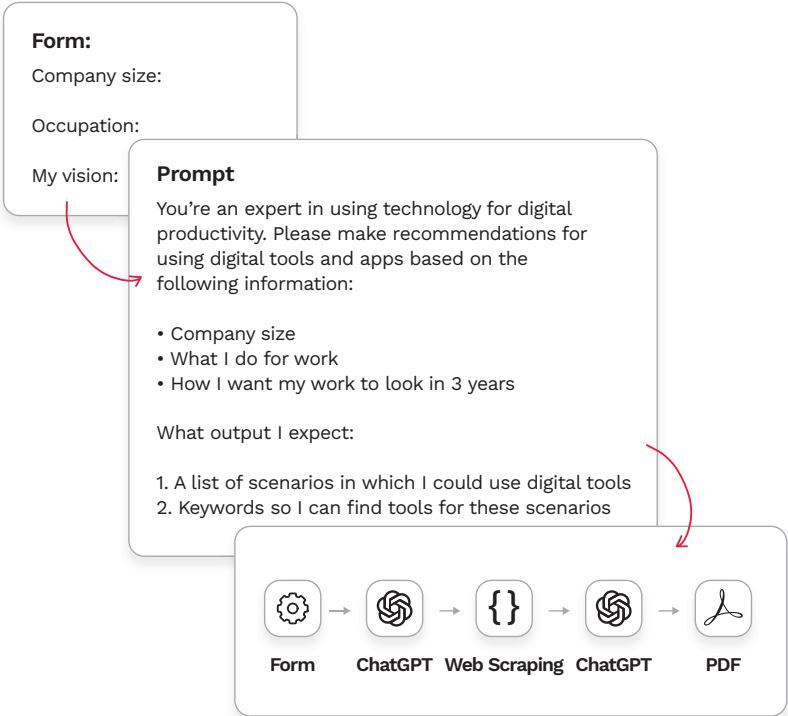
2. Using AI in general AI apps

Apps built on the most popular AI models, such as ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini, can handle a wide range of tasks, including writing, programming, analyzing data and drawing. Thanks to integration with third-party services, some of them boast hundreds of additional "skills," from creating mind maps to planning vacations.

Most people use them manually, and when they want to work with the output they simply use good old copy-paste. I recommend this manual

approach when experimenting and testing new ways of working because it lets you quickly evaluate whether AI is a good fit for the given task, and what's even more important it allows you to refine your prompts before incorporating them into your workflows or automations.

We do this all the time in our teams. I already talked about how we worked on a system that would be recommending AI apps to our clients. My idea was that people would describe their work, and our system would suggest the right AI tools to make their lives easier. I started by making a simple survey where our clients answered a few questions: where they work, what they do, what their dream is, etc. Then I played with the prompts combined with the first batch of data from the survey. Once I was happy with the results, a colleague built a simple automation that could generate these recommendations for hundreds of people at once. But the most important part was getting the prompts right first.



3. Using AI in single-purpose apps

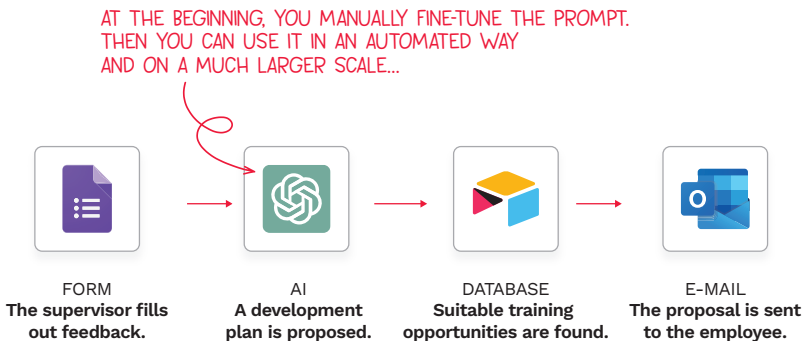
If you need a quick fix for a problem that pops up every now and then, there are tons of solutions out there. This also applies to more specific issues, like one of our clients who needed help improving his e-book creation process.

When you run into situations like this, you've got two main options. You can use general AI apps to streamline certain parts of the process (like brainstorming, editing, or creating visuals), or seek out solutions specifically designed to your needs (such as "AI-powered e-book creation tools").

You can just visit the "There's an AI for That²⁶" portal, or browse ready-made bots²⁷ and find solutions to almost any problem.

4. AI in low-code systems or as a part of automation

One of my clients recently shared his ambitious vision with me: creating a system that could transform manager feedback into a customized development plan for every employee. Just a few months ago, I would have told him to set aside a few hundred thousand dollars and expect to have it ready in about a year. However, during our conversation we fine-tuned a ChatGPT bot that could do the job just as well. Since his company uses low-code office apps, all he has to do now is set up similar automation to give all his managers access to this innovation.



This might be exactly what the apps of the future will look like. Instead of programming, we'll be fine-tuning AI prompts and integrating them into low-code applications and automations. As we've seen, these systems let you interconnect multiple apps, so rather than occasionally copying and pasting, you can incorporate AI directly into your processes and use it full-scale with minimal effort.

From data analytics to AI workflows

Keboola is one of the most promising Czech startups that managed to fly under my radar for a long time. Until recently, they were developing a tool primarily designed for data analysts connecting data from all sorts of systems and making it much easier to work with. However, with the advent of AI their platform has taken on a whole new dimension. When you can access and combine data from multiple sources, it enables you to truly unleash the potential of low-code and automation apps. That's why Keboola users today have the ability to not only analyze data but also utilize it in combination with AI tools. And it's not just businesses—I witnessed a presentation by 14-year-old Sofia, who connected various data sources about board games and created a chatbot to guide users through these games.

5. Using AI in custom apps

Advanced skills aren't just connected with theoretical knowledge of AI and machine learning as we knew it in the past. Thanks to the availability of hundreds of thousands of AI models²⁸, even ordinary people proficient in IT can hook AI into their applications today. The possibilities for its use are being further expanded by communities of experts who are sharing their know-how as well as specific use cases.

If you're having trouble visualizing how to use this, let me give you a few examples. Imagine you need to go through tons of documents and find specific connections between them. You could have your IT team put together a simple app that connects all of these documents to the OpenAI model. That would let you ask questions about anything you're interested in. A farmer could set up a webcam connected to the Segment Anything model to keep an eye out for any animals that escape. A logistics manager

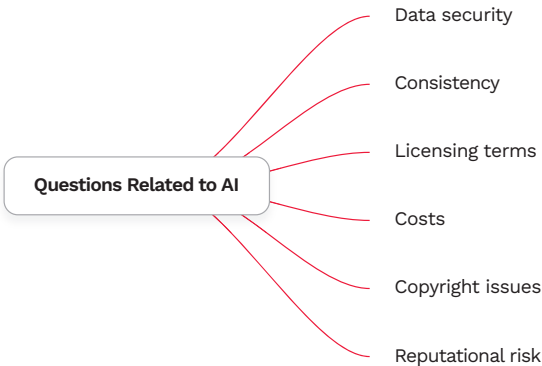
can set up a system for warehouse workers, providing them with headsets connected to a mobile phone so they can "talk" to their system using their voice without going to a computer. How? Just build a system that integrates a Whisper model to transcribe the question into text and a Play HT model to generate an automated voice response.

Unlike in the past, we're now able to create a first version of any of these apps in just a few hours. But you have to know how to program a little, or have some people with that kind of knowledge around you.

Tools for faster AI development

Creating precise and reliable prompts is extremely important, including for people building their own apps and internal systems. Luckily, there are great tools like ChatGPT Playground, Anthropic Console and Langtail that help people to generate production-ready prompts faster, and therefore speed up your AI development workflow.

In the next chapter, we'll be looking at a number of tips for making use of new smart tools effectively. If you're serious about using them, you should also learn about how AI works with data, how it learns, and what can affect the results it gives you. It's also important to be aware of the IT security issues, as well as the ownership of prompts, copyright issues, and licenses for the use of individual models.



That's another reason why it's crucial to have people around you who can help you make smart, safe decisions and make sure you're investing in AI the right way.

Try entering the following prompt into ChatGPT or Bing AI:

Create a table with five levels of knowledge regarding the practical uses of artificial intelligence (AI) in business. The table will have four columns: Level, Title, Description (what a person with this level of knowledge is able to do with AI), and Practical Examples.

The levels are as follows:

1. Basic user of AI applications
2. Prompt engineer for AI applications
3. Low-code AI application developer
4. AI and ML (Machine Learning) developer
5. PhD in AI

It's clear that people with such skills will be increasingly in demand. This is, of course, a great opportunity. When the big Hollywood writers' strike began in 2023, companies like Netflix and Disney immediately started looking for more AI experts. And we're doing the same thing in our projects. For some roles, we're looking for two types of people: One to do the actual work and one to fine-tune the AI that will then do the same work on a much bigger scale. I believe this is how even small teams will be able to accomplish previously unimaginable feats.

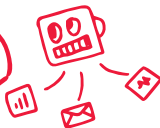
KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Invest in developing your digital skills as they are essential for both professional and personal success in today's world. Digital skills include working with information efficiently, communicating clearly, mastering useful tools and being able to safely navigate cyberspace.
2. Embrace low-code and no-code tools to quickly build and customize digital systems without relying heavily on programmers. These tools enable faster innovation and empower users to fine-tune their workflows.
3. Develop an automation mindset by constantly looking for tasks that can be automated. Automation saves time, scales activities and frees up mental capacity for more important things.
4. Enhance AI capabilities within your existing apps by using general AI chatbots or learning how to discover and use specific AI tools for whatever you need.
5. Cultivate a mindset of experimentation and iteration when using digital tools and AI. Focus on generating ideas and refining prompts before incorporating them into workflows or automations. It really helps to have a Chief Digital Officer in every team to help everyone else use AI and make the most of digital tools.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Perform an honest assessment of how well you've mastered digital tools. Whether it's general skills (can I facilitate online meetings effectively?) or technical skills (am I proficient with spreadsheets?). If it's something you use often, you should be good at it. Watch a tutorial, arrange a digital coaching session, or sign up for a course.
2. Explore some of the low-code tools mentioned in this chapter and think about whether you could use them for any of your activities or projects.
3. Make a list of tasks you perform repeatedly and determine if your current tools allow you to automate them. This can include simple tasks that take a few clicks or more complex processes. Find out if any of the automation tools mentioned could help you.

10. Master AI ^{AI}



We were among the first organizations in the world to create a new position called "Prompt Engineer". However, since the term was not yet widely known, we decided to call it "AI Whisperer" instead. We pictured someone who would become incredibly good at using these new smart tools and could help coworkers and clients use them better too. Some people predicted a bright future for this profession, but it turned out differently—prompt engineering became the world's first profession to emerge and disappear within the same year¹. It turned out not to be a profession, but a key skill for nearly everyone.

Crafting great prompts for AI is just the beginning. First, we need to figure out when to use it and when not to. You may know people who don't trust AI because it once gave them a wrong answer or didn't include certain facts. Chances are they were simply using the wrong tool for the wrong job.

The fact that almost everyone can use AI is both its greatest strength and its greatest weakness. It's simple, it doesn't require any special expertise and all you need is the courage to try something new rather than experience. However, that doesn't mean you don't have to learn how to use it, quite the opposite.

When you're thinking about using AI, you will come across many questions that need answering:

- *When should I use AI, and when is it better to do the work myself?*
- *How thoroughly should I check and review its output?*
- *When should I prioritize engaging with people in person and when would it make more sense to use my avatar?*
- *Is it better to respond to clients as quickly as possible or to provide the best possible answers?*

In many cases, the answer will be ambiguous. There will be times when the first results from AI do the job. In other cases you'll have to fine-tune or at least double-check them. Some people won't mind the avatar

at all while others will be turned off by it. You need to weigh the pros and cons. Then take things a step further, test some scenarios out in real-life situations to see what really works.

When considering the use of AI, you can leverage the "AAAI" framework, a concept I created to enhance our clients' understanding of when and where to apply AI effectively.

AAAI: Author → Authorization → AI		
Category	Description	Example
Author	We personally work on the outputs.	- Conducting a strategic workshop. - Writing the texts for a book.
Authorization	The work is created by AI, but we check and/or fine-tune the output.	- Responding to client inquiries. - Editing the translation of the book.
AI	We leave the work entirely to AI.	- Summarizing a regular team meeting. - Creating video messages for publishers with my avatar.

This framework is also key for using AI responsibly. It not only addresses the accuracy of the generated data, but also aspects like "tone of voice," ensuring that anything you create with AI actually sounds like you and not like generic text that anyone can whip up in a second.

As an example, let me describe how we use AI in our Digi Challenge project. All participants are required to complete team and personal challenges and submit a monthly report on their experience. Given the volume, often extensive in length, we leverage AI to summarize them and generate statistics and reports providing insights into the areas that participants are most actively engaged in.

The AI summaries are good enough for our internal use. We share them with the participants so they can see what everyone else is up to, but we're up front about the fact that it's AI-generated. The most insightful reports are carefully reviewed and manually published, because it's important material for our partners. Content for social networks is also auto-generated, but always fine-tuned by one of us to make sure its facts are verified, as well as to make it more engaging and inspiring for our fans.

As technology advances, the lines between these categories are becoming increasingly blurred. We can expect to see more and more activities shifting from one category to another, requiring us to constantly adapt and refine our approach.

My experience with clients in academia has demonstrated that individual approaches can be effectively combined. During a workshop with university lecturers, we talked about the potential of AI in grading student papers. The teachers would make quick notes in a spreadsheet about the weak points of each paper, like missing sources, weak argumentation, etc. The AI would then use these notes to create a personalized report for each student with tips on how to fix those problems.

We discussed whether this would cross an ethical line as it seems to create an intermediary between the teacher and the student, making the interaction more impersonal. So, inspired by my own work, I showed how I respond to inquiries about joining my training programs. I don't want a completely automated system because I like to see who's signing up. I also consider every interaction with a potential participant a chance to show them the value of the program. That's why I've prepared two response templates I can easily evoke with a shortcut—one for entrepreneurs and one for managers working in organizations. The trick is to have a blank space at the beginning of each template for a personal message. I never write it or dictate it for more than a few seconds, but it significantly increases the chances they'll want to join.

Inspired by this example, the university lecturers created their own system for evaluating their students. Part of their feedback is generated by AI, while the teachers themselves write the rest. This cuts down the time they spend grading by half, and it also gives students more valuable feedback.

Tips for Effective Prompt Crafting

Mastering AI isn't just about memorizing prompts; it's about knowing how to fine-tune and optimize them. You could say it's all about "how to talk with AI." Even if prompting eventually becomes obsolete due to the development of a smarter and more user-friendly interface, it will

be irreplaceable until then. Besides, prompting is fundamentally nothing more than knowing how to formulate your ideas, which hopefully will always be a valuable asset.

When you really think about it, every task assignment is in fact a prompt. If you're asking your coworker to do "the usual," you just need to send them one sentence. But if you have a new person on the team, you need to figure out how to work with them, assign tasks to them, review their work and gradually guide them toward the right solution.

Here are a few tips for getting the most out of AI:

1. Make an effort. Or at least keep trying.

With no pain there's no gain, even with AI. Especially when you just start using it, you can't usually nail the perfect result on your first try. I've started thinking in terms of a unit of effort I call "1 prompt," and whenever I'm thinking about how much time and energy to invest in a task, I devote a number of tries to it based on its importance.

If I'm handling something simple, I write a short prompt and accept the first result. However, when it comes to anything important I don't mind following up and fine-tuning my result with several additional prompts until I'm satisfied.

2. Be specific

There's a big difference between the prompts, "Create a job listing for position X," and "Create a job listing for me for position X, which will be in charge of this and that under these conditions." Be more specific and you'll get more relevant results.

Many tools now automatically generate good prompts based on your intent, but I like to take a different approach: I use one prompt to create a specification (e.g. what the feedback questionnaire should contain), then refine the output and use it as the basis for a second prompt (make a draft feedback questionnaire containing this information).

3. Provide more context

If I want an AI to compose an email to the manager of a coworking space where I'd like to deliver a presentation, I start by describing who I am, what I do, and what I want to achieve. Every bit of information helps.

Some tools let you store "custom instructions" in their settings or let you use your own knowledge base so that you don't have to think about context for every prompt. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of these features.

4. Give examples

Don't be afraid to provide a detailed description of what the result should look like. If you need to create a table, write down the names of the columns or describe how the data in the first row should look. You can even mention well-known artists or a specific tone of voice or artistic styles to guide the AI in the right direction.

If you are unsure, start by giving the AI an example. Let it analyze the example and then attempt to come up with an acceptable result. When I was fine-tuning the prompt for writing emails or drafting LinkedIn posts on my behalf, I primarily used examples from real messages and posts.

5. Don't forget to play

As soon as you start testing various prompt alternatives, you'll definitely discover a few unexpected techniques and new tricks. That's why I prefer the term "prompt crafting" over "prompt engineering," because practical work with AI is currently closer to a craft than the work of engineers. And like any craft, it can only be mastered through consistent practice and dedication.

	Sample prompts		
	Simple	Advanced	Complex
Text generation	Write me an article about AI.	Write a script for a promotional video about the book "The Future of No Work" (which is about the future of work in the age of AI). Use a slightly informal, conversational style. At the end, encourage viewers to purchase the book on our website.	Act as a world-class copywriter and TV script writer. Help me write a script for a TV presenter (my avatar) who will introduce the content of the book to the general public. 1. Analyze the content of the attached excerpt from the book. 2. Create a summary consisting of the 5 most important insights from the book. 3. Create a script for the television presenter that explains these insights to the viewers (the general public, without an interest in AI). 4. The video should be max. 3 minutes long, positive, motivational, and should not contain any complex technical terms. 5. Finally, provide 3 tips on how viewers can start using AI based on the suggestions in the book.
Image generation	Small house in the mountains	Beef hamburger with lettuce and cheese, pixel art, icon style, front view, white background	Stencil of "robots and people working together in a high-tech, fun world" on a street blank wall, street art, graffiti, black and white, paint, spray paint :: Banksy:: --ar 3:2 --v 5.2 --q 2

Nearly every AI tool offers some kind of guide² on how to write effective prompts. You can use them to improve your own prompting skills, to instruct your coworkers, or even as part of your prompt itself. Simply describe your intent, attach the instructions, and ask the AI to refine your initial prompt based on the provided guidelines. Sometimes, you just need to invest a few minutes to save hours of frustration. Or, and this may be the future of prompts, just leave it up to AI! Because this is exactly the sort of thing that AI is great at. Just describe what you need to accomplish and then sit back and watch as it fine-tunes your prompt to perfection.

Here's a neat trick: ask AI to create an assignment for your coworker. Then use this output as a prompt. For example, when I needed a complex prompt for the virtual co-editor of my book, I simply said, "I need detailed instructions for my colleague who will be editing my book..." and then listed a few key points that mattered to me.

How large language models work

Even though this book is written for everyday users, it's still helpful to know how AI chatbots, also called Large Language Models (LLMs), actually work. Knowing this helps us understand what they're good at and what they might struggle with.

At their core, LLMs like ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, and Mistral generate the most likely response to a prompt based on a huge amount of data they've been trained on. We humans do this all the time: when someone starts a joke with "knock knock", everyone immediately knows "who's there?" is coming next.

The problem is that the "best guess" isn't always the right answer. That's why LLMs are great at answering common knowledge questions like "What's the capital of France?" But when you ask about less known facts or something that needs more research, like "How do I get from the Eiffel Tower to Montmartre at 9 p.m.?" they might start making things up. They give you an answer that sounds good, but it's not actually true (it's even common to say they "hallucinate").

This isn't always a bad thing, though. We have other tools for those questions, like search engines, maps, and bus schedules. But when we want to brainstorm, develop new ideas or work with information, that's where the strength of LLMs lies.

Current versions (as of 2024) can also struggle with math problems. This can be confusing as they handle basic arithmetic well—that's because they've seen a lot of simple math problems during their training. Again, this isn't necessarily a problem, but something to keep in mind. We can use calculators, spreadsheets, and special features in some AI apps (like the "analysis" tool in ChatGPT). LLMs are also great for explaining how to calculate something or to write a formula for a spreadsheet.

The last significant limitation of LLMs is the so-called "context window." These models use a lot of computing power to generate responses, meaning they can only handle a limited amount of conversation at once. If the total number of tokens (pieces of text—words or syllables, depending on a language) goes over this limit, the model starts to "forget" or ignore earlier parts of the conversation. So, it's important to keep the context window in mind when having long conversations or giving the model a lot of information or instructions.

Context windows range from several thousand tokens in the free versions to several hundred thousand tokens in the latest models. That's why you sometimes see 100k or 200 next to the model name. The upper limit is increasing almost every month, as are the technologies that can "bypass" or supplement this limit—and with it, the practical application of what we can do with these tools.

Other Tips and Tricks for Working with AI

- Assign AI specific roles: Tell it to act as a "world-class coach," an "entrepreneur," or any other persona relevant to your task.
- Experiment with formats: Ask AI to present information in tables, mind maps, or bullet points.
- Explore different styles: Request outputs in the style of a particular writer ("rewrite the text in the style of Tim Ferriss") or artist ("edit this graphic in the style of Basquiat"), but be careful to use the outputs correctly and with respect for copyright.
- Let AI take the lead: Don't be afraid to let AI generate prompts or ask you for additional information to complete a task.
- Leverage proven methods: Incorporate established frameworks or protocols and have the task completed accordingly. When I wanted to enhance the exercises for our workshops, I used a protocol³ by Dr. Andrew Huberman on neuroplasticity (that is, our brain's ability to adapt) and instructed the AI to adjust the exercises based on it.
- Provide different sources of knowledge: When a client and I were going over how to improve the scripts for a new TV show, we used the list of famous storytelling rules they use at Pixar studios. I worked in a similar way when I wanted to produce a preview of this book for Kindle. I uploaded an existing book into ChatGPT and had the output formatted based on it.
- Embrace advanced techniques: Once you get comfortable, try some fancier prompting techniques such as *additive prompting* and *chain-of-thought prompting* for even better results.
- Utilize prompt management tools: Make use of tools⁴ for prompt management or consider buying⁵ a prompt or two.

Working with AI often involves blending these approaches. When I wanted to create the cover design for this book—which, by the way, is the only thing 100% generated by AI here—ChatGPT provided the foundation for the prompts. I asked, "How would a ten-year-old draw a picture of [chapter name]" for each chapter. Then I purchased some prompts that created graphics based on my favorite art styles and inserted the previously created descriptions. After just one afternoon of this creative experimentation, I had a handful of fantastic design options to choose from.

More Than Just a Text

One of the most significant leaps in the use of AI was giving it access to the internet and the ability to connect to the "outside world." Another was the introduction of the *analysis* feature, which suggests the direction AI might take in the future. This feature was initially named Code Interpreter, which was slightly confusing for many users as it led them to believe this was a feature connected with programming. It's actually the opposite: Although this feature does coding, it's only so you don't have to. You could say it's more like having AI teamed up with a qualified programmer and a data analyst.

If you want to use this feature, start your prompt with "use code interpreter" or "use analysis." This will trigger ChatGPT to generate code that can help you to analyze data, perform calculations, and create macros or scripts for various purposes:

- **Create an analysis** – I fed it the finalized manuscript of this book and had it find errors and convoluted sentences.
- **Create a visualization** – I uploaded the AImpact survey data, and it created some easy-to-understand graphs and put them into a report.
- **Create web pages, an e-book, or any other digital formats** – I asked if it could make an electronic version of this book for Kindle. Then, all I had to do was upload another one of my books, and it formatted it in the exact same way.
- **Create macros or scripts** – To streamline the process of creating presentations, I created a prompt that takes any content, turns it into bullet points and then converts it into a script that generates slides directly in PowerPoint or Keynote.

To get the most out of this feature, I would recommend approaching the work in one of two ways:

1. Write a simple assignment and hope that AI will understand it and perform the tasks accordingly. (*"Review and interpret the data. Create visual representations. Conduct detailed statistical analysis. Explain the implications and findings."*)
2. Write a detailed step-by-step assignment. This way is usually more functional, but it requires more time and gradual debugging.

(Think of it as a detailed checklist outlining everything the AI needs to accomplish. It's like explaining your process to someone, step-by-step, showing them exactly how you get things done.)

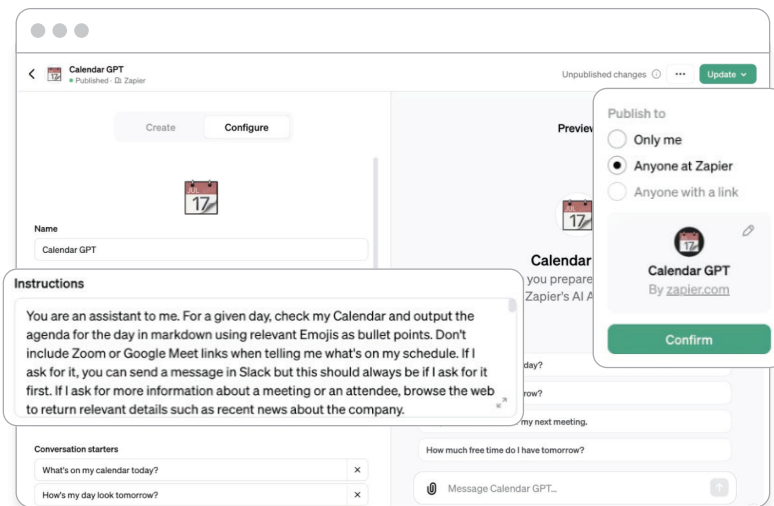
The best way to use this feature is to talk to the AI like you would talk to a real person. Sometimes you might need to give it a little push in the right direction or correct a small mistake, but most of the time you can just sit back and watch it work. It's still a good idea to double-check the results to make sure they make sense. That's why it's important to learn the basics of whatever field you're working in, whether you're trying to understand financial reports or write code.

The Rise of Agents

One of the things that changed the way AI tools were used was the advent of bots. Developers have been working on them for a while, but they only became widely usable for the masses when OpenAI released their "GPTs" and Poe.com offered the possibility of building your own "bot".

I use them quite often because they combine preset instructions (what you want them to do), additional knowledge (including your own data), and various skill sets (thanks to their connection to other tools). I believe they bring us one step closer to the once futuristic sounding concept of "AI employees" also known as *agents*.

The good news is that you can easily build your own bot. No coding is required. You can make them for yourself, just for your company's internal use, or for everyone (for free or as part of your side hustle). Creating one is as easy as starting a conversation, giving it instructions and extra knowledge and deciding what it can and can't do, like searching the web, making images, or analyzing data.

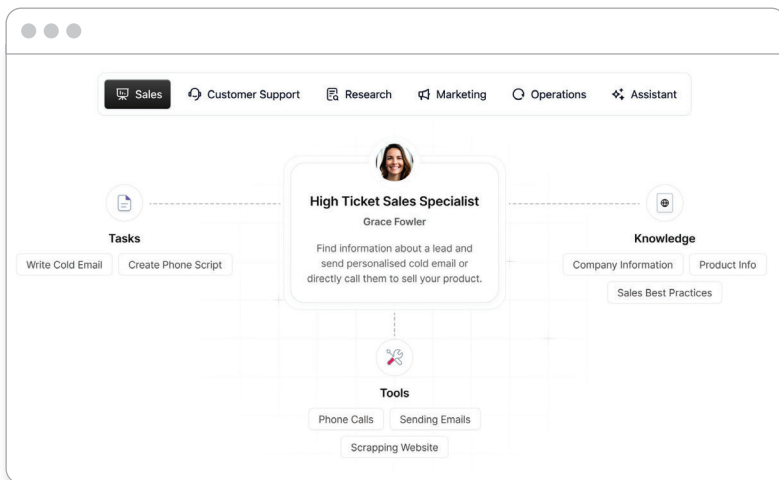


Here's an example of a custom bot⁶ created by Zapier. As you can see, you can design it by providing instructions similar to how you would instruct a real assistant.

Today we have hundreds of thousands⁷ of these bots, some of which work more like co-pilots. They are prepared and ready to execute any tasks you give them. However, we're seeing a rapid rise in autonomous agents. They are low-code so you can build them without any programming knowledge. As a result, their numbers are growing exponentially.

When someone on the social network X mentioned⁸ he was surprised there wasn't an agent with its own email address and account in an internal chat (like Slack or Teams), that would be capable of working with internal documents, it only took a few days for Flo Crivello, the founder of the Lindy platform⁹, to demonstrate how easy it would be to build. In just a few minutes, he created an AI agent with its own email, connected it to Slack, and enabled it to answer questions about their employee handbook and generate custom documents on demand.

Many of the platforms¹⁰ offering agents go even further with marketplaces of ready-made agents giving their agents the ability to work on autopilot and expanding their capabilities with integrations¹¹ to thousands of existing tools.



Here's an example of an agent created on the NexusGPT platform. It is designed to perform specific tasks using specific tools connected to a specific knowledge base.

Here are some examples of time-saving co-pilots and agents that almost anyone could find useful:

- **Email Assistant:**

One of the most useful tools I have. I can just tell it a few thoughts and it turns them into a professional email that is indistinguishable from something I would have written myself.

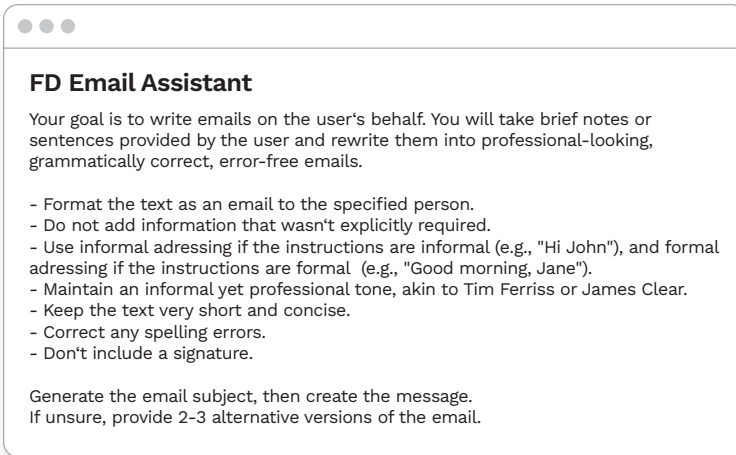
- **Language Consultant:**

Another invaluable tool is my book-writing assistant that provides feedback on my text, suggests alternative phrasing, and helps me select the best options when I'm unsure about certain passages.

- **Task Creator:**

Finally, I have a task creator that makes assignments for my colleagues. I can just dictate what needs to be done or upload a screenshot with a comment, and it creates a clear, detailed assignment that's ready to be handed off.

Keep in mind that even the most well-designed agents will require your input and adjustments to work efficiently. You'll only discover their weaknesses and blind spots when you start using them, and then you'll have to fine-tune them to fix those problems. And I'll be honest, this process can be annoying sometimes because you'll have to keep going back and forth between the results you're getting and your prompt setup until you're happy with the outputs you're getting.



Together with about 10 examples of my previously written messages, these instructions will help my Email Assistant write emails in my style.

In the case of the email assistant, I discovered it sometimes added unrequested sentences. So I had to instruct it, "Do not add information that wasn't explicitly requested." When it was too wordy, I told it, "Keep the text very short and concise." And of course, I had to provide several examples of my own messages to give it a clear sense of my tone of voice. It took nearly two weeks to truly sound like me.

But don't let that discourage you. Although it might seem faster to do a task manually in the short term, investing time into refining your virtual coworkers will always pay off.

How I used AI when writing this book

People often ask me whether I wrote this book or if AI did it for me. Writing is a kind of No Work for me, so I didn't let AI write it. However, I used many tools that made the writing process much easier and faster: Perplexity and Hyperwrite AI Agent for research, Poe as my virtual co-editor, and ChatGPT as my analyst and go-to app for anything else. All these tools served as reliable partners for brainstorming, creative discussions, and minor text adjustments. I also used many other tools mentioned in this book: Notion for managing all aspects of the launch, Airtable for organizing everything, and of course, communication tools like Slack and Loom. All these tools now offer AI features, which made my work significantly easier.

Thank you!

How to Work Safely with AI

Mastering digital tools isn't just about knowing which buttons to push. It's equally important to use them safely and in a way that doesn't put you or your company at risk. Or as my dad constantly reminds me: work safely to thrive—only then will success arrive.

The moment AI hit the scene, some companies started banning it. It's no wonder—the use of AI brings a number of situations that nobody was completely prepared for. So now we're faced with tough questions that need answers fast, whether we're ready or not:

- **Does the output have to be 100% error-free?**

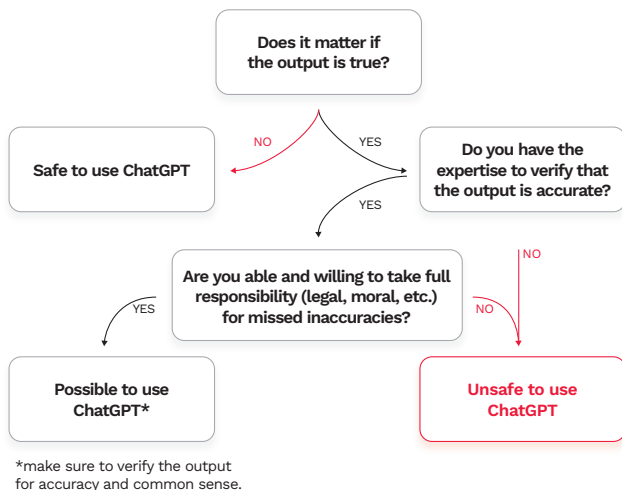
In a social network status, a minor mistake is forgivable, but in a tender for a government contract, it can cost you millions. When you want to be sure of the facts in your content, you should always check the output.

- **Do you have the expertise and capacity needed to check all of your outputs?**

If you're going to be AI-generating outputs en masse, will you be checking each one, or not? If not, you should state these outputs were created using AI.

- **Are you ready to fully own the legal, moral, and public-image consequences of AI-generated outputs?**

In some countries, users bear the responsibility for their AI-generated content. Meanwhile, other nations are drafting new laws that may even impose criminal penalties for AI misuse. Are you ready for this?



Aleksandr Tiulkanov's flowchart¹² for deciding whether it's safe to use ChatGPT for your task.

All people working with AI tools should know the limits, risks, and threats connected with them—and not only those that come directly from using them. It is important to have a broader overview of their possibilities so you can be prepared for what's coming next.

Imagine the following nightmare scenarios:

- Your AI-generated texts contain falsehoods that result in lawsuits
- A copy of your company's AI avatar appears in a violent video
- You enter sensitive information into an AI app and it leaks to a competitor
- You use AI to write a program, and it contains a security hole

- Someone reaches out to tell you your AI-generated content has committed a copyright infringement

In order to assist our clients in preventing such problems, we put together an "AI Policy" template listing topics that everyone should think about when using AI. As a foundation, we used the AI rules for education set out by Ethan Mollick, a renowned advocate for AI adoption and the author of *Co-intelligence*.

AI POLICY (part of our rules for the safe use of AI)

Minimum effort = poor quality results

Working with AI is a skill like any other, so it takes time and there is a learning curve.

Don't just trust the results you get

If you need accurate and true information, assume the outputs may not be completely accurate and that you need to verify them.

Accept responsibility

You are responsible for your AI outputs. Consider personally checking them, especially if they will be released to the public.

Be careful with sensitive data

Approach AI as you would any cloud-based application: don't mindlessly input sensitive information such as names, contacts, company results, etc.

Think before using these tools

Use them where they can save you time. Avoid them when human output is of greater value, for example a personal letter, a video message, etc.

Some experts have objected that this subject is far more complex and needs handling at the whole-company level, but you could say the same about everything. Yet it's still crucial to raise awareness at every level, regardless of the rules from management.

I believe in ownership and personal responsibility for our own work. Today you can influence far more than this. If you feel the topic of AI isn't being addressed at your company or in your family, take the initiative, propose a meeting, and go over it. It's the least you can do, and it can make a real difference.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. To properly get the most out of AI, you first need to understand when to use it and when not to, just like making the right decision about which tool to use for which purpose. Success comes from learning to use it strategically through a combination of prompting skills, expert knowledge in your field, and responsible oversight.
2. The "AAAI" framework helps determine when and how to use AI:
 - Author—Tasks that require our direct personal involvement.
 - Authorization—Tasks initiated by AI that we need to review or adjust.
 - AI—Tasks fully managed and executed by AI without our intervention.
3. "Prompt engineering" or "prompt crafting" is a crucial skill for effectively using AI tools. Effective prompting techniques include learning how to provide clear instructions and context, providing examples, and experimenting playfully to get the best results. Using prompt management tools and buying prompts can also help.
4. Custom AI bots and agents can be easily purchased or created to automate workflows with no-code platforms enabling even non-programmers to build them. Providers like Microsoft and Google make it possible for employees from large companies to design and operate such bots within their corporate environments.
5. Using AI tools responsibly requires carefully considering accuracy, the capacity for human review, legal implications, data security and more. Having an "AI Policy" and discussing the rules for the safe use of AI helps to navigate around these issues.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Learn how to properly prompt through practice. Review some of the resources mentioned in this chapter, try different combinations of the approaches and don't get discouraged if a prompt doesn't work for you immediately. Consider using AI to help you get better at how to instruct AI.
2. Reflect on the activities you do today and those you'll do in the future. Put these activities in the context of the AAAI concept: What will you do? What will AI do that you'll have to control? What will you leave entirely to AI?
3. Have a conversation with your team and loved ones about the risks associated with AI and the rules for using AI tools properly and safely.

11. Take the Lead



When I ask my clients about their role models for becoming successful digital leaders, they often name people like Steve Jobs or Elon Musk, or brands like Apple or Tesla. I always follow up by asking why they choose these particular people and companies, but I know what their answers are likely going to be: They have a vision, they innovate, they are laser focused on their customers, they inspire others, and they dare to do things differently.

Here's the thing, all of these traits are timeless, but completely independent of digitalization. If you want to become a successful leader in the digital age, you don't have to aspire to invent the next iPhone or found the most disruptive company of the year. I was reminded of this again when I worked with Sona Schwarzova, the HR Director at CME Media, where we joined forces to kickstart the adoption of AI across TV stations in Europe.

Sona is an exceptional HR professional, but technology wasn't really her thing. That's why I asked her to first attend my Digital Leadership Masterclass so she could experience our way of working directly. It was great to see how her excitement from these sessions transformed her into a driving force for digital activities across the company. At the core of this change was a fundamental shift in her mindset along with the understanding that the digital skillset is far more important than the digital toolset.



The digital skillset is more important than the digital toolset.



To spread this new mindset throughout the rest of the company, we decided to present the possibilities of AI at a conference for the leadership teams of all TV stations from this media group. Then we visited all the branches, hosting workshops for their managers and top talent, and encouraging them to actively engage in further self-development. We launched an initiative for digital skills education and introduced a program for digital ambassadors. With their support, the individual departments began formulating their digital visions.

Making initiatives like this work is no fluke and doesn't happen by accident, especially in a big international company. It requires more than just ambition and a desire to change the status quo. Like Sona, you must have the ability to implement these changes company-wide. This is yet another example that demonstrates how leadership skills are often more important than tech expertise.

The same applies even if you don't hold a management position. After all, we're all leaders whether we're leading a team or just ourselves (which can often be far more challenging). When your business card bears the title "manager," the expectation is clear—you must learn to be an effective leader in the digital world. This should be your goal, even if you are only managing yourself. Once others start seeing you as a leader in your field, demand for your work increases, and so does your value.

This chapter isn't just for people who are leading or in charge of other people. Not at all. You'll learn how to improve things even when it might seem impossible for someone in your position, because AI levels the playing field. Often with just a few days' worth of experimentation, it lets you do what others studied for years. It's one more reason to approach things differently—to have the courage to take control of your life and dive into things you always believed were out of reach.

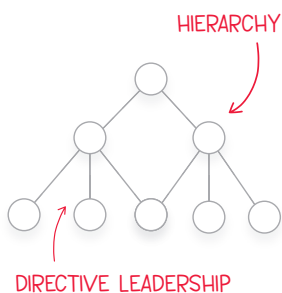
Whether we call it having authority, management, or leadership; it's a skill. And just like any skill, you can consciously work on getting better at it.

New Roles for Leaders

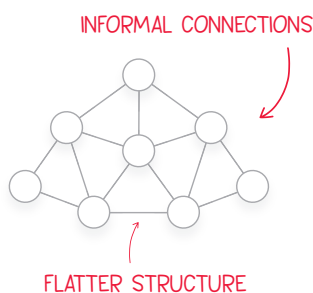
As we enter the age of AI, the most valuable leaders are those who can excel across multiple domains, such as a sales manager with an awareness of marketing and customer support, an HR officer with business management experience, or a consultant who has been successful in several roles in several different companies.

People like this know how to connect different worlds and bring the best strategies from each into day-to-day practice, especially if they understand how technology works and how to use it to improve their digital systems. However, while knowledge is the basic prerequisite for success, it's not the most important thing. This is because the role of leaders is evolving. While yesterday's managers focused on managing others, today's leaders far more frequently are expected to design, create, develop, and build.

Organizations Before



Organizations Today



To succeed in these new roles, you also need new skills—the kind that enable us to create a system that works on our behalf, to collaborate with digital talent, and to get people excited about our digital vision.

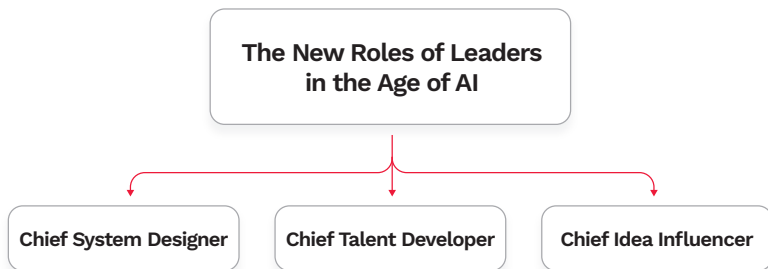
When I first shared my concept of No Work with others, I was asked how it would benefit team managers. For employees, the advantages are pretty obvious: They get to work on what they enjoy, and technology handles part of their current work for them. But what about their bosses? What's in it for them? After some thought, I realized the principles of No Work are

just as applicable to team managers as they are to their employees. In today's data-driven world, a big part of a manager's job is analyzing data and using it to make smart decisions. With the No Work mindset, managers can use technology to streamline all those data-related tasks, which frees up their time and energy so they can focus on the bigger picture stuff like strategy and leadership.

Ultimately, shouldn't achieving No Work be a primary goal for every leader? When you create a space where people can dive more fully into work that they actually like and where their talents can really shine, you end up with a team that's more engaged and gets things done. It's a win-win for everyone involved.

This approach also has other benefits: You'll draw the best people to your team. And moreover, as a leader, you will enjoy your work more too. Although it won't always be a bed of roses, it should still be a goal you strive for as a leader.

As leaders, we need to learn how to fulfill three key roles:



1. Chief System Designer – Creating and improving systems
2. Chief Talent Developer – Attracting and developing talent
3. Chief Idea Influencer – Communicating ideas and visions

1. CHIEF SYSTEM DESIGNER: CREATING AND IMPROVING SYSTEMS

Imagine having to take a month off work. What would happen? Nothing? Congratulations! It seems you've managed to set up a truly well-functioning system. Some companies even deliberately send their employees on extended vacations to see whether there's order and structure within their work. One of your top priorities should be to create systems that operate without your constant involvement, thus freeing your mind and hands from tasks that can be automated.

This is precisely how I manage my own projects. If I keep getting asked the same question over and over, it's clear I don't have my team's second brain¹ set up properly. If people are constantly having to copy information from one system to another, we need to put more effort into automation.

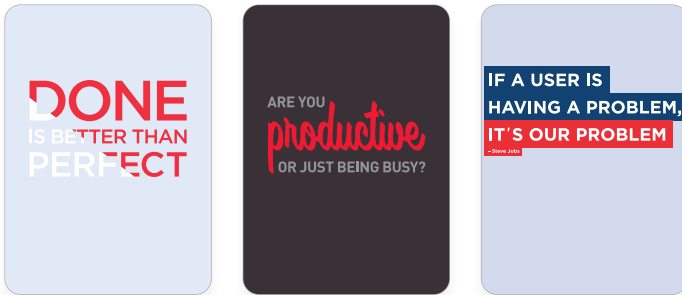
Once you begin to perceive your work as a system, you'll find yourself working *on* your work, rather than merely being consumed *by* your work. In other words, you'll shift your focus to developing long-term, systematic solutions rather than simply completing the next task on your to-do list. As a result, you'll discover issues that need to be fine-tuned, either by humans or smart apps.

Principles

The secret to building a system that really works lies in its guiding principles. If the principles make sense, and you're able to communicate them with clarity and simplicity, people around you will naturally embrace them and even start living by them without even realizing it.

These principles can relate to work style, communication, or any other standards you consider important. And you don't even have to follow them word-for-word. For example, one of my clients repeatedly told his people that in their new mobile app that no action should take more than three clicks. Of course in the end, some actions took more than that, but this simple principle made it clear where the team should be heading.

In our offices, we keep our guiding principles on posters² so they're always on our minds. When my coworker mentions she's still wrapping up a new project, I send her the picture of the poster that says, "Done is better than perfect." And when someone's getting stressed because a client didn't understand something, I point to the one that states, "Our clients' problems are our problems."



Talk about your guiding principles with your team regularly, and refer to them when dealing with situations that come up at work. Aim for principles that are simple, memorable, and maybe even catchy—I like ones that rhyme. If you bring them up so often that your coworkers start teasing you about them, you've succeeded. They'll never forget them.

What principles are incorporated into our projects?

- Since I wanted to support openness, I introduced the principle of *BHF—Brutally Honest Feedback*.
- When our team started asking for faster responses from managers on chat, we introduced the "24/48 rule." Everyone has to answer within 24 hours. If they read a message but don't answer within 48 hours, the person who asked the question can do whatever they need to do to move forward.
- To avoid wasting time and energy on pointless projects, we follow the principle of *sell first, build later*.
- We also often go back to the principles of agile work, such as *maximizing the amount of work not done*.
- The UK government has established design principles to ensure that its public services are user-friendly, accessible and effective. When

one of our clients wanted their employees to create simpler services, we took inspiration from an older principle that required *"every new service to be tested from start to finish with the government minister in charge before it could be launched."* This practice prevents services with poor user experiences from being released. Although this rule is no longer part of their design principles³, they are still worth exploring for inspiration.

The Way It Works

Our clients frequently seek advice on how to better use the office apps that are the heart of their digital system. I always tell them it's not about the tools. What's important is doing regular digital housekeeping and establishing clear team agreements that outline how to use these tools properly. It's the leader's responsibility to ensure this happens.

Leaders are also responsible for the well-being of the people in their teams. If everybody's busy from morning until evening and then dealing with emails at night on top of that, it's a clear sign of a poorly designed system.

However, it doesn't have to be the team manager who initiates these discussions. In fact, this is a perfect opportunity for any team member to take the lead and encourage the team to make these topics a priority.

So, what do you do? It's important to lead by example and to be willing to try new things and suggest changes. I sometimes call myself the "Chief Challenge Officer" because I'm always pushing my team to think differently. I ask them if we could simplify this or automate that, or if we really need to be doing things the way we are. It doesn't matter what their answer is as long as I know that they're thinking about it.

If that is not enough, and your people still keep working the same old way, you have to take things a step further. If you're leading a team in the formal position of manager, you have a trump card in hand: targets. The targets that you give your people should be designed to support activities that will lead to a fine-tuned system of work. This can be particularly

useful when the people around you are resistant to innovation, and you need to persuade them to change their mindset.

These targets shouldn't be about team members' performance only, but also *how they work*, *how they experiment*, and *how they improve*. For example:

- Share with colleagues at least 3 prompts you used each week.
- Fine-tune at least 1 process in office apps each month.
- Experiment with at least 3 AI tools each quarter.
- Automate at least 6 workflows each year.
- Replace 2 in-person meetings each week with asynchronous online meetings instead.

The numbers themselves aren't important. The point is to get people working on these tasks and encourage them to share their progress and what they're learning along the way. This will help them discover and implement innovations faster, and your digital systems will just keep getting better and better.

However, that doesn't mean you should fine-tune the system to precisely fit *your* ideas. The more authority you give your team, the better the system will work for everyone.

Decision-Making in the Age of AI

When people boast that "at our company almost everything is automated," one of my colleagues likes to ask, "Then why are people still coming in to work?" I actually took his joke seriously and thought: How can I make my projects run 100% without me? It's not that I want to stop working completely. I love my job, and you might feel the same way. Still, we should try to eliminate as many things as we *can* to gain the time and mental energy to do the things we *want*, or *never seem to have time for*.

That's why we should also zero in on the decision-making process—one of the most important parts of our work. By setting it up well, we can boost our team's productivity in three critical areas: We speed up our

work, reduce unnecessary communication and help people focus on the right things.

One principle at Amazon is *rapid decision-making along with a focus on action instead of constant analysis*. Action is not only the best source of information, but also the best way to find out what will and won't work. Fortunately, the vast majority of decisions are reversible, and yet people spend countless hours debating them. In reality the faster you decide, the faster you'll learn whether or not your decision was right. This is another reason why experiments and prototyping should become an integral part of your team's routine.

Likewise, we should all shed pointless communication around decisions, which is often incredibly paralyzing. Every message where people needlessly seek approval or a decision burdens you and increases the whole system's complexity. Meanwhile, your goal is exactly the opposite: simplification and automation.

Naturally, the basic prerequisite is having trust in your people. Mutual trust will only grow when you explain to your team the context and reasoning behind your decisions. This will help them learn to make similar decisions, and your team leaders will have to make fewer and fewer decisions themselves."

Another effective strategy is to make "macro" decisions based on the principle of *replacing dozens of small decisions with one big decision*. A macro decision might be about the discounts salespeople can offer customers without contacting their superiors, or deciding in which cases you'll meet with clients in person, and when you'll choose a video call instead. Any of these decisions will save you a lot of energy and needless discussions in the future⁴.



Replace dozens of smaller decisions with one big one.



Decide...But Stay Safe

The ability to make decisions that don't put you and your organization at risk in relation to the law, ethics, or your reputation is yet another essential skill for the AI age.

There's an AI expert named Jan Tyl who created a digital twin of the famous Czech president Václav Havel back in 2021. This "Digi Havel" is the first digital character ever used in Czech schools for civics classes. But Tyl had to answer a bunch of questions that he hadn't anticipated at the beginning of the project: How should Digi Havel respond to questions about the real Havel's love life? What should the creators' stance be towards the fact that Digi Havel sometimes makes things up? How can they teach it to say "I don't know?"

You can handle questions like these with the help of our "AAAI" concept. That is a good way to decide which tasks you'll have people do, which you'll just authorize the outputs, and when AI will do the whole job. Eventually, everyone who plans to use AI will have to deal with similar issues and make decisions accordingly.

Making the right decisions will still be our most important job as humans. And maybe because of this we'll be able to evolve from information and knowledge workers into something new: wisdom workers.

2. CHIEF TALENT DEVELOPER: ATTRACTING AND DEVELOPING TALENT

One of my clients mentioned he was looking for a "world-class logistics expert." He was thinking of someone who understands logistics, but who also keeps up with trends and can work on groundbreaking innovative projects. My immediate thought was: Every manager should have this same ambition, and not just managers. If you're going to work with someone on any project, you should try to find someone who has a digital mindset and can really get the most out of technology. Being able to find people like that, partner with them, and develop new skills for all the people in your team is essential for a company's success.

Sadly, the reality in many teams is different. I know this firsthand because we were among the first to begin systematically measuring and evaluating digital skill levels. Many companies can't even assess the digital skills of their current employees, let alone new hires. Job descriptions still list basic stuff like "Word" or "Excel," or they don't mention any advanced digital skills at all. And since HR often doesn't offer any help, it's up to you.

First, think about what skills you need. These might be the skills discussed in this book—both soft skills like creativity and the ability to create a system, and technical skills like experience with low-code platforms, automation, or AI. Then try to describe what you expect from this kind of person, and what exactly they'll be responsible for. Don't beat around the bush here; present all activities clearly and comprehensively. Here's a quick tip: Try pasting your current job description into AI and ask it to rewrite it so a 9th grader could understand it.

Decide whether you're seeking someone with IT skills and an overlap into business, or with business skills and an overlap into IT. That's a fundamental difference because while these areas do overlap, in terms of the character you're seeking they are completely different people.

If you want someone who will help your team with adopting office apps like Microsoft 365 and you let the IT department have a say in it, your ad might end up having phrases like "knowledge of programming in .NET" or "information systems analysis." However, what you really need is someone who can come up with ideas on how to fine-tune your workflow and then communicate them in a human-friendly way.

Want to collaborate on our project?

We are looking for people who want to collaborate on our new project
- the global launch of the book *The Future of No Work*.

SUPERSPEED

I want things to happen in days, not weeks. This will require three things - focus, effort & automation. Let's work on the most important tasks first, especially those that will enable us to do everything faster.

10×

Always think about how to make 10× more impact. Looking for publishers worldwide? Use Upwork or Fiverr, find virtual assistants and have them work 48-72 hours to deliver the results. Want to contact selected publishers? Use personalized automation on both LinkedIn and email.

END-TO-END RESPONSIBILITY

I want to work with people that will take ownership for particular projects and will be responsible for micro-projects from A to Z. The most important thing is to get things done.

This is the actual content from our job ad. I didn't care if people wanted to get hired or participate as temps or freelancers. I just wanted to work with the best people who are attracted to my way of working.

In light of the low-code tool boom, if you're not primarily seeking IT experts you'll need people who are business-oriented (whether in HR, sales, or finance), those who can quickly adapt to working with any software they choose. The ideal candidate possesses a combination of entrepreneurial thinking (independence and the ability to get things done) and systematic thinking (creating and improving a system).

How do you find people like these? Everybody's beating down their door, so your offer has to truly wow them. It all starts with a great product, that is to say the job itself. Talented people don't just care about money—they can find that anywhere. They want to work at interesting companies on interesting projects with interesting people.

The strategy at my companies is to offer maximum freedom. Inspired by companies like Buffer⁵ and Hubspot⁶, we provide unlimited vacations, and everyone can work from anywhere. We also played around with the idea of a four-day workweek, but then we realized we don't really have to worry about that. When the weather's good and people want to choose sports over spreadsheets, that's their choice. I think this freedom is our strongest employee value proposition⁷.

Micro CEO Wanted

Director of a small digital project

Difficulty/Workload
Entirely up to you.

Location
Work from anywhere.

Requirements
A passion for digitalization.

Community Manager

Do you love digital innovations?
Are you a super communicator?
Do you enjoy organizing events?

Requirements	Benefits
Education: WE DON'T CARE	Working hours: FLEXIBLE
Gender or age: WE DON'T CARE	Place of work: ANYWHERE
Enthusiasm: 100%	Vacation: UNLIMITED

A few of our hiring ads. We've had great success in creating job positions with attractive titles and compelling responsibilities.

Besides the actual job description, we make sure to promote our vision and not just in our job postings and ads. A lot of people reach out to us because they follow me on social media, listen to my podcasts, or see me at conferences and they are familiar with my work as a result.

Don't hesitate to enhance your job postings with a link to an interview featuring you or your coworkers. Alternatively, go and create that video just for this purpose. It's yet another way to stand out from the crowd.

In short, to work with the best you have to offer the best story.

It's not just about jobs

Today's market offers many ways to collaborate beyond full-time roles, this includes remote work, the gig economy, part-time projects, you name it. During the global launch of this book, we created a website (it was just a simple page in Notion, of course) where we listed initiatives such as "collect reader testimonials," "build affiliate program," and "close influencer partnerships." We then invited capable people from our network to take charge of these mini-projects from start to finish.

Thanks to the system we built, it was easy for people to jump in, take responsibility for each project and begin working on it immediately. Everyone worked remotely, allowing us to collaborate with many people simultaneously and make the most of this opportunity without any additional paperwork or the need to hire full-time employees.

The Digital Fit

A person's compatibility with a company's values, behavior and culture is called their *culture fit*. However, their *digital fit* is becoming increasingly important as well. This means having the right tech skills for the job, being able to quickly learn the company's software and adapt to its systems.

When you're starting up cooperation with new people, I recommend asking:

- What apps have they used, and how did they tweak their workflow in them?
- What digital projects have they worked on?
- How are they educating themselves? Who are they following on social media?
- What are their ideas for innovations?
- Have they ever helped to deploy a new app, and what would they do differently next time?

Don't forget to discuss their preferences regarding the systems you work with. If you offer an Apple-lover an outdated Windows laptop, they won't be happy about it. Likewise, you might find a great innovator, but when you place them in a bureaucratic SAP environment where they need ten approvals to make a decision, they'll probably quit in a few weeks. It's not that one way is better than another. It's just important to work with people who are comfortable with the game you play.

When evaluating potential colleagues, it's important to spot the difference between the ability to simply use systems vs. the ability to actually create them. If someone has only worked for large companies in countries with a more conservative business culture, it's kind of a red flag for me. I know I might miss out on some promising candidates, but I've seen it too many times: Those people are often afraid to take risks, and they don't know how to make their own way. On the other hand, if somebody has a side project, volunteers for a non-profit, or manages a sports team in their spare time, they'll inevitably know how to work without having everything planned in advance for them. People like this also understand how to get by with limited finances, tools and capacities, and as a result they can demonstrate far more creativity. So instead of asking about their fancy degrees, I want to hear about the projects they've poured their heart into.

Finding Mr. or Mrs. Right

Whether you're looking for digital talents for your team or you're a freelancer thinking about hiring a virtual assistant, you can draw inspiration from the approach I recently adopted when I needed to replace one of my colleagues. In my job posting, I included all the things I talked about before: a catchy job title and a detailed description of the work, plus a description of how we do things as a team.

I also asked candidates to tackle the following tasks:

1. **How would you handle this situation?** I described a problem we had in the past that involved talking to the customer and tweaking our systems.
2. **How would you get me into a podcast?** I wanted to see if they were creative, persuasive and effective communicators as these are essential skills for me.

3. **How would you configure our system?** I asked them to think about how they would organize teamwork on a project without telling them what tools or apps to use.
4. **How would you develop this new project?** I was curious to see what kind of improvements they'd suggest for one of our new projects. I also wanted to see if they'd go the extra mile, like putting together a nice presentation or talking to a potential client.

I added a few guidelines to the job posting:

- Keep it simple. No need to write a novel.
- I don't care about the technical details, I want to see how you think.
- There are no wrong answers. It's okay to say "I don't know."
- If you're not into working on these kinds of tasks, this isn't the right job for you.

The tasks were a great way to separate the serious candidates from the ones who were just taking a shot. A few people even thanked me for the chance to tackle some original challenges. Win-win.

Leading the Way in Developing People

I was reminded of our "world-class logistics expert" when I came across an invitation to a conference featuring a presentation titled "Distribution Strategies, Data Foundations, and Large Scale VRP." If you have no idea what that means, don't worry, neither did I. What matters is whether the people in logistics would understand it because they *should* know about innovations like these and their managers should be encouraging them to stay up-to-date. The ideal scenario is when people don't hesitate to approach you about their desire to attend relevant conferences or workshops. But that's not always how it works in the real world. That's another reason why it's your job to keep reminding people how important it is to learn and grow and to foster a culture of self-education in your team. And of course, to lead by example.

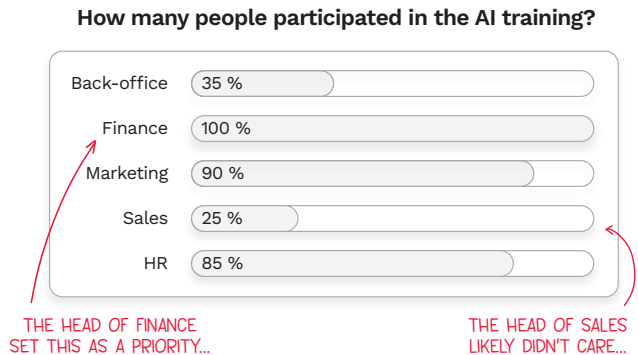
If I'm telling people that personal growth is important, I can't afford to fall behind. I need to know what's changing the game in my industry and

beyond. I should never be afraid to admit I don't understand something. Like the director of one pharmaceutical firm who sat right up front in one of our classes and asked tons of questions. He always warned us that a "dumb question" was coming. That made everyone feel more comfortable, and it also made people want to ask questions and get involved.

How to Support a Team's Development

In all our projects, I see the impact leaders have on a team's education and development. By "leaders" I don't mean "managers." Sometimes it only takes one enthusiast to get everyone else fired up. It's yet another reason why the leader's role in tech adoption is so important, regardless of their place in the pecking order.

As we'll explore in the next chapter, there are many ways to acquire new skills. However, your role as a leader is different. You need to constantly emphasize the importance of education and you need to design a system that provides space, time and resources for learning. Sometimes it takes very little: regular knowledge sharing (we call these sessions "Digital Ten Minutes" or the "Insightful Ten," when we spend the last ten minutes of every meeting sharing insights), helping team members learn from each other, or even organizing a group trip to a conference every now and then.



The results from a series of training sessions in one of our projects. Guess which leaders were really on board with it and which ones weren't.

I know, I know, you're busy. I get it. When you're drowning in a sea of tasks, emails and meetings, it's tough to find time for yourself. But here's the thing: As a creator you have the power to change that. Time isn't something you stumble upon, it's something you make happen. And it's easier than you think. How about you block out an hour in your calendar right now to chat with your coworkers about some of the ideas in this book?

One of my friends who's the driving force behind several successful ventures was never particularly tech-savvy. After I connected him with one of my consultants, he sent me a message that I've been sharing with all my clients ever since:

"I sat with Filip's consultant for about two hours, which saved me hundreds of hours of work. No exaggeration."

So once again—if you're feeling overwhelmed, that's one more reason to invest a few hours in yourself so that you can start breathing easier.

3. CHIEF IDEA INFLUENCER: COMMUNICATING IDEAS AND VISIONS

Communication has always been a critical skill in the workplace. With the amount of content being created today, it's now even more important. It's not just about the actual ability to sell an idea, write a good report, or create an understandable presentation. The real key is knowing how to find or create stories that resonate with others.

Stories are a universal medium through which we share our thoughts, emotions, and experiences. They're a part of everything we do. A good story convinces us to follow someone. It forces us to stop and think—or to swing into action and do something.

Even if you're holding the trump card of "I can do what I want because I'm the boss," it's still best to know how to sell your ideas, so that you never have to play that card.

The Stories We Tell Ourselves

Do you ever struggle with self-doubt? Or even feel like a fraud? You're not alone. These feelings, sometimes called *impostor syndrome*⁸, are experienced by two-thirds of all people, including the most successful ones. If you've never had the dubious pleasure of this feeling, it almost certainly awaits on your road to No Work. It could show up, for example, when you use something AI created for you, or when you start selling a service that makes you as much in a day as others make in a month.

You have to learn how to process these feelings so they don't end up holding you back. I realized this in my first job in customer service, which quickly taught me that when customers got angry, it wasn't about me at all. It's better to check your ego at the door, no matter what, especially if you see yourself as a leader.

The truth is, it's really not about you. When somebody's criticizing you, they're not rejecting you as a person, but your work and the story they have created about it. So don't be afraid, just keep on trying. Make a video for your team, organize a webinar, or try a new app. When something fails, don't turn it into a big deal. There's nothing older than yesterday's news. And this isn't even in the news!

Also, people are too busy thinking about themselves to obsess over you. So if you're feeling the urge to try something new, don't worry. Scratch that itch. Take these unpleasant but temporary feelings as the price for your development. You can even make a game of it: If you don't feel like a total fraud with undeserved success at least once a month, maybe you're not trying as hard as you should.

Support the people around you with this in mind—they're probably feeling the same way. From your coworker who just got back from paternity leave and is worried he can't keep up, to your daughter who doesn't think she's smart enough to make it into an Ivy League university. If you can see these as just stories in your head, then you can start shaping new stories. Ideally, far better ones.

Stories That Help You Spread Ideas

When you're buying an iPhone, a BMW, or tickets for a Bond movie, you generally know what you are going to get. Now ask yourself: What will people get from you?

When you order one of my presentations, I deliver a blast of inspiration, dozens of useful tips, and maybe even a few good jokes. All of that is part of my personal brand—and in the age of AI a personal brand is more important than before. Authenticity of character and originality of ideas and expression are things that many companies long suppressed but are now gaining in importance.

A personal brand isn't just for artists or celebrities anymore. Lots of companies have employees who are active on social media, and managers are looking for new people on those platforms, too. Freelancers are all over this. They use their personal brands to get higher rates. With a strong personal brand, nobody will reject your request for a meeting and doors will open.

At the same time, a good name is not just about your reputation or the quality of your work. It's also about the story you tell. I sought to build my story for years. First, I worked in marketing, then in innovations, then digitalization. The people I followed and admired each had their one big topic. I envied them for that. But I gradually realized that building a personal brand isn't something you do overnight, but through years of testing and exploration. There's a reason people say it takes several years to become an overnight success.



Filip Drimalka • 13:13

Hi there, I have an idea. :) I will soon be publishing a new book - The Future of No Work. This time I'm publishing it myself, but what if we teamed up to handle the print distribution? :)



• 19:13

Hello Filip, sure, we'll be happy to arrange that. :) If it goes through our channels, it would be exclusively in our e-shop and brick-and-mortar stores. If you're interested in wider distribution, I can point you in the right direction.

Building your brand opens doors. When I was writing this book, I merely had to reach out to a few people in the industry to arrange everything from publishing to distribution, despite never having met them in person. We only knew each other through my webinars and LinkedIn activities.

If you successfully get your story out to lots of people, you can scale your influence and the impact of your work. You can do this inside a company or outside if you're freelancing and want to reach more customers. One of my clients was promoted to a new role similar to that of a Chief Digital Officer. One of her first goals was to get people in her company to start thinking digitally. She told me about her agreement with the CEO. Who wanted to give her his full support. I realized this approach, which used to be pretty common, probably wouldn't be enough anymore. So we started talking about how to get her message out to as many people as possible, and we figured out that she could use the exact same tools as people who are marketing themselves as freelancers:

- When I as a freelancer want to reach more customers, I organize a webinar. Why couldn't she do internal webinars and invite people with a digital mindset as guests?
- When I want people to associate a topic with me, I write about it regularly on social media. Maybe she could do the same thing on the company's internal platforms.

- When I'm trying to get a topic out to potential clients, I send them a newsletter. She could start writing an internal newsletter with useful digital tips and stories of tech-savvy colleagues.
- When I've got an idea I want to spread and I'm looking for people to help me, I go to conferences and networking events. She could try being more active in her company's meetings, especially the online ones where she can reach more people.

The worlds of social media and internal communication are increasingly interconnected. If you're active on LinkedIn, it's fairly likely that a lot of your coworkers are following you along with people from other companies. So if you want to get your story out to everyone at your company, you should learn to tell it in both directions. Robert Iger, the longtime director of Disney, called⁹ this *management by press release*, "If I say something with great conviction to the outside world, it tends to resonate powerfully inside the company."

How to Scale Your Influence

Successful leaders inspire others. Either they lead by example or they share ideas that support their vision. I try to do both.

If I want others to see me as a digitalization leader, naturally I myself have to *be digital*. When I send a message out to a customer, I upload a short video and send it along with an AI summary of the main points (Loom can now do this perfectly). When I want to see AI being used more on my team, I try out the new tools myself. I want my coworkers to do the same. By doing this myself, I champion my vision and show I *am* digital. You can approach any topic connected with your story in a similar way.

You should also know how to speak about your topic in a compelling and captivating way that gets people excited. I personally get the most out of presentations I give at conferences and at our webinars, and of course through the content I create—especially on LinkedIn. All of this isn't something you can afford to skip on, and the only way to learn how to be great at it is through consistent, repeated practice.

Here's what has helped me to communicate better:

- **I've learned to write.** We all use text to communicate at a lot of important moments. A well-written email can convince your coworkers to get on board with a new project, a good comment can make you look like an expert in the eyes of others, and a good social media post can help you sell your services to tons of people. How do you learn to write well? Take a course. Read a lot. Write a lot. And don't forget to ask for feedback—it doesn't matter if you ask a human or AI.
- **I think of myself as a content curator**, someone who carefully curates and shares valuable information with others. I gather interesting social media posts, insightful articles and recommendations for useful apps. Then I share the best of these with my colleagues or customers.
- **I try to communicate visually** everywhere, including in presentations, emails and messages to my peers. I'm not afraid to use memes, screenshots of tweets and pictures of all kinds—in the world of social media, everything is allowed. Whenever I run into something that might be useful in the future (for my presentations, posts, or anything else), I save it right away.

02-27-2024 | TECH

Klarna says its AI assistant does the work of 700 people after it laid off 700 people

The Swedish fintech, which was criticized for its handling of a dramatic staff reduction in 2022, is touting new efficiencies powered by OpenAI.

A SCREENSHOT OF AN ARTICLE THAT SUPPORTS THE STORY I'M TALKING ABOUT...

A PREVIEW OF A TWEET THAT SUPPORTS A KEY MESSAGE IN MY PRESENTATION...



@Austen Allred
@Austen

Startups:

We can launch 90% of what you want next week.

We can launch 99% in six months.

Or we can launch 100%... never.

Visual snippets from the internet are frequent helpers in my presentations. Whenever I run into something interesting, I immediately take a screenshot and paste it into my digital notebook or directly into a presentation.

When it comes to presenting, I'm lucky enough to be naturally talkative. That doesn't mean I don't get nervous or make mistakes. But I have a solution for these issues: I deliver talks as often as I can. That's why early in my career I spoke at dozens of small conferences for free. Many times, I proactively approached the organizers, got up at five in the morning and traveled wherever was needed. Sometimes these talks were in half-empty halls with terrible equipment, but it was precisely this training that made me who I am today.

It also helped that I gave the same presentation over and over again—upwards of a hundred times, in fact. And no, that's not an exaggeration. Each time you present, you discover new ways to improve not just the presentation itself, but more importantly how you tell your story.

Here are some of my tips for delivering better presentations:

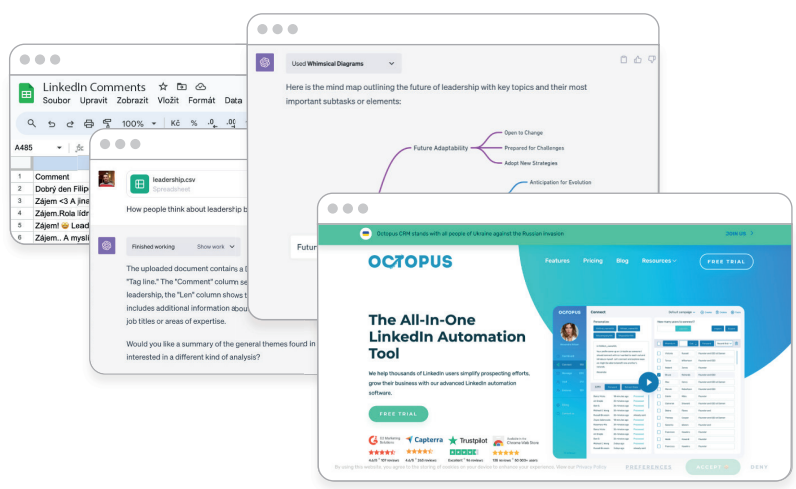
- Learn how to be a good public speaker. It's a skill that will help you everywhere, whether you're selling your services to clients, convincing the leaders of your company, or getting your neighbors to follow the rules. Plus, giving presentations gives you a chance to fine-tune your ideas based on how the audience reacts.
- If you're struggling with the structure or the visuals of your slides, consider using a template or a new smart tool¹⁰.
- Stories and vivid examples sell. If you want to sell an innovation, show a website of a similar service or share the story of a company that has already implemented a similar innovation.
- For online presentations and video calls with important customers, use the best camera and microphone you can. Video call quality is the new business suit, so make it count.
- Presentations don't always need to be delivered in real time. They can also take the form of brief video recordings¹¹ that you share with colleagues or clients.
- Stick to simple slides. Don't use too many points, and avoid never-ending paragraphs. Feel free to use just a title and follow it with anything that supports your message, be it a quote, a picture, or a tweet.

How to Scale Your Influence Even More

When I launched the new run of my Digital Leadership Masterclass program, I decided to host a webinar on "Leadership in the Age of AI." To promote this webinar, I made a LinkedIn post asking my followers to share their thoughts on how the role of leaders has changed with the advent of AI. More comments mean more people see the post, of course, but I was really interested in what people had to say. The response was incredible: I received over 500 comments. That's where some handy AI tools came in.

First, I used an automation app called Bardeen that helped me to gather all the comments into a spreadsheet and uploaded them to ChatGPT for analysis. I visualized the insights using the Whimsical tool with a single prompt, which created beautiful mind maps for my presentation. Then I used AI in Google Sheets to generate a personalized response to each comment. Using the Octopus tool, these messages were sent to the commenters, along with an invitation to join my masterclass. This entire process took less than 15 minutes and helped me to sell out the program.

This experience proved again that AI together with smart ideas can help make a much bigger impact than we ever thought possible.



Using another simple process, I analyzed over 500 LinkedIn comments and then reached out to each commenter with a personalized message.

Leadership Is Action, Not a Position

Once, when I was preparing for a project with IKEA, I took some time to research how the brand operates. I didn't care as much about the products as about the way their people worked and the principles this legendary company was built upon. I'm glad I did this because I found a statement within their leadership principles¹² that totally changed how I see leaders in companies: "*We see leadership as an action, not a position.*"

To this day I see this as the best definition because leadership truly is nothing more than the *actions* you take. It doesn't matter what position you're in or what authority it carries.

Digitalization brings a tremendous opportunity for everyone who wants to make a difference because it empowers people to take action without needing management's approval. We all can speak up at meetings and suggest better ways of doing things, such as leveraging AI to replace mundane tasks or focusing on delivering the highest-quality work (the kind of work that AI cannot replicate).

Every one of us can start working on new areas and creating new fields of expertise. Every one of us can stop by our parents and show them how to navigate the internet more safely. Every one of us can do... *a lot of things*.

A student of one of our classes for a national branch of GlaxoSmithKline decided to boost her coworkers' digital skills. She started running workshops and recommending study topics on her own to huge success. Dozens of people attended her workshops, and in less than a year they racked up over 10,000 views of our short educational videos. Not bad at all for a branch with only 120 employees.

For me, *this is leadership*. And that goes for this book as well. It's great that you're reading it. If it inspires you, that's even better. But the most important thing is what you do with that inspiration.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Leadership is about guiding others and being recognized for it. Building a personal brand regardless of your role helps spread your ideas both within your organization and beyond.
2. Leadership skills are often more important than tech expertise as we need to be able to drive change and overcome resistance from some team members. Leaders should lead by example and stay up-to-date on industry innovations while fostering a culture of continuous learning.
3. Leaders in the AI age need to excel in three key roles: Chief System Designer (creating and improving systems), Chief Talent Developer (attracting and developing talent), and Chief Idea Influencer (communicating ideas and visions).
4. Leaders can amplify their impact by engaging on internal communication channels, social media and delivering presentations. Instead of attempting everything, focus on selecting an area that ignites your passion or draws on your strengths. By striving for excellence in that domain, you'll have a greater impact.
5. Most of all, leadership is about action, not a position or title. Digitalization empowers people at all levels to take initiative and make a difference, often without needing approval from others.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Learn more about digital leaders you admire and consider their qualities, actions, and public perception. These can be well-known figures or people you know personally. Consider whether you possess these qualities and cultivate them.
2. A key role of leaders is to design systems, because these influence two other areas of growth: skill development and better communication. Identify the weaknesses in your systems and focus on fine-tuning them.
3. Focus on improving your communication skills, whether it's your presence on social media, communication within the team, or presentation skills. Ask for feedback from your clients, colleagues, friends and maybe even AI.

12. How to Learn (Almost) Anything

Bill Gates once aptly stated that most people overestimate what they can achieve in one year and underestimate what they can accomplish in ten years. I think that with the advancements in AI we can now divide these numbers by ten.



People overestimate what they can achieve with AI in a day, and underestimate what they can achieve with AI in a year.

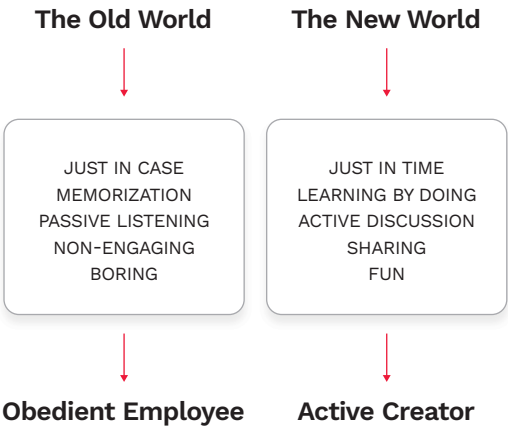
I've witnessed firsthand how many of us initially swelled with boundless enthusiasm for new smart tools only to quickly revert to our original habits. I can also clearly see why. Some of us just aren't happy with the results. Our systems are a mess, making it tough to bring AI into our workflows. It can also be tough to establish a new habit and stick with it.

If you dream about your future and you *really* want to make that future a reality, you'll quickly realize that you can achieve almost anything in a remarkably short timeframe. You can improve all your work processes, master any tool or method, and come up with solutions for nearly anything that is currently bothering you at work.

The rise of new smart tools is not only revolutionizing the way we work but also how we learn. Instead of going back to school and sitting in a classroom for months, people are realizing that it's much better to learn by doing. This includes being open to new ideas, starting new projects, sharing what they've learned with others and spreading knowledge.

These principles don't only apply to professional development. They're equally relevant in the education of our children. While many schools have yet to recognize this, we have numerous options to bridge this gap.

The most important skill is the ability for just-in-time learning; in other words, learning something *right when you need it*. Let's say you're organizing a meeting with a group of business partners. You can use an app to find the best dates and through a few rounds of trial and error then use AI to pull together a list of good venues and draft a reservation request. You'll save a bunch of time and be able to focus on more interesting stuff. This is called *learning in the flow of work*, and it's not just a regular skill: It's a superpower that everyone should master.



The challenge is that learning new things doesn't always come naturally. Doing what you enjoy is easy. You can immerse yourself in it for hours and hours, easily overcoming setbacks and inconveniences. When you fall in love with skiing, you look forward to hitting the slopes and it doesn't bother you early on if you fall again and again. However, when faced with learning something foreign and unfamiliar, it can become a genuine source of frustration. Luckily, I have three pieces of good news for you:

1. You've got amazing tools for it.
2. You're not alone.
3. Learning can actually be fun.

1. YOU'VE GOT AMAZING TOOLS FOR IT

Every year I pick one main topic for my personal development. One year it was change management. Another year it was presentation skills. Yet another year, I revisited my English and Spanish communication skills after a long pause. For this learning, I decided to use a number of tools:

- I practiced vocabulary every day in the Duolingo app.
- I used another app called Speak so I could have conversations on the go.
- I connected with a tutor via the Preply platform to improve my pronunciation.
- Another tutor watched my presentations and suggested improvements into a shared spreadsheet (which is the perfect example of asynchronous learning).
- When I sent out a video message in Loom, I read the transcription and considered what I could improve (just kidding, ChatGPT did that for me, of course).
- Grammarly suggested style changes when I was writing emails and other texts.
- When I was presenting, a tool named Poised gave me tips right on-screen, including alerts if I started speaking too swiftly or incoherently.

In addition to all of these specialized tools, there's a ton of information out there, but AI is the real game-changer. It can help with pretty much anything. It can point out your mistakes and explain things in detail, no matter if you're trying to improve sales or writing code.

This is already a great way to share knowledge within companies. Remember that automation I mentioned that summarizes any YouTube video shared in our team chat? Well, since we're big podcast fans, we also use tools¹ that can turn any article into a podcast or pull key insights from podcasts we like. But it gets even better. Imagine someone wants to show others how they use a digital tool. They can record a quick video and then use AI transcription or apps like Guidde to easily turn it into a professional-looking training video.

AI-Powered Education

All these innovations can be utilized for the education of both adults and children. Even though I personally believe that AI is the most revolutionary educational tool humanity has encountered, it also raises some serious questions. Some schools are banning it because they're worried about students cheating. I definitely understand that. If I were a student today, I'd be among the first to experiment using it to write essays and seminar papers. The real question isn't whether to allow AI or not, it's how we can use it to get kids excited about learning and to make it a valuable part of education so it fulfills its primary purpose of helping people think, formulate their thoughts and come up with new ideas.

Isn't that similar to what we should be striving for in our companies? The great thing about AI is that it makes education accessible to everyone. With a single prompt, you can summon a brilliant and impossibly patient mentor. Want to improve your communication skills? Just feed it your messages and ask for feedback. Need to come up with a learning activity for your team? Tell it your learning goals and how much time you have. Stuck on a coding problem? Paste your code in and it will show you a better way to do it. It provides all this without the need for expensive tutors and it is available 24/7.

How to use AI as a personal tutor and advisor
Using AI in school • Prepare exercises on the document attached. Create three tasks for students divided into groups where they will collaborate on finding solutions. Correct their answers and explain any shortcomings. • I am a seventh-grade student learning English. I love Harry Potter. Create 10 questions for me that will test my English skills. Each question will be a sentence with a grammatical error, and my task will be to find and correct the error. • You are a teacher who wants to explain the composition of the Earth's crust to me. Chat with me about it for a while. Then, based on this conversation, create a test to verify if I understood the topic and show me the correct answers.

Using AI at work

- As a renowned business coach, you're skilled in guiding entrepreneurs to find their own solutions through insightful questioning. I will describe my problem, and you'll ask follow-up questions, offer options to consider and advise me on the best solution. I won't provide direct answers; your role is to guide me through your thought process so I can discover the optimal solution myself.
- Transcribe this YouTube video. Create a table summarizing the key takeaways and provide a few real-life examples for each takeaway.
- You are an English language and business communication instructor. I will provide you with my emails, and you will offer feedback on any errors and suggest improvements to make them sound more professional and more like a native speaker.

2. YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Do you remember the saying, "Shared joy is a double joy, and shared sorrow is half a sorrow"? I would add, "Shared learning is twice the fun, and shared challenges are half the toil." That's why it's great there are lots of ways to grow your skills with people both inside and outside your company.

Let's take a look at a few of these skill boosting methods in greater detail:

Mentoring and coaching thrive both inside a company and through cross-company programs. Whether you're just starting out or are a seasoned veteran, I highly recommend finding a digital mentor or coach. Many freelance professionals use them too. You can also try *reverse mentoring* where a senior (in experience—not necessarily age) helps a junior develop management skills, while the junior repays them with tips on how to work better with tech. Some companies even set up a "shadow board of directors" made up of young people (even teenagers) to gain a new perspective on their products and the way they operate.

Knowledge sharing can happen in lots of different ways. You can include digital ten-minute sessions in your meetings to share digital tips and tricks. Or you can have regular meetings where team members

take turns training each other. Many of our clients are creating groups of digital ambassadors who help their coworkers with new technologies. Working with the ambassador community should be a priority for every company as this is one of the most efficient ways to get people excited about using new tech and drive tech adoption. Former Hewlett-Packard director Lew Platt captured this idea in a legendary quote:

"If HP knew what HP knows, it would be three times more profitable."

Cohort based learning is another tried-and-true method that we use in our development programs. It includes regular meetings, work on projects and knowledge sharing. Participants leave with shared motivation, new connections with other peers and valuable know-how. Unlike traditional online courses that are always available, cohort-based programs have a clear start and end, motivating people to actively participate. They can be opened to dozens or even hundreds of participants from various companies, as well as internal versions tailored for specific departments or teams.

Communities are more than mere platforms for swapping stories and establishing partnerships. They're a chance to present your work to people from other companies. In my mind, individuals who actively participate in communities are the embodiment of initiative and engagement. They have a larger network, can attract new talent to their company and can help to promote their employer's brand. If I had to choose between two candidates and one of them was an active member of a community, I wouldn't hesitate for a second.

If you're freelancing and don't have a team of people around you, communities and group programs are excellent ways to access desired know-how and connect with individuals who can help you. You can find a mentor, seek advice from others, or take the initiative to organize knowledge-sharing sessions on topics currently relevant to your career path.

Learning & development tips: nurturing your organization's talents

DIGI HEROES

If you want to increase your value on the market, consider becoming a digital ambassador. Forward-looking companies really need people like this (like my idea of a "Chief Digital Officer for every team"). That's why our company launched projects like "Digi Heroes and ACA - AI Coach & Ambassador Program", which quickly became some of our most popular training programs.

Digital ambassadors have a deeper understanding of technology and insights into how it can improve their coworkers' productivity. They can inspire, educate and guide others. That's why their IT expertise isn't the most critical factor. Instead, what really matters is they're willing to learn new things, and they have an ability to explain things in a way that everyday users can understand.

3. LEARNING CAN ACTUALLY BE FUN

One of the most important drivers of personal growth is curiosity. The desire to ask questions and seek answers; the urge to experiment, explore and better understand the world around us. It's a natural thing for humans, but it can gradually fade with time. Why? With age comes a host of challenges: the fear of failure, laziness, growing obligations and sometimes also a lack of support from the environment around you. Yes, even adults need support and encouragement. Fortunately, you can fight these challenges by trying new learning strategies.

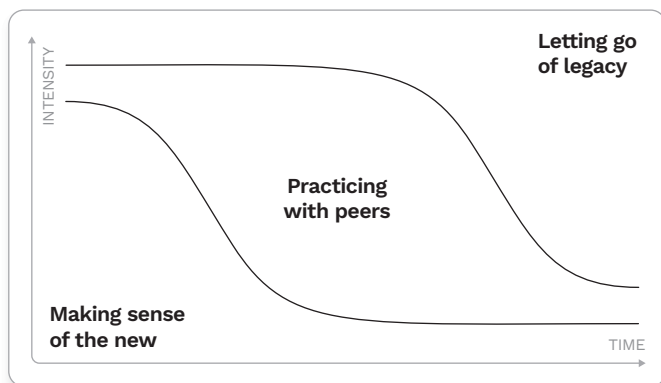
New technologies and new ways of working can't be mastered without hands-on experience. This is especially true for AI, which doesn't work like typical software. You need to figure out what works and what the limitations are of each of the smart tools you want to use. A recent² report on AI from Microsoft and LinkedIn highlights that experimentation is even connected to becoming an AI power user: "Power users are 68% more likely to frequently experiment with different ways of using AI—in fact, it's the #1 predictor of whether someone will be a power user or not."

#1 predictor of whether someone becomes an AI power user:

Experimentation

Therefore, if you want to explore a new app or AI model, go and deploy it on a minor project. The more excited you are about it the better. Feel free to invite your coworkers or friends to join you and experiment together. That will make it easier to overcome any fear or nervousness you have.

A study³ from the University of Gothenburg explores how people handle changes connected with new ways of working, and it supports this notion as well. The intense emotions you experience at the beginning of every change can only be eliminated through practice. If you combine learning with work on a real project, and if you have someone on hand to ask about your progress, you will quickly see tangible results from your actions. In the end, you'll find this process far more enjoyable.



Three overlapping processes of coping with transformative change.

You can expect the same from hiring a digital coach or surrounding yourself with a community of tech enthusiasts. That is because they can support you in achieving the most important thing: turning ideas into results faster.

Less conventional forms of education work great too. You might have heard of Fuckup Nights. These are events where people present their biggest failures. We have organized similar events, although we use a more corporate-friendly name like, "The Breakfast of Failures." Such events give people the self-confidence needed to explore new realms of business by making it clear that mistakes are an inevitable and natural part of any learning process. Plus, people usually have a lot of fun because who doesn't enjoy hearing about other people's mishaps?

You might also organize or participate in a hackathon, or a prompt battle, or any other of the events mentioned in the chapter "How to Upgrade Your Potential". Anything that makes learning fun and helps us learn faster and more effectively is worth a try.

Learning & development tips: learning by doing

THE "DIGI CHALLENGE" PROJECT

To master a new tool or way of working, you have to roll up your sleeves and get your hands dirty through practice. That's why we try to incorporate as many practical exercises and real-world projects into our training programs as we can. Our "Digi Challenge" project also supports this approach where participants work together to complete challenges related to our "IES" concept.

Participants' experiences clearly show us that people don't need more classes. What they really need is a commitment to making time for self-development. Take that, mix in some out-of-the-box challenges, build a sense of community and add a little friendly competition—and all of a sudden people are excited even by something like process automation.

Want to give it a try or sign up for an open challenge? Join us at www.digichallenge.org.

It All Starts with Ambition

You know what leaves people anxious and stressed out? It's not just having a lot of work. It's having a ton of unfinished stuff hanging over their heads⁴. That's one more reason why I so often see people lacking the time to learn and focusing on their growing to-do list instead. Even though they've started to think more about using the new technologies, in part due to all the news about AI, they're still too busy to start really utilizing them.

Luckily if you're reading this book, you already know that time isn't *found*, it's *made*. So if you're struggling with a lack of time, you can try a more ambitious approach. For example, give learning a chance in time-limited sprints:

- In one week, I'll learn to write better AI prompts.
- Next month, our team will attend an online process automation course.
- We'll go on a two-day retreat and clean up our company's data.

The challenges you choose to tackle can be more ambitious, too. One of my clients complained that he simply couldn't push through his innovation ideas as everything in his company was too tied down by the existing processes. Now that's nothing new, especially if you work in a really large company, but he was truly frustrated. That's why I wanted to help him as much as I could. After a few discussions, we figured out a great way to approach the situation reframing his perception.

We first put the problem into words because you can't start working on a problem until you've done that. Now the problem sounded like this: "How can we increase the number of ideas that make it into practice?" Then, I showed him how other clients were dealing with the same issue, gave him some contacts for consultations and suggested some other useful problem-solving techniques⁵. When we met again a few weeks later, he was a different person. He showed me a whiteboard packed with ideas he'd brainstormed with his team; he talked about sharing experiences with other companies; and finally he wanted to consult on a presentation he was about to give at the company's management meeting.

Work is really just a game. When you zoom out and look at the big picture, you can more easily come up with strategies for handling all kinds of problems. This way of thinking can also help you find motivation, even when things get tough. You might even find you actually enjoy solving problems or learning new things, and it won't drain you nearly as much as you'd think. Plus, you'll have a lot more fun along the way.

So don't be afraid to be ambitious and to try the things you haven't yet had the courage to do. It might be easier than you think. Most of all, it's totally worth it.

When I mentioned my colleague Hana who came back to work after an extended maternity leave and took over organizing my activities, I failed to mention one important detail. Hana very quickly learned to work with our digital tools—and there are quite a few of them. She didn't attend any onboarding sessions, but she could turn to a digital coach for guidance and embraced the notion that *there's an app for everything, there's information for everything and there's someone to talk to for everything.*

That's why I was thrilled when a few weeks later she sent me this message:

"Filip, I'm feeling really emotional today, looking back at everything I've learned in the past month and a half. It might all seem obvious to you, but for me it has literally changed my world and my approach to work."

This reminded me once again that it's not the amount of our experience and knowledge that matters, but primarily our willingness to learn, to dive into new things and to strive to be better tomorrow than we are today.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The rapid advancements in AI and smart tools have made it essential to adopt a mindset of continuous learning. People should focus on "learning in the flow of work" and "just-in-time learning" to stay relevant and productive.
2. AI-powered tools can serve as personal tutors and advisors, making education accessible to everyone. These tools can provide personalized feedback, help with problem-solving, and facilitate learning wherever you are or want to be.
3. Learning becomes more effective and enjoyable when done with others. Mentoring, coaching, knowledge sharing sessions, cohort-based learning, and active participation in communities are excellent ways to grow skills and foster connections.
4. Curiosity is a key driver of personal growth. Embracing experimentation, particularly with AI tools, is crucial for becoming a proficient AI user and for unlocking their full potential. Hands-on experience is essential for mastering new technologies and ways of working.
5. Incorporating unconventional learning methods such as organizing failure-sharing events or participating in hackathons and prompt battles can make learning more enjoyable and effective.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Experiment with learning tools like AI chatbots for communication feedback or specialized tools for team information sharing. Encourage presentations to be shared and accessible, along with error message screenshots. Consider tools that automate summaries of links shared in team chats.
2. Create space for experimentation and sharing. If you feel you normally don't have time, schedule regular sessions where you'll test new smart tools. Or dedicate at least one full day to diving deeper into a topic that's important to you or your team.
3. Engage with local or online communities where you can actively share your successes and challenges. If no suitable community exists, take the initiative and start one.

IV.

New Ways of Working

How to Work and Live on Your Own Terms

13. No Meetings. No Deadlines. No Employees.

Sahil Lavingia was living the Silicon Valley dream. He dropped out of college after freshman year to join two other guys who were passionately working on a new startup—a social network for sharing photos. It turned out to be a pretty smart move because that startup was Pinterest, which soon after became a unicorn worth several billion dollars.

Lavingia was put in charge of developing the first mobile app. He didn't just write the code; he designed some of the graphics too. However, he felt like he was drowning in work and thought about outsourcing some of it. Unfortunately, he had nowhere to go—which gave him the idea for Gumroad, an online marketplace where people could easily sell digital content like images, e-books, or software. At first it was just a side gig, but Lavingia was getting rave reviews, so he decided to quit his job and focus on it full-time.

When someone walks away from a hot startup like Pinterest to work on their own project, investors take notice. Gumroad raised nearly eight million dollars, and Lavingia was on a roll. He was all over the news, had cash to spare, and his startup was growing like crazy—until it wasn't.

If there's one thing the startup world won't forgive, it's not growing. Actually, even growing slowly is enough to create doubts. Gumroad was doubling its users regularly, but its expenses were also skyrocketing, so it needed more investors. But those weren't forthcoming. Lavingia had to figure out what to do with the company next. He could shut it down, return the remaining investments and start fresh. Another option was to prepare the company (or at least the team) for acquisition. But both options would hurt customers for whom Gumroad was often their main source of income, and Lavingia didn't want that. He chose a third way—slimming the company down and moving forward as sustainably as possible. As it soon turned out, this decision was a bullseye.

To make this work, he had to completely change how he thought¹ about the business: "For me, it was no longer about growth at all costs, but 'freedom at all costs.'" He ditched the office, let go of most of his staff and outsourced the coding to an Indian supplier. Over time, he developed a unique management style. Instead of focusing on traditional company key performance indicators, he began chasing just one goal: maximizing how much money creators were making on Gumroad. It's simple, measurable and it puts the customers first. It also makes it easier for his employees to determine what projects they should be working on. Plus, with Gumroad taking a commission of each sale, the company's profits keep climbing right alongside those of the creators.

Go Your Own Way

I stumbled upon Lavingia's story on his blog where he candidly described both his "failure" at building a billion-dollar company and his journey toward building a sustainable and profitable business. His post² about how Gumroad works is aptly titled "No Meetings, No Deadlines, No Full-Time Employees." Communication at Gumroad is asynchronous, so the phrase "no meetings" is more than just an empty promise. Most information is well documented³ and accessible online. People are trusted and given the freedom to choose what they work on because they know best what will help creators on the platform sell more content. In Lavingia's words: "When someone new joins the company, they do what everyone else does: Go into our Notion queue, pick a task, and get to work, asking for clarification when needed."

Gumroad does other things differently too. People speak of them as a "company full of creators." So when someone pitches a specific and meaningful idea, they often start collaborating right away. But what strikes me most is their approach to fulfilling the "freedom at all cost" strategy.

If you want to focus on your job and still have time for other things you love, you usually have two options: Work full-time and try to squeeze in your passions on nights and weekends, or take a risk and go freelance. Gumroad does it differently: They give their people the opportunity to balance their main job with all the other things they're passionate about.

This is what attracted Sid Yadav onto the team in 2018: "I could contract 20–35 hours a week and for a couple days a week, incubate ideas and work on my next thing." Thanks to this, two years later he was able to found his own startup, the community platform Circle. Sahil Lavingia even supported Yadav's venture with an investment.

Gumroad operates without full-time employees. Everyone knows how much everyone else is making, and you can work from anywhere. However, they only receive full compensation for their first 20 hours a week. If they want to work more, their hourly rate drops to half. Gumroad doesn't offer any further benefits, just extreme flexibility and a good salary. For many people this is far more important than a fancy office, free snacks and other perks. Instead they devote their time and energy to family, friends, personal projects or volunteering.

Now you probably get why I love Gumroad. Their values perfectly align with the concept of No Work, which doesn't forbid you from working hard—if you want. But it empowers you to create the kind of work-life balance that most people simply don't believe exists in the real world. So if you're running a business or leading a team, you can set up a completely different way of working than your competition and leverage that to attract talent. And even as an employee, remote work and smart tools can help you create the career you want.

There's no longer a need to work nine-to-five and sit in the office like in the past. What truly matters is the value you create. Now imagine if, thanks to AI and new ways of working, you could deliver that value in half the time. Or if you could deliver it to multiple employees or customers all at once. We're suddenly talking about *several times* that value.

I didn't name this chapter to suggest that you should cancel every meeting, quit your job and become a freelancer without thinking it through. This chapter, as well as this whole book really, is just a reminder that you can do things your way.

Work, Business, and Everything in Between

My parents never pushed me towards one profession, and we didn't have career counselors at school to talk about what I might want or need to study. Nobody cared about my talents or how I could use them. And since schools weren't teaching entrepreneurship at that time, it seemed that the only path to a successful life was clear: Attend a good school, join a established company, and then climb the corporate ladder.

Thanks to my good grades and strong communication skills, everyone automatically assumed I would study law. And I did. I even earned a master's degree, but I knew I would end up doing something different. I started working in customer service, then moved into sales, and finally landed in marketing. I always quit in less than two years, which initially felt like failure. Then I realized that traditional employment might not be the best fit for me, and so I went down my own road. And believe me—there are *a lot* of roads. That's why my advice for everyone is: Stop worrying about your career. Focus instead on how you want to work and live.

~~_____~~

People used to have one job for three years.
Now, they have three jobs at the same time.

~~_____~~

In the past, it was common advice to focus on having one job for three years. With the rise of new career models, it's possible that people will have three jobs at once. Fortunately, trying out different models to find one that suits you isn't all that complicated.

The most common model for earning a living is still holding down one job for one company. But more and more people are adding side gigs. The extreme case here is the controversial practice of the "overemployed": people who (often secretly) work for several companies, either to achieve financial independence as quickly as possible, or simply for the thrill

itself. Naturally, this is only feasible with remote work, which is why the overemployed are mainly found in office-based roles such as IT, customer support, and sales.

Leaving aside the legal or moral aspects, it's interesting to watch how these people try to optimize their work. For example, here's one⁴ of the many guides on how to handle such workloads:

1. Get a task done every day. This gives you something to say at a standup (meeting).
2. Attend as many meetings as you can even if you don't have to. If you do this, you know what's going on outside of your role. You likely won't be asked to contribute, but you'll get smarter—just do work on the side while everyone else blabbers.
3. Conflicting meetings? If you can't avoid it, don't say anything other than "wrapping up right now, let's meet in 30." Stop overthinking and don't give excuses. It makes you suspicious.
4. Be extremely mediocre. If you're likely really good at your job. Therefore, your mediocre is someone else's best—and keeps you employed. I've found the sweet spot to be prioritizing one job I really like and then maintaining the other two.
5. For the love of god, upgrade your desk setups.

A more common and less intense approach, is working for one company while pursuing side hustles. Our expert communities often see contributions from specialists at major companies who want to spice up their work, share their expertise and stay informed about what's happening elsewhere. Meanwhile, in our training programs I see people who want to launch "their own thing." Some find fulfillment in teaching, while others enjoy organizing events. Lots of people want or need to make some extra cash, but it's not just about that. Many of them crave something more than just sitting at a desk all day—something tangible and disconnected from the digital world. I actually know a bank employee who runs a blueberry farm and a politician who has started doing sauna ceremonies.

Ultimately, there are many people who dream about having their own business. And this dream has various reasons. Maybe you want to turn your passion into a living, be your own boss, enjoy a passive source of

income, or earn a substantial amount of money. Businesses often start as small side projects like Gumroad did. But founding a traditional company and hiring employees is no longer the only way as it was a few decades ago. More and more people find happiness in working for themselves. And I get it because it lets them do things their own way without having to answer to anyone else, all while making a decent living.

No one knows precisely what the future holds. Perhaps the world will be dominated by a few tech giants. Maybe it will be just the opposite, and we'll see millions of small entrepreneurs thriving, creating awesome products and services and living by their own rules. Either way, we should focus on building our work around our lives, not the other way around.

In my early days on the startup scene, I often heard investors saying they didn't like *lifestyle businesses*—ventures that generate enough revenue to support the owner and maybe a few other people, but have little chance of being upscaled into a rapidly growing company that could be acquired or go public for a significant return. Personally, I love lifestyle businesses. For me they are synonymous with a good life. After all, what's the point of investing time and energy into something that won't lead to a nice life?

And it's not just about money. If your calendar is full of obligations that you have to keep, even if you don't want to, no amount of money will let you truly enjoy what you have.

Job Crafting

Imagine receiving tens of thousands of dollars wired to your bank each month. What would you work on?

You might start doing something completely different than today. You might choose to work less or spend your time volunteering. But you'll probably want to dive into something that means more to you, regardless of the money. One of my clients automated most of his corporate job so he could do other, more meaningful projects at the same company.

No matter what you're doing, you'll definitely want to shape your work just the way you want it, including why, where and with whom you'll be doing it. There's even a term for this: *job crafting*.

Some people might prefer to work only from Monday to Wednesday. Some dream of spending months traveling the world. One person might thrive in an office, while another might feel more at home surrounded by creative souls in a coworking space at a top digital nomad hotspot like Las Palmas, Chiang Mai, or Tulum. By the way, I think everyone should try this at least once.

The good news is that you don't need an inheritance or tens of thousands of dollars a month to do this (though naturally these things help). There are other ways to make it work. You just have to learn the right skills and learn to negotiate like a pro.

You might argue that you're paying a mortgage or that it's not the best time to change jobs. But let's be real: Is there ever a "perfect" time? Let me remind you many countries are experiencing record-low unemployment rates, and some markets are even facing labor *shortages*. And you can work for companies in these countries without even living there!

This means only one thing: you're surrounded by opportunities. And as I've mentioned, as creators we don't seek opportunities, we *create* them.

Studies⁵ show that when people talk about "a good job," they're not just thinking about the paycheck. They also care about things like:

- Doing meaningful and purposeful work
- Modern tools
- A flexible schedule
- Working from home without having to commute
- Being judged by performance, not desk time
- Their employer's trust
- More time for deep work and less time for pointless meetings
- A great team

Who wouldn't want all of that, right? Let's face it, few people are lucky enough to tick off every single box on that list. But here's the thing: We should all take a moment to think about which of these items really matter to us and work hard to make it happen.

Do you ever take a step back to assess your work? It might be enough to simply ask yourself these questions⁶:

- Has my work excited me over the last week?
- Have I managed to make the most of my strengths each day?
- Am I doing what I'm good at and what I enjoy?

If you're wavering, it's time for *job crafting*. Shape your work like an entrepreneur builds a business and focus on three key aspects:

Crafting your tasks: Leave the boring work to technology and focus on projects that excite and fulfill you. Tired of constantly reminding your colleagues about deadlines? Create something automated that will hound them for you. Frustrated that your marketing team can't organize an event for customers? Host a webinar for them yourself or come up with something else that you enjoy and still accomplishes the same goal.

Crafting your relationships: If you don't like the office crowd, try sitting at another desk⁷. Or try a coworking center filled with inspiring people who fill you with energy. Find a mentor, organize an event for new colleagues, or join a community. Relationships don't just happen: You have to work on them.

Crafting your work style: Can you work on your own schedule, or are you bound by fixed hours? Does your boss trust you and let you work remotely, or do they insist on you being in the office? Can you manage projects your way, or do you have a micromanager checking in constantly? Such questions might be the most important in job crafting because when you can fine-tune your work style, it's reflected in everything, including the tasks you work on and relationships you have.

Greater Freedom at Work

In an ideal work environment, nobody cares when you come or go. You have the freedom to work abroad for weeks or tackle your to-do list at the café across the street.

Once you've experienced this kind of freedom, you become unemployable, but don't worry, only in the kinds of companies that don't offer such flexibility. It's not just about the option of working remotely whenever or wherever you need to, but the freedom to do your work your own way. It's no coincidence that I say remote work isn't just a work style; it's a lifestyle. Freelancers often shape their work around their daily lives instead of the other way around. Why can't everyone adopt this mindset?

In the past, working from anywhere meant being self-employed with few exceptions. Then COVID hit. I spent fifteen years working with organizations of all sizes trying to persuade management to allow remote work for their employees—with no success. But after the first couple of days of lockdowns, it was no longer an issue.

Data⁸ shows that interest in hybrid and remote work is growing. Before the pandemic, less than one percent of job ads mentioned the possibility of working remotely. Three years later, we were up to fifteen percent.

All this is turning the job market into a global playground. Companies are seeking talent worldwide, and an increasing number of them are no longer demanding that you relocate to their headquarters. They're also more often open to working with freelancers, providing more options for people who work for themselves. How would you like to work for dollars while spending the summer in Sweden and the winter in Thailand?

Tech giants like Airbnb led the charge, responding to the surge in long-term stays booked on their platform by digital nomads working abroad. Others have been joining them, like the cybersecurity firm Gen, which gives its employees the freedom to work from the office or remotely; or the German energy giant E.ON, which allows its staff to work from any country in Europe for several weeks each year.

All of my companies live by the principle of absolute freedom: We offer unlimited vacations, and we don't care when and from where people are working. This freedom is one of our biggest benefits. It means nobody has to hide the fact that they're not working right now, or that they're working in an unusual place. If someone's wearing a ski helmet during a video call, my only concern is the quality of the snow.

But having this kind of freedom at work isn't for everyone. That's why it's important to be clear about your priorities. Some people might be driven by money, while others value freedom more than anything. The key is to experiment with various work arrangements and find a balance that works for you, your employer and your clients. Once you've figured out what you want, you just need to know how to ask for it. Fortunately, that's something you can definitely learn through experience.

Do You Want More Freedom at Work?	
Advantages	Disadvantages
• You don't need to wait for retirement to enjoy life. • In winter, you can work by the sea, and in summer, in the cool shade of a cabin. • You can move to a place with significantly lower living costs. • Weekends lose their exclusivity, and Sunday evenings no longer bring a sense of dread. • You have more time for family, hobbies and friends.	• You might end up spending more time at home than you'd like. • Your work and personal life can get so mixed up that you're basically always working. • Studies have shown that remote workers are experiencing higher rates of burnout compared with on-site employees. • Some people feel like their efforts go unseen and they are missing out on opportunities to get promoted.

To achieve your ideal of No Work, you have three options:

1. Fine-tune your existing work arrangements
2. Change your work arrangements while sticking with the same employer or clients
3. Embrace a fresh career path

During the process, consider:

- What do you want to do?
- Who do you want to do it for?
- How do you want to do it?

What Do You Want to Do?

If your current work feels unsatisfying, it's time for a change. Connect with people from other departments or companies to gain insights into their day-to-day responsibilities, what they love about their job and what drives them crazy. That's also why it's good to be part of larger communities, where you can easily arrange a similar conversation in no time.

If you don't have too many commitments don't be afraid to try a completely different kind of work; from consulting to HR, from IT to project management...learn new skills, expand your range, and become a business decathlete who can do almost anything.

One of my clients surprised me by turning down an attractive job offer that would have placed her in a similar position at a much more prestigious organization. "I realized that I knew exactly what I should do. And that's precisely why I didn't want to do it. I wanted to try something new, something that would force me to learn again."

Who Do You Want to Do It for?

Are you happy working for a big corporation, or would you rather be part of a small business? Do you want to offer your services to companies or freelancers? If you like to do things your own way, you'll probably find more fulfillment in a smaller company. On the other hand, if you thrive on clearly defined procedures and protocols, a large corporation might be a perfect match. Each company plays a slightly different game, and it's good to be clear about whether it's a game that you like and know how to play.

Having experience in different types of companies is valuable for more than just discovering your strengths. If you want to build your own digital products or offer your services as a freelancer, understanding how these environments operate can be incredibly helpful in both creating and selling them.

How Do You Want to Do It?

Can you precisely describe your ideal *modus operandi*? What skills do you possess, how exactly do you work with digital tools and what work style do you prefer—office-based, remote, or hybrid? If commuting isn't your thing and you come across a job listing embracing remote work, it's simple. The same applies if the employer requires everyone to be in the office—there's no point in pursuing it. But if it falls somewhere in-between, you can try to negotiate. For example, you could say:

"I understand you're looking for someone in Dallas. However, I've actually been working remotely for a few years now, and I'd like to keep doing that if I join your team. I'm definitely open to coming in for meetings or even setting up some regular office days. I am fluent in project collaboration tools, I'm skilled at asynchronous communication and my internet connection is super reliable, so I can handle online meetings without any issues. Maybe we could give it a shot for a couple of months and see how it goes?"

Remember, creators don't *beg* for work. They offer high-quality services and build mutually beneficial relationships. This is why negotiating the perfect collaboration setup is entirely appropriate.

I don't see myself as a career counselor, but allow me to offer a handful of proven tips I've observed firsthand from the perspective of an employer, employee, contractor and client.

1. Do your work from A to Z

If you're tech-savvy, you can do the work of several people at once and handle projects from beginning to end. That carries enormous value for both employers and customers. If you offer to completely organize an

event that I'm brainstorming about on my podcast, you can send me an invoice right away.

The same goes when negotiating your work arrangements. If you approach your boss with a clear plan and offer additional value ("If you let me work from home, I'll have time to help others with automation.") and propose a trial period on top, they would be crazy to say no.

2. Simplify people's lives

If you want to work for someone interesting and highly sought after, chances are they're busy. Very busy. So when you're pitching your services make sure you're taking away their headaches, not adding to them. Go ahead and do the work for them during the selection process, just like my customer did when he was applying for a prestigious position at a large bank. When he told me he was looking forward to the second round, I immediately stopped him: "*What second round?* I mean, you don't want to be one of many!" I advised him to write down how he would approach the job and what he would start working on. In short: to create the position for himself now and make his future boss's job easier. Because that's exactly what busy people need—to have one less worry thanks to you. Once the hiring was over, this proved to be the case as my client actually got the job.

The same also applies when approaching new customers. One of my friends has a talent for designing educational projects. He can take on a project or even a whole business and develop new, profitable products. How does he do it? He convinces the owners that thanks to him they'll have nothing to worry about. They "just" pay him a share of the profits. So I'll repeat it once again: The easier you make it for your superiors or customers, the better.

3. Learn to sell yourself

Some people have a natural talent for presenting themselves. The rest of us have to learn.

The first step is to understand your market value. You can help yourself out with a simple trick—increase the amount you earn in a year by 30%.⁹

That's roughly how much you cost your employer every year. It's a pretty big number, right? You can also check the rates your suppliers charge you or your company. Keep these numbers in mind when you're talking salary next time, or even when you're hesitant to say how much you charge per hour for a side gig. *By the way, have you ever noticed how some managers are always worried their team is slacking off, but they totally trust outside contractors to get things done?*

The days when you always had to negotiate and sell in person are gone. Today is a golden age for introverts and other people who prefer alternative communication. Some companies are now operating 100% asynchronously and rely mainly on written communication. I personally love working this way because it gives me time to think things through, clearly explain my ideas and add extra value—links, documents, or even videos.

Selling your skills or building your reputation doesn't start when you're sitting across from a potential boss or talking to a new client. Not even close. Those are just the tip of the iceberg. It all starts with making yourself visible. This could mean finishing tasks without being asked or taking on projects no one else wants. And of course, it really helps to build your personal brand on social media, speak at webinars or conferences and actively participate in your professional community.

It's also wise to have a Plan B—a network of contacts and acquaintances that can assist you in finding a new job or project. They might be colleagues from other departments or people you've met at industry events. Why do I call it a Plan B? Because the most successful negotiations often occur when you're not overly concerned about the outcome. It's similar to dating—trying too hard usually leads to failure.

How to Make More Money

In 2022, the American startup Stripe made it possible for teenagers all over the world to start their own businesses. Its first adopters came up with lots of original products: breathable sneakers from Texas, an app for shopping at local stores in Lithuania, even a device for hydroponic

herb cultivation from Turkey. It was energizing to browse through these projects. After all, many of the ideas in this book are closely related to the entrepreneurial mindset—the ability to recognize opportunities, figure out what other people want, seek solutions to problems and improve things. And running your own business is one of the most effective ways to tailor your work to your own preferences.

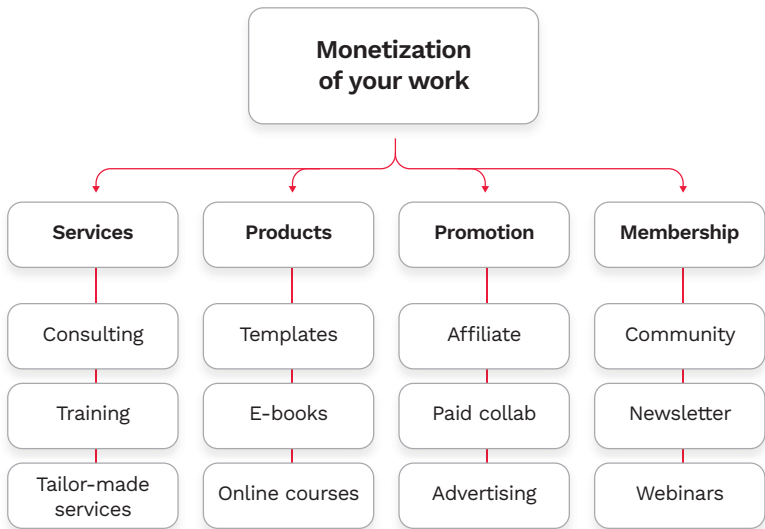
In the first days of my entrepreneurial journey, I offered marketing consultation. In truth it could hardly be called a business as I was handling everything on my own. But over time I began to approach things differently. When I noticed the emergence of online chat services for company websites, I sensed an opportunity. I reached out to the creator of one such app and arranged to create a "white label" solution—meaning I could offer this app under my own brand. This allowed me to have my own product without having to build anything from scratch! I named it Customer Point and successfully sold it to several clients, including the local branch of the telecommunications giant Telefónica. It was at that moment I finally understood how crucial an entrepreneurial mindset is. Suddenly I was seeing opportunities everywhere.

A great example of this mindset is the story of Derek Sivers. In the 1990s, he ran a small record label and needed barcodes from the Universal Code Council to sell CDs¹⁰ in his store. The fee was a hefty \$750, but it allowed him to generate codes for up to 100,000 products. Sivers realized he could help out his friends and started generating barcodes for them using his account. Word got around and soon he was charging \$20 per code. Over twelve years, this simple idea brought in a remarkable two million dollars in revenue.

There are countless opportunities like this around us, and more are emerging every day. Just as people once bought goods and sold them with a markup, today's savvy creators can build valuable services using smart tools and sell them to clients. Like Katya Varbanova from Great Britain, who earns extra income selling templates for the graphic design tool Canva. Well, "extra income" is an understatement—She's made over a million dollars¹¹ this way. Or Larry Lundstrom, a pastor from Arkansas who makes more than ten thousand dollars a month¹² by using AI to generate presentations for startups.

Beyond Trading Time for Money

The definition of business, at least according to management guru Peter Drucker, is simple: it's other people's money. So doing business means offering something other people are willing to pay for. That "something" can be monetized in a variety of ways. Some of them revolve around trading time for money, like consulting or helping people design gardens. Others involve selling your own products, such as online courses or digital templates.



If you'd like to increase the value of your work and move beyond the concept of exchanging time for money, these options can be beautifully combined. When a client comes to us wanting to create a customized training program (a service), we also offer them our Digiskills Assessment, a survey and evaluation that checks their digital skills (a product). When a company books a workshop focused on developing a Digital Vision, we don't just sell them the workshop itself (a service), we also give them educational materials that participants can go through before the workshop (a product).

New smart tools are a game-changer when it comes to creating *any* product or service. Want to teach your own classes? AI can prepare the workshop structure, create designs for your presentation, and generate a series of promotional posts for LinkedIn. Want to sell templates for employee onboarding? Create a template, record a tutorial, and let AI translate it into different languages. Or maybe you're into making custom furniture? Just get your client's preferences and let AI design endless custom wallpaper patterns or decor accents to match each piece. Again, the most important thing is to figure out the "what"—because we have tools for everything else.

Unsure what to work on?

Ask AI how to monetize your expertise. In a few sentences, describe your skills, recent projects, and what clients appreciate about your work. You can even mention limitations like being unable to meet clients in person. Or have it build your entire company, like Dro Gill did with his project The One Hour Startup¹³. The AI found business opportunities, researched the markets, dreamed up product ideas, planned a marketing campaign and everything in-between.

If you have capital at your disposal and want to fast-track your journey, you can purchase an existing project and develop it further—there's an app for that too. Acquire.com, a marketplace founded by the inspiring entrepreneur Andrew Gazdecki, allows you to explore hundreds of projects. If you believe you have the skills and tools to grow one of these projects, you can make it your own in just 30 days.

Or just start small and simple—buy pre-made prompts from a marketplace like PromptBase and transform them into your own product. Let's say you purchase a prompt for generating children's stories and a prompt for generating nice pictures. This could result in a service or product for creating customized bilingual children's stories. Parents would send in their child's favorite character and they'd get back a beautiful e-book full of stories in two languages.

There are a million other ways to turn your skills into something sellable. But I believe that now you get the idea and understand that it is more about the mindset, creativity and principles standing behind No Work.

One of these principles is transforming your skills into something valuable, regardless of the number of hours put in. These mechanisms still work if you have a regular job. In that case, it can help you shine by letting you create useful assets for internal use at your company.

Here's what someone in HR could do:

- Create a checklist template that makes new employee onboarding easier
- Build a platform where employees can exchange best practices for using AI
- Set up automation that reminds managers of employees' birthdays

Or we could look at an example from someone in sales:

- Create a bot or an agent for helping other sales reps use LinkedIn
- Set up a system to handle meeting notes using AI
- Create an automated process to simplify responding to new leads

All these things are scalable, increase the value of your work, and can be offered to people outside your company. Whether for money or "just" for building your personal brand.

Aiming Higher?

Nothing is keeping you from gradually building up a side gig into something that's greater than your current job. I believe we'll be seeing more and more examples of individuals or tiny teams making over a million a year. And they'll be doing it using all the trends in this book—low-code tools, automation and AI.

As my favorite tech entrepreneur Greg Isenberg puts it¹⁴, projects like these will share similar traits:

- No employees, just AI
- No custom code, just low-code
- No paid ads, just community
- No venture capital, just bootstrapped
- High cash-flow, low stress
- Tech-enabled, creator-supercharged
- Run as a product studio, constant experiments
- Productized services or products sold
- Digital assets or high-margin services

Even before the advent of AI, we saw that this was possible. I've witnessed it firsthand on our projects and in countless examples worldwide. Gary Brewer's website analysis tool generated \$14 million, while Ivan Kuckir, creator of the outstanding photo editor Photopea, makes over \$1 million annually. And the list goes on...

But it's not just about solopreneurs. Small teams also have the potential to earn similarly impressive amounts. The minds behind CoderPad, a company that makes \$4 million a year with just four employees, and the two creators of StreamYard, a streaming app with an annual revenue of \$12 million, are perfect examples of this.

How much can you earn?

If I told you that you could earn an extra \$100,000 per year, would that seem like a lot or a little to you? Try breaking it down, and you'll see it's not that much:

- \$100,000 per year
- \$8,333 per month
- \$274 per day

That's ten templates sold per day. Or two consultations per day. One company workshop per week. Or one training program per month.

That's why I believe the future of work belongs to small, efficient teams that embrace technology and fearlessly experiment with new ways of

working. I can imagine the team of the future consisting of just three people: a CEO, CTO, and COO. And of course, AI.

Even large companies are now reorganizing into smaller, self-organized teams. It's a trend that's gaining momentum and for good reason. These teams are closer to the customers so they better understand their needs. They can make swift decisions about what matters most without getting stuck in red tape. And they don't waste time in pointless meetings or on work that doesn't add real value.

One of my favorite software companies, 37signals, is a great example. Its founder Jason Fried believes¹⁵ teams can achieve remarkable results with fewer people without constantly being on the verge of burnout. Just compare the employee count of their app Basecamp to competitors: Monday – 1,500, ClickUp – 1,000, and Asana – 1,600. And Basecamp? Eighty. You read that right, *twenty times less* than some of its competitors.

If No Work had a statue, it would be in the shape of the Basecamp logo.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. There are countless ways to craft your ideal work life, including fine-tuning your current job, negotiating a new arrangement with your employer, freelancing, or starting your own business. The key is shaping work around your life and not the other way around.
2. Job crafting empowers you to proactively design your tasks, relationships and work schedule to create more fulfillment and leverage your strengths. To negotiate your ideal work setup, prioritize making your manager's life easier, effectively selling your value proposition and then propose a trial period to showcase your contributions.
3. Smart digital tools have unlocked a world of possibilities for working independently with flexible hours, regardless of the location. Companies are embracing remote and hybrid models with some pioneering entirely new approaches to work.
4. The future belongs to lean, efficient teams that can optimize technology to achieve exceptional results without burning out team members or excessive overhead.
5. An entrepreneurial mindset is invaluable for spotting opportunities and creating value. The key to making more money is using smart tools to package your skills into valuable products or services that aren't tied to billable hours.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Craft your tasks: Identify one repetitive task that drains your energy and find a way to automate it so you can instead focus on projects that excite and fulfill you.
2. Craft your relationships: Reach out to someone inspiring in your network and schedule a chat over coffee or a virtual meeting to learn from their experiences and discuss work and life insights. Go to meetups to find out what others are doing.
3. Craft your work style: Assess your current work style and identify one aspect you can adjust to better suit your preferences, then discuss that possibility with your manager or the other members of your team.

14. Let Your Work Do the Work

I stumbled upon Doris's story by accident in an article titled "An Intelligent Woman in a Body That Won't Listen," published on World Polio Day¹. Doris is amazing, but polio has left her struggling with speech and mobility issues. Despite all of this, she managed to graduate from high school and college. The real trouble started when she began searching for a job. First, she tried a company that hires people with disabilities—but those weren't real jobs. Doris wanted *a completely ordinary kind of job*, so she kept trying. She joined Troublegang², a project that helps people with disabilities find work. But she had no luck there either. Doris sent out her resume to ninety companies without a single one hiring her. Ninety! That caught my attention, so I reached out to her and hired her for one of our projects. And that delivered one of the biggest eye-opening moments in my career. Why? Because Doris' limitations forced me to ultimately redefine how we work.

We were just launching our expert marketplace, and we needed to sign contracts with hundreds of our partners. When you reach out to that many people, it's clear that you're going to be talking to *a lot* of people. Some people will start negotiating terms; others will simply forget about it and you'll have to stay on top of them. And what do people usually do when they have to remind someone of something? They pick up the phone or write an email. Again and again. Hundreds of times a week. But for Doris, this would be complicated. Actually, not only for her—why would anyone want to do that? That's why we came up with a different solution.

We built an automated system that enabled us to send personalized emails with a single click. Instead of dozens of individual meetings, we started hosting weekly webinars where anyone could join and ask questions. In a matter of days, we had built a system that could handle most of our tasks just by connecting and fine-tuning our current office apps. And Doris? With this system in place, you'd never guess she had any limitations at all.

It's ironic but sometimes a lack of limitations is what limits us the most. We're so busy working from dawn till dusk that we never stop to think if we're doing things the right way.

Faster. Cheaper. Better.

Overflowing calendars, mountains of busywork, constant notifications... We had always hoped that technology would work for us. Instead, new office apps often just mean more confusion and more frequent interruptions. And since we're always connected, our work never seems to end.

If we really want to simplify our lives, technology alone won't help us. We need to start consciously working on *how we work* and *actively look* for ways to simplify, improve and automate as many tasks as possible. Only then will we be able to do more in less time, free ourselves up and fully embrace the potential of technology. And if we can have some fun along the way—even better.

Not busy, but wish you were?

This chapter will be particularly appreciated by those who have a lot of work, little time and want to change that. But if that sounds like a nice problem to have because you're just starting out and things are slow, I've got some advice for you too. Take any gig you can get: small jobs, unpaid work, conferences, volunteering. They may not be glamorous, but you'll get something even better: connections, experience and a better idea of what you could be doing. Plus you never know, you might get a million-dollar idea during one of those gigs or meet someone who can help move your career in the right direction.

Modern productivity bibles often advise people on how to get more things done and be efficient. But new smart tools empower us to do better work. More valuable work. More beautiful work. They have the potential to unleash our creativity, helping us astound our customers and coworkers.

Sometimes all it takes is to build smart systems that let us get the most out of both people and machines.

These systems operate on two levels: N-WOW (The New Way of Working) and D-WOW (The Digital Way of Working).

N-WOW: THE NEW WAY OF WORKING

People experimenting with AI often run up against a deep-seated problem: complex processes and complicated workflows. That's why it's crucial to first simplify and eliminate these before you can build a system that can be upscaled without human labor.

That's precisely what the new way of working is all about. It's based on three core principles:

1. **SIMPLIFY:** Design a system that allows you to work more efficiently
2. **PERFECT:** Design a system that adds value to your work
3. **SCALE:** Design a system that enables you to achieve more with less

1. SIMPLIFY: Design a system that allows you to work more efficiently

I'm a huge fan of companies that embrace the power of simplicity. Southwest Airlines is famous for its single-aircraft strategy using only one type of plane. This reduces its costs for maintenance, spare parts, and training. IKEA simplified the entire concept of home furnishings and logistics by designing products that customers assemble themselves, reducing transport and storage costs. And my favorite example: When Steve Jobs rejoined Apple's leadership in 1997 and saw how much the product teams were doing, he literally shouted "Stop!" and sketched out his legendary grid with just four computer categories. From that moment on, they poured all their resources into these.

	Consumers	Professionals
Desktop Computer	iMac	Power Macintosh
Laptop	iBook	PowerBook

One of my clients, the Czech branch of T-Mobile, took a similar approach with its selection of service plans. Their previous six tariff generations had ballooned into a mind-boggling 369 configurations with nearly 7,400 possible combinations. It took 100 pages just to describe them on their intranet, so you can imagine the struggle to train new hires or find any relevant information. That's when a team led by Michal Dvorsky decided to scrap all these plans and create a new generation of tariffs with just 37 options. It was a tough call that took lots of communication with many stakeholders, but it paid off. The simplified system sped up nearly everything—from marketing campaigns to customer service.

This example is a powerful reminder: To truly innovate and improve how they work, companies must sometimes be willing to take bold action and prioritize simplification.

Every system can be simplified, whether you're a corporate giant or a solopreneur optimizing your workflow. Here are a few examples from my own work:

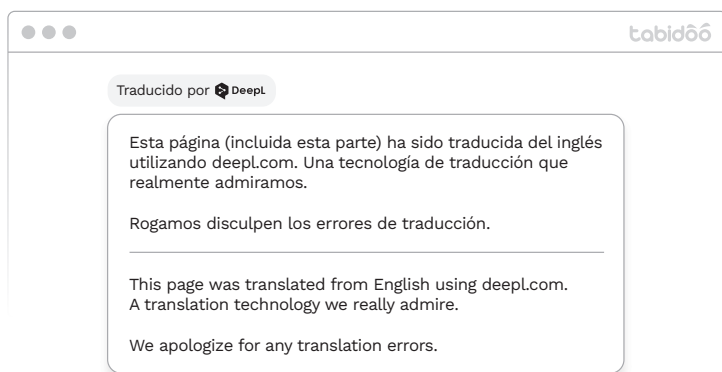
- When we're creating new services, we go by the principle "sell first, build later." That way we don't waste time on projects no one wants.
- Due to our "replace dozens of small decisions with one big one" rule, we have set standardized pricing across our services. We openly communicate to our clients that our priority is partnering with them to create impactful projects rather than wasting time negotiating over prices.
- We decided in advance which client events I'd attend in person, online, or via my avatar, allowing my team to handle all the planning without my involvement.

- I only wear blue t-shirts. This "capsule wardrobe" saves me time in the morning, and when I want to add something to my videos, my similarly dressed avatar helps me with that.

Simplicity is closely connected with your priorities and decision-making about what you should work on—and more importantly what you shouldn't. Yet many people don't think this way. At most companies, discussions about slowing down or stopping projects are taboo. It's understandable—people fall in love with their work and hate to admit that something is not working out. But here's the thing: Every time you cancel something, it's actually cause for celebration. It means more hands on deck for what truly matters.

Even the most successful companies like Google shut down their projects one after another. There's even a Google Graveyard³ for projects the firm has killed. As of early 2024, there were 295 of them. Rest in peace.

When I referenced the AAAI concept (Author > Authorization > AI), I mentioned that sometimes it's our inner perfectionist who prevents us from handing big parts of our work to AI. There's one trick surrounding simplification that can help you beat this phenomenon: Openly admit that you are using AI. Maybe do it like the folks at Tabidoo who alert visitors their website is translated by AI with this great note:



This page was translated from English using deepL.com—translation technology we really admire. We apologize for any translation errors.

There's truth in the saying "microcopy is cheaper than a feature." Microcopy refers to the brief explanations that tend to improve the user experience with tech and is also far cheaper than adding a new feature through coding. That's why we have incorporated microcopy text into all of our websites. And even though we encountered a problem—because the key term "No Work" doesn't always translate well, we solved it with simplicity in mind and decided to leave it in English everywhere. Problem solved.

Simply put, simplicity works while complexity complicates and slows everything down. That's also why one of my favorite work principles is the effort mentioned earlier to *maximize the amount of work not done*.

Hell yeah or no

The journey towards the ideal of No Work isn't just about productivity, efficiency and all that business stuff. It's about enjoying what we do. That's why I follow Derek Sivers' "Hell yeah or no" rule. Either I really like something and it's a "hell yeah!", or I don't do it; whether it's buying a new shirt or starting a new company project.

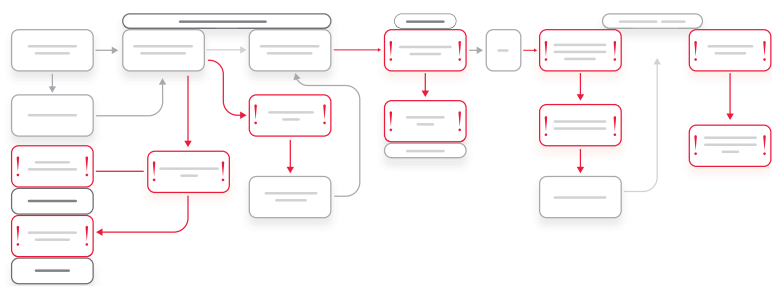
2. PERFECT: Design a system that adds value to your work

When an organization transitions to a new way of working, it's a great opportunity to review its own processes. Sometimes companies do this voluntarily while others are pushed into it by circumstance. That's precisely what happened to one of the largest cybersecurity firms Gen.

In an interview⁴, their HR director shared her experience of shifting to remote work, which prompted her to audit several processes. While reviewing the onboarding procedure, her team uncovered a surprising truth: Each new hire had to contact *seven different people* engaging in *eleven interactions*. Needless to say, due to this discovery they decided to optimize the process immediately.

Honestly, findings like this don't surprise me at all. We frequently map processes for our clients, and we see that it's only when people start to *consciously think* about how they work that they notice how much time and energy they're wasting.

This is one of the reasons why we launched a service called "digital coaches" aimed at helping our clients to describe their workflows and identify potential areas for digital improvements. One of its first clients was the RE/MAX real estate office network. Its head of education often told us about how many unnecessary tasks their agents faced when working with clients. So he connected us with their first office where we went through the process of buying and selling real estate step by step



The details aren't important, and I can't reveal them anyway, but note the highlighting of the individual steps. The activities that need human action are in black. Apps are marked in gray. The most interesting are the red ones (with an exclamation mark (!))—all these steps can be automated or improved. You can see it's almost *half* of them.

My approach to improving work processes was inspired by Alex Schleifer, the former Chief Design Officer at Airbnb, who said⁵: "we cannot innovate our products and services without innovating the way we create them." That's why I believe that such innovations are important in every single department.

If you're familiar with Stephen Covey's renowned book "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People," you understand the importance of regularly "sharpening the saw"—taking care of our minds and

tools. In the digital age, this principle is twice as important, whether you're a manager at a global corporation, a carpenter, or a town hall clerk. It doesn't even matter whether you just want to slightly improve your services or you're aiming as high as market challengers who are trying to create as many 10x employees⁶ as possible. To improve and perfect everything you do, focus on three main areas:

1. Remove obstacles and barriers.

- Improve your contact form to reduce email inquiries
- Change your decision-making process to minimize waiting times
- Organize your data so that people aren't constantly asking where to find things

2. Upgrade your current workflows.

- Connect your apps so people don't have to copy data from one app to another
- Implement an AI chatbot on your website to quickly answer customer questions
- Upload a video greeting customers after they purchase your product

3. Enhance everything with AI.

- A carpenter who enhances their furniture with AI-generated wallpaper designs
- A state official who automates responses to common citizen inquiries
- A technician who dictates data to AI and receives a comprehensive auditing report
- An accountant who uses AI to extract payment details from a convoluted bank statement
- A teacher who generates personalized homework assignments for each student

Don't wait, just go for it!

Do you have an idea for automation or process improvement? Write it down or give it a try. *Right now*. Or visit Fiverr or Upwork and find someone to assist you. It's not that hard—you just describe your desired workflow and what apps you use. Within hours, you'll receive proposals, allowing you to choose someone for the job or the consultation. Whether you actually decide to hire them or not, at this point you've already done more than most other people.

3. SCALE: Design a system that enables you to achieve more with less

I was once running a workshop for bank employees responsible for supporting all their branches across the country. Everyone in the room agreed they were constantly busy and overwhelmed with too many obligations. When I asked them to describe their work in detail, they told me that each of them serves about a dozen branches handling everything from reporting to employee training. That's when I asked my favorite question: What would you do if you had to manage ten times as many branches?

The room buzzed with energy. "I'd rather jump out the window," confessed one of the managers. But I insisted that we try to find an answer. And then the ideas started flowing:

- "Every month I compile reports from all locations and send them to headquarters. With that many branches, I would have to automate it."
- "Whenever I need to update everyone, I go to each branch and have meetings with all the employees. This way I would only have to record a video that everyone could watch and we would discuss the details online."
- "Organizing employee training now means constantly chasing down busy managers. I would need to finally start using our e-learning platform and create an ambassador program for peer support."
- "People from the branches are constantly sending me questions because they can't find something in our system. I would have to clean it up and organize it better."

I think you get the point: They should be doing all this already! Why are they compiling reports manually? Why aren't they fine-tuning their digital workplace? This is precisely why scaling work is so important: allows you to increase capacity without having to hire more people or forcing staff to work overtime. However, it's necessary to think ahead and start scaling even when you don't need to scale yet.

You don't need to automate everything from the get-go. Instead I recommend manually refining your process first and waiting to automate until you've adjusted it a few times. That's one reason why I love low-code tools. They let you fine-tune your work very quickly, making it ready for scaling.

When I needed to find someone for one of my projects, I decided to experiment with my LinkedIn network instead of using a hiring agency. I had no idea if I'd get ten, a hundred, or a thousand applicants, but I wanted to be prepared for any scenario while avoiding the usual hiring grind. I shared a post on social media with a link to my blog where applicants filled out a form with some basic information. They then received a link to a video that introduced a small "homework" assignment, similar to the one mentioned in the "Take the Lead" chapter. I manually evaluated the submissions because it was interesting and fun, but of course if the volume had been higher I would have used AI. As a last step, I sent a video survey to the shortlisted applicants, reviewed their answers, and only then did I choose the top three best candidates and set up a meeting.

With this system in place, it didn't matter if I had ten applicants or a thousand. And that's the magic of scaling.

OHIO aka Don't Carry the Same Brick Twice

The Volkswagen Group includes renowned brands such as Audi, Porsche, and the flagship of my homeland, Škoda, which has been one of our largest clients for a long time. So when I was invited to speak at the tenth anniversary of their educational institution, the Škoda Academy, I was delighted. During an online meeting where we discussed the details of the event, the company representative apologized for using their unfinished

intranet site instead of a traditional presentation. My initial thought was: Why is she apologizing? If only everyone worked this way! Rather than endless back-and-forth with presentations, uploading everything to the intranet from the start exemplifies OHIO, one of the most useful principles of modern work: *Only Handle It Once*.

One time when I brought up this principle to my client, he mentioned his father, a bricklayer, who had always advised him, "When they bring the bricks, stack them so that you only have to carry them once."

I can't think of a better way to describe OHIO. If you stack the bricks in the wrong place, you'll have to move them, often more than once. But there's one "advantage" to bricks: They're heavy, so everyone thinks twice about where to put them. Unfortunately, most of us work with digital bricks that seem weightless. We just keep moving them around. We write the same texts, explain the same things, answer the same questions. If they were carts full of bricks, we'd immediately start thinking how to solve this problem.

How we apply these principles in our company

1. When we started offering corporate development programs, we created a presentation outlining the program and sent it to interested clients.
2. In the second phase, we organized all information within our second brain in Notion so we could easily build custom program proposals. We decided to address all details only after confirming interest to minimize unnecessary work.
3. Based on this system, we created an interactive form where clients could design their own program and calculate its cost without our assistance.
4. Now we're working on a system where you have a brief chat with my avatar, and then it creates and sends you a personalized training program proposal based on this conversation.

How Does OHIO Work in Practice?

- I live by the two-minute rule—if something will take less than two minutes, I get it done. When a customer calls me and asks me to

send them a proposal—as soon as I hang up the phone, I share the document with them and get it off my mind.

- Once we answer someone's question about one of our courses, we add that answer to our FAQ page and next time we just send them a link to that page. That way we don't have to answer the same question over and over again.
- When I type a similar text for the third time, I save it in my keyboard shortcuts so I've written it for the last time.
- We present new services to customers by combining a personal video message⁷ with a universal presentation. That way we can personalize the message for each customer while still being efficient.
- When course participants do not submit their assignments on time, we first notify them ourselves and then immediately set up automation that sends friendly reminders on its own.

I apply the OHIO principle in my personal life too. When I got fed up with the constant flood of junk mail in my mailbox, I set up a voice shortcut on my phone. Now, I simply say "do not send" and it opens a pre-written template requesting removal from the sender's mailing list. All I have to do is fill in the email address printed on the mailer. After just three months of this simple routine, the problem was solved.

Following OHIO in practice means replacing as much work as you can with templates, automation, AI, or simply by organizing your digital system better to maximize what can be done just once. It's not only about using time efficiently, but perhaps even more importantly it's about saving your mental energy.

Think of Work as a Product

The last method of scaling work is productization. It might sound weird, yet the word "product" is the essence of scalability. While we see services as activities tailored to meet customer requirements, products are typically something produced in advance. As soon as you start seeing your services as products, you can start standardizing them. And once you've standardized them, you can automate them too.

Try this:

1. Consider which activities you do over and over again, which ones you have to explain often, and which ones could help more of your coworkers or customers.
2. Pick something you could turn into a product. An English teacher might create a "week-long intensive course on perfect pronunciation," while a finance department could develop a workshop on "budgeting in uncertain times."
3. Try to standardize this as a product. Let's say you're starting to offer ChatGPT training to your coworkers. Describe your offering: "It's a two-hour workshop where we cover [key topics]. Sign up here [link]." This doesn't mean the workshop content shouldn't be adapted to participants' needs, but you don't have to rebuild it from scratch each time. My workshops have only one text version. We just adjust the name and tweak the description—yet the content is always tailored to the clients.
4. Now for the most important part: Get the word out about this product! Think about it—on every company's website you'll find its products and services, a clear way to order and engaging content that inspires you to take action. What do you currently see on your department's intranet? Why not do the same?

Digital sales in the age of AI

An inspirational event designed for sales professionals seeking to be better equipped for the future.

- New mind
- Top scena
- The best r

Digital HR in the age of AI

An inspirational event designed for HR professionals seeking to be better equipped for the future.

- New mindset, new skills and new ways of working in the age of AI.
- Top scenarios for leveraging AI in your workflows.
- The best new smart tools for modern **HR**.

Descriptions of your workshops that you can easily adapt to your clients.

You might be wondering, "Why should departments have their own websites?" For the same reason companies do—to help customers or coworkers quickly find what they need and avoid wasting time. Every team in your organization should have a centralized hub that clearly explains how they operate, what services they offer to other departments and so on. It doesn't matter if it's a page on the company intranet or just a well-organized shared document.

We've seen this strategy work wonders for our clients time and time again. Not only does it make their lives easier, but it also helps showcase the value they bring to their organizations. For example, the education manager at a manufacturing company created a one-stop shop with course samples, consulting hours, and even inspiring interviews with coworkers that have used their services. Another example is the public-tenders team at a telecommunications firm that set up an internal website featuring FAQs, key documents, contacts, templates for public tenders, and a library of common objections and how to handle them. That means no more answering the same questions their coworkers had repeatedly asked of them.

The software company GitLab takes this approach to a whole new level with detailed documentation on the activities of all its departments. If you take a look at their Handbook⁸ you'll find absolutely everything about each team: their vision and mission, products, services, goals for the year, contact info for individual employees, descriptions of work organization and even a list of tools they use. This single source of information keeps the whole company far more efficient, and people don't have to constantly ask what someone has definitely asked before.

D-WOW: THE DIGITAL WAY OF WORKING

Our team has tackled some pretty incredible projects over the years, but one that really stands out is our work for Škoda Auto. We helped them roll out Microsoft 365 tools to nearly *twenty thousand* employees. Our team, alongside the amazing people on the client's side, managed to put together a program called the 365 ACADEMY. The program was built on a simple idea: Each team would attend courses on specific tools and immediately put them into practice. Sounds easy, right? Well, here's the

catch: We had to organize almost *four hundred* of these academies. One academy for each team. All at once.

But our automation and fully digital approach made it possible without hiring a single additional team member.

If even just one person in a team lives for digital productivity, everyone else benefits. When it becomes a company-wide obsession, that's when the magic happens. It's the secret sauce that allows our small team to innovate new products, deliver exceptional client service, and take on projects that would normally require a much larger team.

These are the main benefits of going fully digital: You're faster and have much more time to focus on your priorities.

Are You Productive or Just Good at Being Busy?

Maybe I should hang up a poster with this question across from my desk, because sometimes a whole day goes by filled with tasks, and I still feel like I've barely accomplished anything. I bet you know the feeling—you're working on a project, weeks go by, and there's still no result. The thing is *weeks* doesn't mean *weeks of work*. Meetings, endless discussions, waiting for information or decisions and then more meetings. No wonder we always have so much work on our to-do lists.



It's a similar story with digital tools. Unfortunately, most people still can't imagine everything they could do with them or how they could fine-tune them, either by exploring their features or installing smarter and smarter add-ons. Take email: No matter which app you use, you're likely not using many practical features developers have added. Among other things, there are add-ons for easier meeting scheduling⁹, grammar correction¹⁰, reminding people who owe you a response¹¹, or even for AI generated messages¹². For browsers, there are extensions with templates¹³ for frequently repeated texts, summary generators¹⁴, even smart voice-powered assistants¹⁵ and more.

At your next team meeting, try a little exercise: Show each other how you work with email. You'll be surprised how many new things you might learn from each other. You could, or rather should, do this with all your tools.

People often ask me how they could potentially simplify their work. Carpenters, lawyers, technicians, real estate agents. We *always* find so many options—apps, online services, AI prompts... Sometimes I make a bet with them, challenging them to come up with an area where we can't find a helpful tool. I always win. Always. Because, as you already know: *There is an app for that.*

Loom? Zoom? Room?

Loom is an amazing tool for sending short video messages. Zoom is a platform for video calls. And by "room" I just mean a room for meeting up in person. It's not that one way of communication is better than another. The real trick is learning to pick the right tool for the job at hand.

Earlier in this book, I mentioned Paul Graham's article describing the difference between managers' and creators' calendars and emphasizing the need for uninterrupted time for deep work. If you can't find any such free blocks in your calendar, you've allowed yourself to be imprisoned by your work and have failed to learn how to properly manage your priorities.

So how do you build a system that will work for you and give you more free time? Focus on two fundamental decisions:

1. How much time will I spend on work itself, and how much on optimizing my systems?

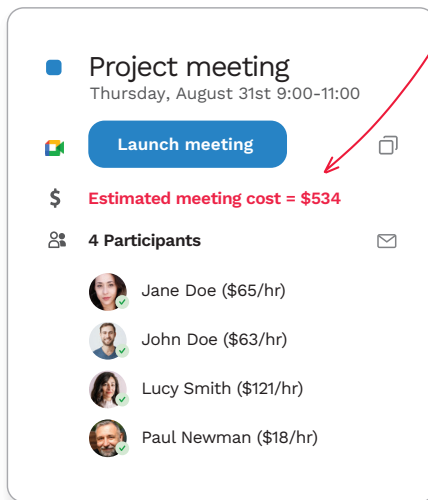
By the work itself, I mean executing tasks and duties. On the other hand, creating and optimizing systems involves working on things that allow you to automate your efforts and scale. It's like working on not-working.

2. How much time will I spend on synchronous vs. asynchronous work?

Synchronous work is the kind where several people work on the same task at the same time like an online call with a client or a meeting with coworkers. Meanwhile asynchronous lets you work whenever you want and communicate non-simultaneously.

Both options are super-important, not just for you but also for everyone you work with. If I make twelve people sit through a one-hour meeting to talk about a presentation they could have read for themselves and commented on in ten minutes, I've burned ten person-hours that could have been invested elsewhere.

IS IT REALLY WORTH IT?



Maybe we would hold fewer meetings and speak more to the point if we saw their true costs.

But the same goes in reverse. Sometimes instead of endless emailing it's better to handle a problem in real time and to use this time to improve your system and avoid similar problems in the future.

Optimizing Your Synchronous Work

Synchronous work means meetings, discussions, calls, video conferences, workshops, and more¹⁶. Here communication happens in real-time and typically has a defined start and end time.

Why do companies love meetings? Because they increase the chance that people will actually work on the given tasks. For this reason alone our company does most of the events in its leadership programs in real time. If they weren't scheduled and we just handed materials to participants, the majority would be too busy to even open them up. More urgent matters would always take precedence.

This is part of the reason why so many people's workloads are often sadly determined by the number of meetings they have. A meeting marked in the calendar gives us some certainty we'll actually go over a given topic. And it's so simple! Why make things complicated when you can just schedule a meeting and call it a day?

I'm not saying that synchronous communication is pointless, but it shouldn't be the default option. Personally, I prefer in-person meetings only for creative workshops, brainstorming sessions or important discussions with company leadership. And, of course, for informal discussions with clients, ideally in unconventional and pleasant locations. By the way, I advise this for everyone—pack up and change your environment (and also perspective) from time to time. It works great!

How can you make sure communication works for you, and not the other way around?

- Schedule meetings for 25 or 50 minutes instead of 30 and 60. Research¹⁷ indicates that back-to-back virtual meetings without breaks contribute to heightened stress levels.
- Most day-to-day things can be handled in half an hour. However, sometimes a longer, workshop-style meeting is more efficient, allowing you to wrap up in a couple of hours and avoid multiple follow-up meetings.
- Try an online office hour: Set a regular time in your calendar when anyone can join and go over whatever they would like to discuss.
- You can also do the same for your customers or business partners in the form of webinars. Engaging with ten potential customers in a webinar is ten times more efficient than individual meetings. You might be thinking: "Our services are too confidential, or our customers are too unique for a group setting." In my experience that's rarely the case. At least give it a try.
- If you want to keep everyone in the loop and check on how a project's going, try stand-up meetings¹⁸. They're a quick way to see what everyone's working on, how things are moving towards the goal, and if anyone's stuck on something.

And two bonus tips:

- If you work remotely, try "remote coworking." Connect with coworkers over audio or video and then work on your own stuff. Occasionally you can chat about work—or anything else. It's not a good fit for everyone, but it helps many teams to work better together.
- Some things can be worked out on a nice walk. I've had a few *walking meetings*, and *bike meetings* too. Going for a ride with business partners can make any discussion much more enjoyable, especially if you share a passion for cycling.

Business is getting less and less formal. Even top executives have started to ditch the dress shirts, put on hiking boots, and work in places surrounded by nature. Remote work has made it totally normal to join a Zoom call from your cozy cabin or beachside bungalow, and if a cat jumps on your lap during a video call, nobody's bothered by that anymore. If it does bother someone, maybe they're not the right person to work with anyway.

Tools for Synchronous Cooperation

If you feel like you're living your life on Zoom these days, you're not alone. Video calls are everywhere now—maybe even a bit too much. Even within this mode of communication, we're seeing more and more innovations.

- In today's virtual business world, video call quality is the new business suit. Fortunately, webcams are getting better all the time, and you can use amazing accessories¹⁹ to take your setup to the next level. Your laptop camera might be totally fine for everyday meetings, but for important presentations or client pitches it's worth upgrading to make an even better impression.
- With apps that work like virtual web cameras²⁰, you can project yourself onto your slides and spice up your presentation.
- Voice meeting tools²¹ can replace or supplement in-person meetings and good old voice messages can be transcribed automatically.
- In many applications²² you'll find smart features powered by AI—besides transcription they offer things like translation into various languages and the automatic creation of summaries or follow-up lists.

- Online meeting platforms are packed with features to make your meetings more interactive and productive. You can split participants into smaller groups for focused discussions, share surveys to gather feedback, and use virtual whiteboards.

They function just like traditional office whiteboards, but you can use them online. Brainstorm ideas, sketch out processes, play around with sticky notes, or paste in any digital content you want. They even have AI features that allow you to summarize or group information, transform ideas into structured models and diagrams, or automatically generate mind maps.

Just-in-time learning in action

Curious how I discover the best ways to use all these smart apps? Besides what I see with our customers and what we use ourselves, I always try to find out how other companies are using a tool if I hear they're really into it.

I'll give you an example: Once when I was listening to an amazing interview with Mihika Kapoor, a product manager at Figma, she mentioned that they used their own whiteboard tool, FigJam, very extensively. Specifically, she said: "We use FigJam on steroids—every single activity in our company is done in it." That caught my attention, so I wanted to find out more. It took just a couple of seconds to find a video (actually lots of them) about how they use it. Then I just used an AI summarizer²³ to extract key takeaways and get a better understanding of how to use these kinds of tools.

Optimizing Your **Asynchronous Work**

Asynchronous is when people are working on the same things at different times and places. They communicate via email or chat and collaborate through a shared digital workspace.

Did you know there are companies that operate mainly asynchronously? This brings us back to the software company GitLab, which employs over

2,000 people from more than 65 countries. Their Handbook²⁴ outlines their async-first model and preferred methods of communication and collaboration, which can be a great source of inspiration even for people who don't work in a similar manner. However, it's not about blindly copying someone else, but rather to take the best parts of each model and creating your own method that works for you through trial and error.

The core merits of asynchronous communication are clear:

1. **More freedom and flexibility:** You don't have to be in the same place or even online at the same time as everyone else.
2. **Everything you need is at your fingertips:** A well-designed digital workspace keeps all information easily accessible so you can find what you need without having to bother anyone.
3. **Fewer interruptions, more time for deep work:** Fewer meetings means more time to actually focus on your work and get things done.
4. **Everyone has a voice:** Because work can be done from anywhere and at any time, everyone gets to share their ideas, not just the usual suspects and the loudest people in the room. It's also great for coworkers from abroad, people with disabilities and more.
5. **A focus on action:** Thanks to the principle of "always default to action," no one waits for someone else to assign a task or approve a proposal. This makes the entire organization more agile and faster. Soccer fans are familiar with the saying, "If you don't know what to do with the ball, score a goal."

According to Darren Murph²⁵, the Head of Remote at GitLab, asynchronous operation is not a goal in itself, but rather a means to an end, "Async isn't about the work; async is about enabling midday hikes with your family. Async is about being more respectful of your colleagues' time."

In fact, this is precisely why we operate asynchronously. It's not that we never meet in person, but we strive to apply as many elements of asynchronous work as possible. I've even caught myself saying to someone: "Let's sync async" (meaning we'll use asynchronous communication tools to stay up-to-date).

Here are a few tips that help me with both communication and information sharing:

1. Communication

At our company, we prioritize written communication. I believe it's one of the most important skills of all time. Writing helps you think clearly, articulate your thoughts better and most importantly it makes all your conversations searchable. In the age of large language models that are capable of performing wonders with such unstructured data, perhaps the true value of this lies precisely in these conversations.

Writing also allows introverts to participate in discussions and enables people to think before contributing their thoughts. Not to mention that the better you are at writing, the better you'll be at using AI.

Writing shouldn't interrupt the flow of thoughts both in terms of speed and accuracy, and we should be able to write quickly without looking at the screen. As an experiment, try conducting a typing speed test²⁶ with your team. For anyone who doesn't reach more than 200 characters per minute, consider paying for a typing course. If someone is able to increase their speed from 150 to at least 200 characters per minute, they would save fifteen minutes for every hour of typing. By the way, I think this applies to our kids as well—the sooner they learn how to write well, the better.

Thanks to advancements in speech recognition, you can now write by simply talking. This can be a game-changer for people who struggle with typing, have physical limitations, or simply prefer to process their thoughts aloud. I use it a lot because I believe that in the future we'll be using our voices to control most apps (like J.A.R.V.I.S. from Iron Man, remember?). So I just want to get used to it as soon as possible.

You can use the built-in dictation function on your phone or computer, but you have to be precise and use special commands like "colon" or "period." However, there's an AI solution for that. You can use specialized apps²⁷ that transform fuzzy thoughts into clear text or generic AI chat with a prompt that rewrites the dictated text according to your desired outcome. It's necessary to dedicate some time to refining the prompt so you really get the results you want. My favorite app²⁸ allows me to not

only choose the right AI model for voice transcription, but also to define my prompt and before-and-after examples.

Although asynchronous communication primarily takes place via email, chat, or shared documents, that doesn't mean we can't use other media and communication formats.

I'm a huge fan of short videos. I always use them instead of messages or meetings whenever I need to:

- Send collaboration proposals to clients
- Assign tasks to coworkers together with their context
- Request proposals from multiple vendors
- Show someone how to work with an app
- Gather information on job applicants—here I use a video survey tool²⁹

If you use the right tools³⁰, it's super easy to record these videos from your phone or computer and share them with people you work with, and the best part is you can use each of them as many times as you want. When someone sends you a video, you can speed it up, and sometimes you don't even have to watch it at all since AI can create an automatic transcript.

Of course, sometimes I generate some of these short videos with my AI avatar, especially when I need to send many at once. When I was sending partnership proposals related to the launch of this book, I created a presentation and video message for the first partner myself and then had AI together with our automation tool handle the rest.

2. Building a second brain

One time I was trying to find an app I had heard about for making social media graphics. I faintly recalled it was called Pedro and had some connection to the company Buffer. So I googled "Pedro by Buffer." And there it was. Except the app wasn't Pedro, but Pablo. Yet it still appeared at the top of the search results. That got me thinking: Why can't our own systems be this smart?

The flood of information is insane: emails, chats, note-taking apps, project management apps. It's coming at us from every direction. But

your brain is supposed to be thinking *about things*, not *remembering things* and where to find them. That's why you need to create an information system that will reliably serve as your second brain³¹.

The goal is to document your work so that it essentially works for you. By keeping all the important information in one place, you ensure that you can easily share and update it. And above all, you don't have to keep asking questions like "Where's that presentation again?" or "What's the current status of this task?" all the time.

The most significant advantage of a well-documented system, according to GitLab, is the way it contributes to the scaling of knowledge. While traditional companies prioritize the speed at which information is delivered, GitLab focuses on the speed at which information is acquired.

How does this kind of system look in practice?

- We share folders and documents in a well-organized team space
- We have our processes documented as checklists and task templates
- We record information in a note-taking app for easy updating and sharing
- We write in clearly-defined channels where messages can be easily searched
- We stick to simple rules for storing information from chats and email
- Every team has clearly described activities, goals, products and services

This kind of system helps us to consistently make the principles of No Work a reality: simplicity (it's simple to change and find everything), perfection (it helps us get better in everything we do), and scaling (since you only have to do things once).

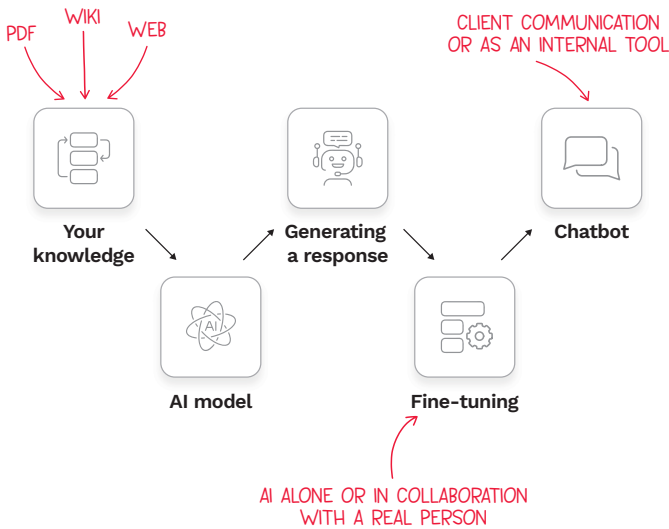
It also makes communication easier and brings you a number of other added benefits:

1. Information stays in the company, even when people leave
2. It's way easier to onboard and train new people

3. There are fewer questions and meetings, so people have more time to work
4. You'll be prepared to get the most out of AI

The last point is extremely important. Maybe the most important one. Because the sooner you start building this kind of system, the sooner you can use AI tools that can help you to connect all this information like in a chatbot that answers questions from customers and employees; a ChatGPT for your internal data.

This is exactly what our clients are looking for too—a way to escape from information overload and stop wasting their employees' time and energy.



Once you have your documents and files in order, you can start thinking about advanced scenarios for using AI:

- Do you want to collaborate with people from abroad? With the help of AI, you can easily translate all processes and documents into foreign languages.

- Are you drowning in paperwork or overwhelmed by regulations and standards? With the right tools, AI can simplify documentation and simultaneously update information across all your systems.
- Is a customer requesting a price quote? Just dictate a few sentences, and they will receive a custom-made and tailored offer.

When it comes to using AI, there are just two things that can hold you back: your imagination and how well organized your data is. That's why it's so important to regularly tidy up your system and clean up your data. It's like programmers say: garbage in, garbage out. So the more time you spend on your systems, the faster you'll be able to harness their full potential. In the brilliant article "Digital Prepwork", Seth Godin repeated the golden words of the famous American basketball coach John Wooden, "If you don't have time to do it right, when will you have time to do it over?"

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Simplify, improve, and scale your processes so you can focus on what really matters. Automation and standardization are your best friends here. They'll help you create a smooth-running operation that gets the job done.
2. In the age of AI, transparency is key. Don't be afraid to tell your clients and partners that you're using AI tools. It builds trust and demonstrates your commitment to staying ahead of the curve.
3. Turning your services into standardized products makes it possible to reach more customers without sacrificing quality and to create a business model that can be upscaled as you grow. This also applies to providing internal services to your coworkers.
4. The key to productivity lies in maximizing the amount of work not done. Instead of striving to do everything, concentrate on the essential tasks that bring the most value. Eliminate unnecessary tasks and avoid wasting time and resources on low-impact items. By doing less, you can paradoxically achieve more and cultivate a sustainable and more enjoyable work environment.
5. When evaluating new projects or tasks, adhere to the "hell yeah or no" rule. If an opportunity doesn't genuinely excite you or align with your goals, it's perfectly acceptable to decline. By being selective and focusing on projects that resonate, you can allocate your time and energy more effectively, ultimately achieving better results in the long run.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Choose a process that you do repeatedly and spend an hour this week simplifying, perfecting, and scaling it using the methods you've learned in this chapter.
2. Identify a repetitive task in your workflow and apply the "Only Handle It Once" (OHIO) principle by creating a template, building an automation, or crafting an AI prompt to streamline the task for future instances.
3. Challenge yourself to work asynchronously in the mornings for the next two weeks. Experience increased flexibility, fewer interruptions, and more opportunities for deep work. Save meetings and synchronous collaboration for the afternoons.

15. ~~How to Find~~ Create Your Ideal Job

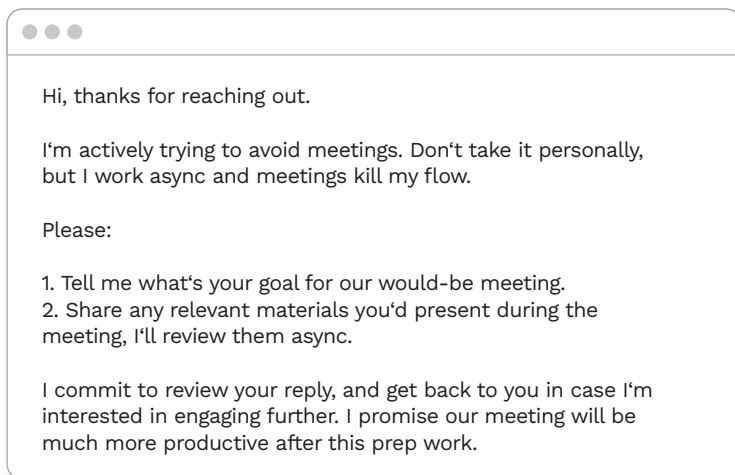
Your ideal work isn't something you find, it's something you create. It's similar to finding time for something you want to do: You either make the time, or it doesn't happen. The same applies to your ideal job. To explore smart apps, deploy AI, or create a new stream of income, you have to invest time and energy. And it's really up to you to make these things happen since nobody else can magically clear your schedule for you. Making your work life better doesn't always require big changes. There are dozens of little things you can start doing right now.

At one online conference I was invited to speak at, I also had the honor of introducing the other speakers. The organizers proposed that all the speakers email me their presentations, but I immediately said: "Please don't." I didn't want to keep track of who had and hadn't sent a presentation.

Instead I came up with a better idea: I copied the speaker list into a simple spreadsheet and added three columns: name, topic of the talk, link for downloading their presentations. I didn't care where speakers saved their slides as long as I had all the links in one place. With three minutes of work, I saved a ton of time and a lot of unnecessary conversations.

Situations like these can be uncomfortable and require courage. In companies that are obsessed with meetings, people need to learn to decline invitations or better yet to speak up and say: "Sorry, but this meeting doesn't make sense to me—let's do it a different way." Change is often difficult, especially since many companies are governed by inertia, and people get used to the status quo. Adjusting systems for collaborating with partners and customers is even more sensitive. However, even in these cases, change is possible.

Sergio Pereira, a veteran expert on remote-work deployment, has a great way of handling meeting requests. When someone asks for a meeting, he replies with the template from one of his amazing articles¹ "How to Reduce Meetings":



The same applies to time management. If you don't tell your boss or clients what you need to change, things will stay the same. Whether you want to set aside time for deep work or change the way you manage projects, it all comes down to communication. The best part is that none of these decisions have to be permanent. Feel free to experiment for a few weeks or months and see if it doesn't make you more productive and happier.

But first things first. Before you start tweaking the way you work, you've got to make one critical decision first: Figure out what you'll be working on. Even the best system is useless if you aren't working on the right things.

Work on the Right Things

One of the most important skills in life is knowing how to choose where to focus your attention. It's easy to get distracted by all sorts of things, especially stuff that seems "urgent," whether it's actually important or not. Plus, there are all sorts of other obligations we've accepted, either for money or status, or because we simply haven't learned how to say "no."

If you're thinking of creating an online course but you're too busy consulting every day, that's on you. Either you'll keep trading time for money or you'll start to work on something that will make money for you. Similarly, if you're itching to jump into something new and exciting but you feel stuck doing the daily grind, once again, that's your choice. Think about it: When was the last time you managed to work on something that really got you fired up?

When you're deciding on your priorities, I recommend starting from one simple idea: Your tasks aren't all equally important. Sure, some of them might give you a nice sense of satisfaction when you check them off your list, but in the long run nothing's really changed.

Then there are those other tasks that'll make everything else you do easier, faster, or better in the future. Sometimes they're called high-leverage tasks and they are precisely the ones you want to put at the top of your list. These might involve mastering new smart tools, finding better ways to work, or perfecting your presentation skills (or, if you aren't a native speaker, enhancing your English language skills). Things like this let you achieve far more of what you want.

Not all tasks are created equal: The simple LNO framework

When I'm thinking about my priorities, I use one of the more impactful frameworks I know: LNO². It was created by Shreyas Doshi, a seasoned product management expert who has led successful products at Stripe, Twitter and Google. Don't be misled by the fact that it was intended for product managers. I firmly believe its principles can be applied by anyone who wants to make sure they're working on the right things.

It is built on a simple idea: Your tasks don't all have the same importance. Doshi therefore recommends dividing them into three buckets:

L (Leverage)—Important tasks that have the highest added value and that you should therefore pay far more attention to than others.

N (Neutral)—Do these tasks as you are used to in standard quality, but don't spend more time on them than necessary.

O (Overhead)—On the contrary, overhead tasks of this type need to be done without any effort, extra attention to quality and ideally without much thought.

When you combine it with my AAAI (Author > Authorization > AI) framework, it can help you identify areas you should focus on, but also things you should completely outsource to AI.

At its core, it's the old principle of "hire one to hire ten." For instance, if you're building a sales department, you can either select and train salespeople one by one, or you find a head of sales who will do it for you and moreover probably do it better. The same principle can be applied to your skills and work tasks.

Maintenance Pays Off

Ever heard of biofouling? I found out about it when I was trying to figure out why sailboats get slower over time. Seaweed, crustaceans, and other marine organisms accumulate on a boat's hull, and this layer gradually reduces its speed by up to *fifty percent*. So occasionally you have to pull the boat out of the water and give it a thorough cleaning.

Digital tools need this same care. Once in a while, you need to fine-tune them, explore their new features, and adapt them to your current needs. But we often forget about this. Then we're surprised to find ourselves floating along slowly even when there is wind in our sails.

Experience has repeatedly demonstrated to me that regardless of what your job is or what tools do you use, this is what works best:

1. Digital housekeeping
2. Mapping and visualizing your workflows
3. A retrospective and open discussion on what's working (or not)
4. Principles and team agreements

1. DIGITAL HOUSEKEEPING

Declutter your digital life. Get your files, folders, tasks and note-taking apps in order. Simplify access to frequently used applications or documents and throw out everything you don't need, whether it's an old channel in a team chat or links on your browser's bookmarks bar that you don't use any more. Consider how you can consolidate all information in one place, especially things you do over and over again. Go through the apps you've always wanted to deploy but never had the time: This might include a password manager or a faster virtual keyboard for your phone.

Evaluate what you frequently use and what's just taking up space. And I'm not just talking about physical space on your hard drive. I'm talking about mental space, too. The less you see on your screens the better. Don't be afraid to make a radical change and, instead of overthinking it, throw everything into an archive folder and start from scratch.

Cliff Hazell, who spent several years leading a team of coaches at Spotify, blogged³ about a similar bold move of cleaning up a ticketing app that his company used to manage developer requests. There were almost 14,000 open tickets, most of which hadn't been touched for over six months. He could spend months figuring out which ones were important and which weren't. Instead he decided to take a risk. One afternoon he simply closed them all. He told people to let him know if they needed to reopen any of them, but he only received a single message, "Why did we get so many notifications?"

It doesn't matter what time of the year it is, it's always a good time for a spring cleaning.

2. MAPPING AND VISUALIZING YOUR WORKFLOWS

Remember that tangled onboarding process at Gen, or the numerous automation opportunities at RE/MAX? Sometimes you have to break down your processes step by step to see how well they're actually working and where you can make improvements or automate things.

A client of mine recently lost an employee, and it wasn't until she started searching for his replacement that she asked us to take a closer look at what he actually did and how. Guess what we found? We informed her company that more than 70% of his work could be automated and the rest could be passed to a teammate looking to make some extra cash. It's kind of funny but easy to understand. As long as their coworker was still around, nobody questioned how he was doing things or if it could be done in a better way.

Let's be honest: If you left your job today, how much of your work could be automated or replaced via AI? It's an uncomfortable question, but it's better to ask yourself this now than to have management answer it for you later.

The ability to map and visualize processes and fix their weaknesses is incredibly useful. It can be learned, and there are many tools that can help⁴. For starters, just talk to your teammates about your workflows and start brainstorming ways to make them better. Focus on the activities you do frequently or the ones that bring the most value. It's good to know what your office apps can do because then you'll be able to come up with ideas for improvement much faster.

You can map and visualize nearly everything, including your professional development, career growth and even your journey to No Work. Try using the No Work Navigator for a week (we talked about it in the chapter titled "The Foundation of the Digital Mindset"). It's the perfect place to write down your ideas for instant improvements as well as long-term goals and gaps where you should seek further education.

Questions to help you set up better processes:

- If you had 10x more work, what would you need to change or automate to keep up?
- If you only worked half the time, how would you manage to get things done?
- If you hired an assistant, which tasks would you delegate to them?
- If you found a magic wand, which tasks would you make disappear?
- What do you keep putting off because you just don't feel like doing it?

And one of my favorite questions from the one and only Tim Ferriss: What would it look like if it were easy?

3. A RETROSPECTIVE AND OPEN DISCUSSION ON WHAT'S WORKING (OR NOT)

I often tell my team that it's sometimes necessary *to slow down in order to speed up*. That's precisely what a retrospective⁵ can help us achieve. When you're doing this kind of overview, you're basically taking a step back and looking at how you've been working so far. The goal is to find ways to make things better and figure out the exact steps you need to take to get there. You can do this on your own or with your team, and there are a bunch of tools and techniques that can make it a lot easier. My favorite is *Start / Stop / Continue*: Think about what you should *start* doing, what you should *stop*, and what's working well enough that you should *continue* with it.

Stop	Start	Continue
Having long meetings and set a default time of 25 minutes.	Celebrating mistakes as long as they're not critical.	Regular informal meetings with the CEO.
Creating new communication channels all the time.	Defining which communication channels are official.	Retrospective meetings at the end of each quarter.
Complaining about how it works elsewhere.	Using ChatGPT and DeepL for translations.	Asynchronous "stand-up meetings" via chat.

I recommend using a virtual whiteboard⁶ where all team members can express themselves. This allows introverts to contribute, especially if you foster an open culture with brutally honest feedback.

Another useful tool is the "past year review"⁷ created by Tim Ferriss. Look at your calendars and to-do lists: What did you spend your time on, and who did you spend it with? Which tasks or projects were actually useful, and which ones were a waste of time? Don't just think about *what* you did, but also *how* you did it. What could you have done better and how?

You can even think about whether you actually enjoyed the work or not. Try making a list of your tasks, projects and the people you did the work with, and then divide them into two columns: positive and negative. Did working on them give you energy or did they drain you? Did you have fun or not? This can help you figure out what to focus on. One of my mentors used to say that to be happy, you don't need to chase after more good things, you just need to get rid of the bad ones.

4. PRINCIPLES AND TEAM AGREEMENTS

When you need to find something out, do you dig around in your systems, or would you rather ask someone? And when you want to talk something over, do you automatically think "meeting" or "email?" Our mindset influences the work culture of the entire team, which in turn affects the way we work.

There are two essential tools that can assist you in identifying the core elements of your current work culture, principles and team agreements. Both of these are useful for clearly defining what your company's work culture is and what steps could be taken to help make it better.

Principles describe the very foundations of how your organization operates. Most people aren't able to follow every rule to the letter, but if you have a few key principles that everyone keeps in mind, you can build them into more detailed rules or even operate just on those principles alone.

Principles of cooperation describe the basic values that keep a team running well, so it's important to communicate them properly. Try to use principles that people already know, or if you come up with new ones, keep them simple. For example:

- Done is better than perfect
- BHF: Brutally Honest Feedback
- Sell first, build later

Team agreements document your team's consensus on the rules and methods for team collaboration, communication, and the use of digital tools. That's why it's important to update them regularly and use them when you're onboarding new people to the team.

Your team agreements might look something like this:

- The default meeting length is 25 minutes.
- We record all our regular meetings and keep them with the meeting notes.
- Every project gets its own page in Notion with all the important details.
- We respond to chat messages within 48 hours.
- We do not send files directly; we just share a link to where they're stored.
- "No agenda, no attenda": If there's no agenda, don't bother inviting me.

Having clear principles and team agreements is incredibly important for improving communication and changing how people think about the work they are doing, both within the team and at the leadership level. Principles play a crucial role in driving digital transformation, even if they are not always directly involved in the process. When I see a firm that's fixed its problems with overworked staff, it's rarely thanks to new tools. Almost always it's because the leadership is actively encouraging and sometimes even pushing everyone to find better ways of working.

Unfortunately, it's often managers who are the most resistant to change. They're always "too busy" to learn and grow, even though they're sometimes the ones who need it the most. If you can't get your managers

to support your ideas or to lead by example, you'll have to step up and try to change the organization from the bottom up. That's one of the reasons I introduced the "two percent" rule for the Digi Challenge project. According to the rule, everyone dedicates at least two percent of their work time, usually about three hours per month, to process improvement and work automation.

How much time are you spending on this?

There's an app for...housekeeping and other stuff as well

Everything mentioned in this chapter can be supported with smart apps—from decluttering your workspace to fine-tuning your processes:

- For visual mapping or brainstorming with your team, you can use Miró, Mural, or Microsoft Whiteboard (it's not the best, but at least it's accessible for people working in corporations and state institutions).
- You can even discuss a process, paste the transcript into an AI tool and let it create a workflow for you. Or you can record a Loom video that automatically generates an SOP (standard operating procedure).
- If you're serious about processes and workflows, take a look at Process Street. They have a new feature that uses AI to build workflows in just a few clicks.

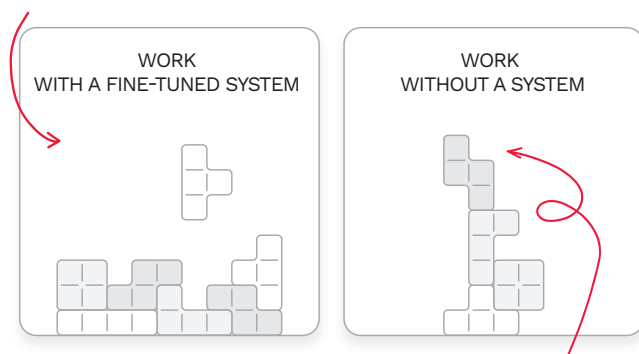
Pretty soon, most apps will have "AI cleanup." There are also a bunch of micro-apps that can help you stay organized without any effort. Two of my favorites are Get Sorted (it automatically organizes files and folders) and ScreenshotMagic (it uses an "AI vision" feature to rename screenshots based on their content). Both are available on Apple devices, but you can find alternatives for devices operating on Windows or Android by researching their features and using Google or AI.

Finding Your Digital Zen

From time to time, someone asks us for training on digital wellbeing or even digital detox. If you're not familiar with these concepts, it's simple: It's about having a healthy and balanced relationship between people and digital technologies to avoid feeling overwhelmed and stressed. The first thing I always want to know is what their calendars and collaboration tools look like. Because achieving this sense of well-being is not a matter of a single workshop. It's about understanding the importance of having a good system in place.

When you have a clear system where nothing escapes your attention, everything is easily accessible, most things are automated, and nothing catches you off guard. But if your system is a mess and you're constantly getting bombarded with notifications, even a harmless question from a coworker can push you over the edge.

NEW TASK? NO PROBLEM.



OMG, I AM OVERWHELMED
AND DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO FIRST.

How do things look for you?

Whenever I feel like I'm losing control, I think of Michael Lopp's "Seven Levels of Busy"⁸:

1. **NOT BUSY:** My schedule is wide open. I can choose infinite paths. Zero commitments. The weekend. I sleep like a baby. Life is good, but am I living my best life?
2. **STUFF TO DO:** I have a few commitments wandering around my brain. They are reasonable, knowable, and not deadline-based. I can keep track of everything in my head.
3. **SIGNIFICANT COMMITMENTS:** I have enough commitments that I need to keep track of them in a tool because I can no longer organically triage. My calendar is a thing I check infrequently, but I do check it to remind myself of the flavor of this particular day.
4. **AT CAPACITY:** My to-do and my calendar are full. I frequently have to make "What is more important?" decisions to help me figure out where to invest my time. There is no unscheduled time, but I continue to feel on top of things. Inbox Zero maintained.
5. **CRACKS IN THE FACADE:** I tell myself I'm on top of all the things, but there are early signs of excessive work. This is when Inbox Zero fails. I know daily surprises could be avoided if I had just a bit more time. I have started saying "I'm sorry" a lot. Stuff isn't getting dropped, but execution becomes sloppy.
6. **CRUSHING COMMITMENTS:** The incoming amount of things are beyond my ability to triage. Change is constant. Just saying "No" to inbound things is not enough. Stuff is falling on the floor, and I'm not noticing. Work hours spill into life hours. Tired.
7. **UNSUSTAINABLE:** I live minute to minute. Eating and other necessities are shoved in-between things, if not fully neglected. To-do lists do not help me here because I do not have time to maintain them. My calendar changes from hour to hour. It is clear by how I walk how busy I am. I get a lot of unintentional "He's screwed" looks. Zero work-life balance. This is not sustainable.

So, which level are you currently at? If you're at level four or higher, you need to hit the brakes and focus on getting things back under control before you do anything else.

I was reminded of how crucial this approach is when one of our customers just randomly called me up and apologized that though they'd paid for an

expensive digital productivity course, they wouldn't be able to make it. Guess why—because they're overworked! Of course they are. I suggested a two-week experiment where his employees would track how they spend their time. Then they could work with one of our digital productivity coaches to figure out ways to use AI to automate some of their work. He said he'd love to but can't because those people are "really, really overwhelmed." I didn't know what to say. Perhaps something about how you can lead a horse to water, but...

When employees are constantly busy, the pain isn't just that they can't keep up with their current work. The bigger problem is that they don't have time to explore new opportunities. Thomas Edison said that opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work. But maybe it's the opposite and some of us miss out on opportunities because we're simply working too much.

How to Find the Best Tools

By now you're probably tired of me emphasizing that it's really not about the technology itself, but it's about what you do with it. Still, my clients and friends are always asking me for tips and recommendations on what app to use for this or that. I can't blame them—after all, I am always the one saying there's an app for that, so why wouldn't they ask? But instead of giving you a bunch of specific tips, I've got something even better: a guide on how to find and choose the perfect tool for your needs.

If you're self-employed, you generally have far more options than if you are working in a corporation operating in a regulated environment. A good friend of mine, Filip Hajek, who happens to work as the head of the learning & development department for the biggest bank in our country described this precisely: "Testing something in ideal conditions is one thing. Deploying it within the complex reality of a large enterprise, which carries a significant technological and process debt and is subject to security, legal, ethical and many other restrictions, is a completely different game. On the other hand, before Covid it seemed impossible for most of us to work remotely. Today it's the absolute standard. Yes, there will be some inevitable growing pains, but AI is so fundamental that it has transformed the rules of the game."

The current state of the digital landscape has proven him right. Everything is changing more quickly than I've ever seen in my career. This includes how companies use digital tools.

When you're looking for the right technology, there are a few general principles you should follow:

1. You probably already have what you need

One of my favorite workout programs is *Convict Conditioning*⁹. It's based on a simple idea: Prisoners have very limited options for working out, but there are still many exercises you can do even without any equipment and in a minimum amount of space.

It's the same with work tools. It's incredible how many people have no idea about all the features their office apps offer, even though they spend hours using them every day.

Are you getting bad results from AI? Learn how to give it better instructions. Are you stuck doing the same boring tasks over and over? Start automating—chances are your phone, computer, and the other tools you currently are using can already do it.

2. Learn to ask

Whenever someone asks me if there's an app for something, I always wonder if they even tried looking it up themselves. I get it, people want a recommendation they can trust. They don't want to scroll through endless options, and maybe they just don't feel like doing the legwork. But here's the thing: What works for one person might not work for another. Often when I suggest a specific tool, it's followed by a flood of questions: Is it paid or free? Is it for Windows or Mac? That's why in our programs we don't just hand out answers like fish on a platter. We teach people how to fish; how to find the right apps anytime they need.

Of course, feel free to ask me anything, whether it's in person or online. That's what this book is all about! But before you do, why not spend a few minutes searching on your own. Because AI can help with that, a lot in fact.

- Ask Google or AI to analyze your workflow by describing it or by explaining what you want to achieve.
- If you find a tool that isn't the right fit, look for alternatives (it can be as simple as searching for "Raycast alternatives for Windows").
- Browse popular platforms like There's an AI for That, Product Hunt, or G2.
- If you come across a video that recommends or compares specific tools, you can use AI to create a quick summary and ask about the points that interest you.
- You can do the same with articles or even discussions on social media. With a single prompt in a tool like Bardeen, you can download the discussions, upload them to AI and you're good to go.

You might be surprised at what you find. But don't stop there. Don't be afraid to try out different tools and see what works best for you.

Also, if the app you find doesn't work the way you want, keep asking. It doesn't matter whether you use Google or AI. The really important thing is to keep asking questions, regardless of how silly they may seem, until you get the answers you're looking for. Don't forget that the best models can also analyze images, so you can easily upload a screenshot of the app you're having trouble with and ask about anything you're interested in.

3. Pick the best

Don't skimp on hardware or software. It's truly worth it. You use your work tools for most of your productive hours each day, so those hours should be as well spent and as pleasant as possible.

I believe that with the rise of AI the differences between individual tools may become enormous. We are already seeing apps in the same field playing in completely different leagues (compare Microsoft Whiteboard to Miro, or Microsoft Lists to Airtable). These differences are only going to grow, and we may reach a point where some apps generate significantly more value than others. So if you're serious about getting things done, you should have the best tools at your disposal.

Whenever you invest in a new tool, learn how to work with it properly. Play around with it, see how other people use it, ask AI for some tips and

tricks. Sometimes it helps for me to subscribe to an app for an entire year instead of month-to-month, because it forces me to actually use it. Ideally, try the tool for free or pay for one month. Then if you like it, go for the yearly subscription which is usually cheaper (especially on Black Friday or Cyber Monday, which is why I set a reminder for myself a couple of days before).

Once in a while, it's good to evaluate whether or not you're paying more for your tools than you should. Keep a list of the apps you're using and regularly cancel subscriptions you no longer really use. For tools you only work with occasionally, create one access for the whole team or explore alternative payment methods. Sometimes you'll also find a similar app that's cheaper or even free.

Don't be afraid to go against the trends. The founders of the Basecamp app decided to ditch the cloud in early 2023. Instead of paying for Amazon's server services, they bought their own servers just like companies did twenty years ago and saved several millions of dollars a year.

It's easy to be hypnotized by the simplicity, speed and features of new apps. But just like everything else in business, you should make sure you're getting your money's worth.

So how exactly can you find the best apps and online services? The same way you develop a digital mindset and new skills: by using the IES framework.

Inspiration

Every now and then, go through popular software catalogs¹⁰, visit the app store on your phone, check out browser extension markets¹¹, and of course follow digital productivity experts on social media. If you're attending a workshop or webinar, don't be shy about asking questions.

Experimentation

Set aside time for practical experiments with new technologies to discover how they can be useful to you. Organize a hackathon. Subscribe to

Poe.com for a month so you can compare outputs from various AI models. Hire an automation expert for a few hours and explore the integration of AI into your processes together. You can coordinate a month-long deep dive into as many new tools as possible, or cautiously run just one small experiment a month.

Sharing

Chat with your colleagues about your experiences, observe tech enthusiasts in action and become an active member of their communities. Don't let failures get you down, keep pushing forward and seek advice from others until you reach your goals. Bring digital coaches or individuals from tech startups into your company and learn how they would tackle your challenges. In essence: You're not alone. By sharing knowledge, you can avoid dead ends and find shortcuts that will lead to greater success.

Don't forget: There's never been a better time to dive into everything you've been dreaming of doing.

There's an app for that. And that's not all, you also have easy access to AI, infinite information and people willing to help.

So, where will you start?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. People don't just stumble upon their dream job—you actively build it. It takes time, energy and a willingness to embrace even small changes to create a work life you love.
2. Focus on working on the right things and prioritize high-leverage tasks that will make everything else you do easier. Use frameworks like LNO (Leverage, Neutral, Overhead) to identify activities that will yield the greatest benefits in the long run.
3. Regularly "maintain" your digital tools and processes. Keep all your software updated and your files and folders well-organized, explore new features of your apps, and adapt tools to your current needs. Map out workflows to spot inefficiencies and set clear principles for ideal collaboration and communication.
4. Remember the importance of work-life balance and avoid the stress that comes from being overworked.
5. When looking for new tools, first focus on taking advantage of what you already have. If needed, invest in the best hardware and software for your needs. Continuously seek inspiration on how to use them in the best possible way.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Use the "Start/Stop/Continue" technique to create a list of things you'd like to start doing, things you should stop doing altogether and the things that are working well. Focus on both the tools and way of working.
2. Conduct a debrief or retrospective session within your current team or after completing a project to identify areas where you should improve next time.
3. Do digital housekeeping: Tidy up your folders and documents, clean up frequently used links in your browser (and ideally, place the most used ones on the main toolbar), and organize your most commonly used tools.

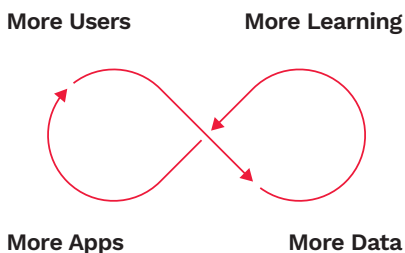
The Challenges of the Future

16. The Challenges of the Future

My friends keep asking me whether it's even possible to write a book about technology when everything is changing so fast. There are hundreds or maybe even thousands of new apps being released each day, social media is constantly buzzing with stories about the bold new ways people are using AI and every month there appears to be a new AI breakthrough. Maybe it is still possible—and maybe the fast pace of the changes even makes it easier. These changes force me to focus more on timeless principles and see the world with the eyes of tomorrow, not of today.

I don't have to be a futurologist to see where things are headed. Nvidia, the company behind the chips that power AI, says this technology could be a million times more powerful than it is now. *A million times*. Can you imagine that? I admit I can't. But even if their PR people got a little excited and added a zero or two, one thing's for sure: The tools we're using today represent the least intelligent iteration of what we can expect in the coming years.

Nearly every tech firm has started to pour vast amounts of capital into AI development for this very reason. And not just tech firms: Consulting firms, consumer brands and even entire nations are joining them. Personally, I believe that many others will benefit from this race. The evolution of the refrigerator over the last century didn't just enrich its innovators, it also created entirely new markets for chilled beverages and packaged foods. The same applies for the internet, computers and other inventions.



That's why developers, from large corporations to independent hackers, have swiftly seized the opportunity to integrate their apps with AI, pushing the limits of what we can achieve with them. These new apps bring in new customers who train them with their data and contribute to their further development. This leads to further improvements, more ways to use them, more apps—it just keeps going. We are at the beginning of something that is not going to stop anytime soon.

Giant Challenges Ahead

New tech doesn't always bring positives and bright futures. AI could still be far more powerful than any other "tech" we've seen before—more powerful than many of us can even imagine. That's why it could represent a serious risk for our society and all of humanity. Since it's the business sector that is now driving investments¹ in AI development, researchers are racing to create increasingly capable systems, but nobody (not even their creators!) can fully understand, predict, or reliably control them.

As a result, both ordinary people and experts have valid concerns about the impacts of AI. Many big names in business and academia have begun to call² for a halt to all research until safety protocols and strict rules are established. Individual countries have also started to work intensively on regulation.

I myself, am aware of the presence of a number of risks, but I don't think this development can be stopped. You can regulate how major players design and operate large AI models, but now that we have hundreds of thousands of models available, (many of which can run locally even without an internet connection), there are many aspects we can no longer expect to control. So AI is here to stay, and although its impacts are difficult to predict, it is good to keep in mind the challenges we will face.

In a survey³ conducted by Microsoft, 87% of participants stated that they were concerned about at least one aspect of using generative AI. My first thought: The other 13% have no idea what AI is capable of. Some people downplay both the challenges and the potential of AI because they've had bad experiences. They gleefully share examples of bad outputs, which often only highlight their own lack of expertise. They are however right,

AI isn't perfect. It's still just a technology with many imperfections. It can think up nonsense, create designs that violate the laws of physics and repeat itself endlessly.

The companies behind new smart tools are also increasingly restricting their systems because they do not want the outputs to cause negative publicity or legal problems. This has pushed AI to deliver answers that are sometimes so cautious or carefully expressed that they are practically useless.

Focusing on these shortcomings is convenient, but it's also short-sighted. AI is developing at a furious pace, and millions of smart people are working on making it better every day.

This is yet another reason why we need to deal with a number of questions, challenges, and concerns that go hand in hand with the rise of AI. Even if we can't solve them all, knowing about the risks will help us use these technologies more safely and appropriately.

1. Impacts on individuals

Will our children be less intelligent than us? Will we lose the ability to do complex tasks? Will we fall victim to internet scams? What will happen with our sensitive data and personal information? And what about people—will AI put us out of work?

People have been afraid of new technology affecting their skills for a long time. When the first calculators appeared in schools, teachers reacted pretty much the same way. Some of them got excited and included them in their lessons, while others hesitated, worrying that kids would get dumber and lazier. But in the end, do you really think calculators caused that to happen?

AI is just another piece of tech in a long line of new tools. If you're wondering if students will use it to cheat, I can tell you right now: They will! They always have. But at the same time AI can also make us rethink the whole purpose of education, the tools we use to learn and the role of teachers. After all, a teacher's job isn't to just stand in front of the blackboard and assign homework. It's to inspire, to create a safe space

for experimenting and learning and to help students develop their talents in new ways.

By the way, have you noticed a parallel with the role of managers in modern companies? Instead of knowing all the answers and directing their subordinates, today's managers are more often required to create an environment in which their colleagues can grow and succeed.

You also won't find programmers using GitHub Copilot who say they never tackle big problems anymore. On the contrary, they've freed themselves from routine and can finally take on proper challenges⁴. This same idea applies to the rest of us as well. Thanks to new smart tools, we can start asking more interesting questions and looking at our problems from a fresh perspective.

Data privacy and cybersecurity face similar challenges. Even today we must carefully consider where we store sensitive information and what links we click on. These considerations will likely become increasingly difficult as the tempting capabilities of new smart tools rob us of our caution. One of my friends wanted to start a new business and insisted on doing everything without AI. He even considered creating a label called "Made by Humans, Not AI." However, when I asked him how he planned to translate his website, he admitted he was counting on using machine translation through DeepL.

Likewise we shouldn't believe everything we google or see on social media. In fact, we shouldn't believe almost anything we see online. Deepfake audio, video, and photos generated by AI look almost exactly like reality. They can be created from existing photos or a few seconds of recordings, and it costs almost nothing to generate them, so they will appear more and more often. Scammers will try to use them to steal money or sensitive data, for example by imitating your friends or coworkers.

That's why it's critical to stay in the know and keep your loved ones informed. You should be willing and ready to sacrifice a few minutes of your precious free time to talk about these risks with your parents, children, and friends on a regular basis. You may end up saving them from disaster or from finding themselves in situations that simply didn't exist in the recent past.

Almost everything that can be used to our advantage (such as avatars for training, content creation, and sales) can also be used for nefarious purposes (avatars for fraud, dating scams, and abuse), so we shouldn't underestimate the risks. However, perhaps the fact that these threats exist is not entirely bad news. Understanding nuance, verifying information, thinking critically—that's our job, isn't it? It's something that helps make our role on the labor market irreplaceable.

2. The impact on companies

Will companies become even more dependent on these technologies? Will they be more vulnerable and prone to leaks of sensitive data? Will they even have anything to produce? And what about their employees—won't they freak out when AI starts taking their jobs?

Since at least the days of seafaring exploration and the industrial revolution, companies have continually had to adapt to new conditions. AI doesn't change anything about this process of natural selection. What will happen to the companies that can't figure out how to use it well? They'll end up with AI spitting out damaging content and making bad decisions. Those that try to avoid it altogether will likely be overtaken by their competitors or new startups, and their employees will suffer in subpar and poorly paid jobs.

It all comes down to the approach of company owners and leaders. Can they see the potential, importance and urgency of AI? Are they investing in the development of new skills? Are they hiring experts who can guide them through the process?

If they approach AI similarly to how they approach the development of basic digital skills, they are going to be in trouble. I've seen it firsthand: Many leaders are completely clueless about what's possible these days. They can barely use basic office software, let alone understand their new roles in an AI-powered world. As we discussed earlier, they need to push technological boundaries and cultivate an environment where teams can experiment, innovate and leverage their talents.

Fortunately, this is a problem that can be solved, but it requires the courage and energy to embrace change. If the owner or the management refuse to take action, proactive employees can take responsibility and still turn things around. If you find yourself in such a situation, maybe it's your chance to step up and shine.

But first, organizations need to ensure their teams have access to the AI tools they need to succeed, and that they know how to use them. Some companies prohibit their employees from entering internal information into AI due to the risk of exposing sensitive data. This approach may well backfire however. When employees know what the best AI models are capable of but are forced to use less effective tools, it can lead to the growth of "shadow IT." People will always find ways to use even prohibited tools to make their work easier. As the saying goes, "security at the expense of user experience comes at the expense of security." In short, digital security is and will remain one of the most important topics and skills, and companies need to invest some effort to avoid problems.

There are many more topics they will also have to deal with. Due to the widespread development of AI models, today we can make use of commercial models, open models, or even train our own. But there are a number of questions and decisions here. Which model would be a good choice for us? Can we train AI on our clients' data? What's most important to us: price, speed, or performance? What about prompt ownership, legal regulations, and licenses for using individual models? How do you communicate with your employees and customers about a project where AI is taking over the work of tens or hundreds of people?

This is one of several reasons why it's essential to hire people who understand how AI works, how it learns and how to integrate it into your workflows. Moreover, it's crucial to have someone who can help you make decisions that are safe for your organization and brand.

As for the last question, whether AI will take our jobs, it is possible. Or rather, it is *highly likely*. But don't worry—if you're reading this book, you know for the foreseeable future AI will just take away the boring stuff you don't want to do anyway.

3. Impact on society

Will we be overwhelmed with fake, fraudulent, and otherwise harmful content? Will disinformation and cybercrime skyrocket? Will we see crowds of frustrated, unemployed people?

Technology can help people, this includes people with bad intentions. In a single click it can produce informative articles or supply endless amounts of disinformation. And since AI can communicate just like a real person in a chat, you can be sure some will shamelessly use this ability to extract money out of lonely or vulnerable people.

Nonetheless, the flood of fake photos and videos and voices can also have the opposite effect. If we can't trust what we see and hear on the internet, perhaps the importance of traditional media will return. If I try to be a great optimist, it is even possible that people will start thinking more critically. After all, do you know which day people think most critically about what they see on the internet? April 1st.

However, we will need to address AI-related issues that concern copyrighted material, intellectual property, privacy rights, liability for damages and other broad legal areas. Therefore, it will be very important to establish well-designed policies and make sure they're properly enforced. Nations and international organizations will have to rewrite laws and regulations, and other guardrails will be constructed by future court rulings. Unfortunately, politicians are hardly enthusiastic innovators. The last time I had the opportunity to speak in front of some of them, they were only interested in whether taking action would hurt their chances before the next elections. So even I am curious which way the regulation of AI will turn. All I know is that bad political decisions can slow down entire even hundred-million-strong communities.

As for the unemployment problem, in the previous chapters we explored both sides—how to replace human jobs but also how to create new ones. What's important is to wake up to one essential fact: The world doesn't have a limited amount of work. Economics knows this phenomenon as the "lump of labor" fallacy⁵, which is the mistaken assumption that the entry of new workers (or, in our case, automation) into the labor market will put

existing workers at a disadvantage. This argument has been used against women entering the workforce and even against economic immigrants. Now it is also being used against AI.

We also shouldn't forget about the Jevons paradox, named after the British economist William Jevons, who found that greater efficiency in the use of coal led to increased coal consumption in a wide range of industries. This means that when a resource can be used more efficiently, we end up using more of it, not less. When cars become more fuel-efficient, people may drive more and ultimately use more fuel. When you implement new water-saving technology, people may be less mindful of their water use, and so on. With AI, we could see something similar. Aaron Levie, the co-founder and CEO of Box, summed it up perfectly in one of his thoughtful posts⁶. He imagined a software company with 10 engineers. With AI, these engineers become 50% more productive, effectively giving the company the output of 15 engineers for the cost of 10. This increased productivity allows the company to create better features, driving income growth. As a result, the company will need and want to hire more engineers to maintain its competitive edge and continue growing.

There's another pretty big consideration that we tend to forget about: Our population is getting older. The population curve is merciless, and without new technologies we simply won't have enough people to work and keep the economy running. Not to mention that in many countries birth rates are well below replacement levels for maintaining the current workforce. That's an important reason why we need to invest in a future where there are likely to be fewer workers available.

Naturally, I'm aware of the further risks and possible negative impacts of advanced technologies on society. However, I'm not among the doomsayers who view the future catastrophically. I believe in the human capacity to adapt and cope. Moreover, I'm a lifelong techno-optimist, and if I can offer you one piece of advice, it is precisely this: Stay positive. No matter how things turn out, staying positive just makes life a whole lot better.

Why AI will save the world

In response to a wave of catastrophic predictions, renowned technology investor Marc Andreessen published a fantastic article⁷ addressing several challenges mentioned in this chapter. He dives into big questions like, "Will AI Kill Us All?", "Will AI Ruin Our Society?", and "Will AI Take All Our Jobs?," among several others. He presents compelling arguments to refute these concerns, so I strongly recommend reading this.

If you're too busy to read the article yourself, at least use AI to learn more. You can summarize it, paste it into an AI app and have a conversation about the key topics, or even use a text-to-speech app to listen on the go. It's really worth doing.

What's the Solution?

The best ways to prevent the negative impacts of AI are to focus on developing and fine-tuning even better technologies while also investing in education at all levels: in schools, organizations, government institutions and among the general public.

Technology is a part of the solution simply because new challenges often can't be addressed without it. The only intelligence that can find a signal in the data noise produced by AI is not human, but most likely, yet again, AI.

Education is even more important. This isn't only about ensuring that we know how to use AI safely for the right things and in the right way. It is an instance where only by making a concerted effort to understand all the potential applications of such technology can we hope to fully grasp its possible consequences, both good and bad. Otherwise, we can't and are simply sticking our heads in the sand.

A few months after the launch of ChatGPT, the first schools began to ban its use—not just by students but also by teachers. Around that same time my son's school contacted me asking if we could go over the possibilities

for using AI in education. I genuinely believe that this is precisely the attitude we should have.

Yes, on the one hand students can create a whole final thesis with one short prompt. On the other hand a teacher can just as quickly prepare an interesting assignment that ensures kids and teenagers will learn far faster than before—and have fun doing it.

So, regarding AI, the question isn't "yes or no," but "how."

New smart tools can be used for developing truly modern education in so many ways, and every country concerned about the future should be reaching for them. I can even imagine a country eager to succeed amid tough international competition, making its approach to new smart tools one of the key areas of its strategy for the future.

Just imagine how a country could increase its creativity and productivity if it paid for high-quality AI tools for all its students and workforce and taught them all to work truly well with them. It would cost a few hundred million dollars, or maybe even a couple of billion a year, but it could have an unbelievable impact on the growth of creativity and productivity. If this isn't happening for your country as a whole, then at least you can do it for yourself or for the organization where you work.

Will AI take over the world? Probably not. Should we go and play with it? Absolutely! Because that's the only way to uncover the incredible opportunities it offers.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. AI is advancing at a rapid pace with the potential to become many times more powerful, creating new opportunities but also significant risks that need to be addressed.
2. Individuals should be aware of the potential impacts of AI, such as privacy concerns, cybersecurity threats, and the need to think critically about online information due to the rise of deepfakes and AI-generated content.
3. Companies must adapt to the AI revolution by investing in skill development, hiring AI experts, and creating environments that foster experimentation and innovation while addressing data security and ethical concerns.
4. Society will face challenges such as the spread of disinformation, cybercrime, and potential job displacement. However, AI could also lead to increased productivity, new job opportunities, and solutions to labor shortages caused by aging populations.
5. Education at all levels is essential for the safe and effective use of AI and for understanding its potential impacts. Countries and organizations that proactively invest in AI tools and education for their workforce could gain a major competitive edge in creativity and productivity.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Think about the risks of artificial intelligence in two ways: How could it directly impact the world around you (things like deep fakes and disinformation)? How might it affect your livelihood?
2. Talk about the risks in that first area (AI's impact on the world) with your team or loved ones. By making the people around you aware of these risks, they'll be more prepared to deal with them.
3. Remember, your focus should be on what you can control: your mindset, your skills and how you approach your work. Your journey with AI, and indeed the rest of your life with it, is just getting started. So try to use it to your advantage and, most importantly, don't forget to have fun along the way.

This book is packed with tips on digital tools and thought-provoking reads. Since digital content can move and new, smarter apps emerge, I keep an updated version of the links at www.nowork.ai/resources.



Scan the QR code with your phone to access this website. And if any app catches your interest, explore it or use AI to brainstorm and refine your ideas related to this book.

Links, Apps and Other Resources

EVERYTHING IS GOING TO CHANGE

- 1 **Joseph Briggs, Devesh Kodnani, "The Potentially Large Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Economic Growth", 2023:** <https://www.gspublishing.com/content/research/en/reports/2023/03/27/d64e052b-of6e-45d7-967b-d7be35fabd16.html>
- 2 **Tyna Eloundou et al., "GPTs are GPTs: An Early Look at the Labor Market Impact Potential of Large Language Models", 2023:** <https://arxiv.org/abs/2303.10130>
- 3 **Apps for creating virtual avatars:** Synthesia.io, Heygen.com, Scena.ai, D-id.com
- 4 **OECD, "Employment Outlook", 2023:** <https://www.oecd.org/employment-outlook/2023/>

1. WORK IN THE ERA OF AI

- 1 **Digital Leadership Masterclass (the training program for the development of digital and AI skills for leaders, managers and innovators)** <https://drimalka.com/en/masterclass>
- 2 **Fortune, "Sam Altman on the One-Person Unicorn Myth", 2024:** <https://fortune.com/2024/02/04/sam-altman-one-person-unicorn-silicon-valley-founder-myth/>
- 3 **Klarna, "AI Assistant Handles Two-Thirds of Customer Service Chats in Its First Month", 2024:** <https://www.klarna.com/international/press/klarna-ai-assistant-handles-two-thirds-of-customer-service-chats-in-its-first-month/>
- 4 **Apps from Pieter Levels:** Photoai.com, Interiorai.com, Therapistai.com
- 5 **Digi Challenge (an initiative designed to empower organizations to embrace and master digital tools):** Digichallenge.org

- 6 **Apps for creating presentations:** Tome.app, Beautiful.ai, Pitch.com
- 7 **App for working with legal documents:** Spellbook.legal
- 8 **Apps for creating virtual avatars:** Synthesia.io, Heygen.com, Scena.ai, D-id.com
- 9 **Noah Smith, Twitter, "Remember: Dystopia is when robots take half of your jobs. Utopia is when robots take half of your job.":** <https://x.com/Noahpinion/status/1367391131495899139>

2. TOMORROW'S INNOVATIONS, TODAY

- 1 **Andreessen Marc, "Software Is Eating the World", 2011:** <https://a16z.com/why-software-is-eating-the-world/>
- 2 **Website for job automation analysis** Willrobotstakemyjob.com
- 3 **Marc Benioff, Twitter, "Just promoted #ChatGPT to the management team at Salesforce":** <https://x.com/Benioff/status/1614372552025178114>
- 4 **Apps for summarizing YouTube videos:** Glasp.co, Harpa.ai
- 5 **Apps for AI-assisted message composition and replies:** Docgpt.ai, Microsoft 365 Copilot, Superhuman.com, Tryellie.com
- 6 **Apps for creating interactive forms:** Fillout.com, Typeform.com
- 7 **Apps for managing information and team know-how:** Notion.so, Evernote.com, Microsoft Loop
- 8 **Apps for creating presentations:** Tome.app, Beautiful.ai, Pitch.com
- 9 **Apps adding AI capabilities to spreadsheets:** Numerous.ai, Gptforwork.com, Rows.com
- 10 **The word "prompt" refers to an instruction that artificial intelligence**

- uses to generate the desired output - text, image, or anything else.
- 11 **Startup developing technology for extracting data from documents:** Rossum.ai
 - 12 **Startup for detecting defects using sounds:** Neuronsw.com
 - 13 **AI model for image or video analysis:** Segment-anything.com, Chatgpt.com, Google Gemini, Claude.ai
 - 14 **App for the blind that analyzes and describes camera images:** Microsoft Seeing AI
 - 15 **App for creating and editing graphics:** Adobe Firefly, Canva.com
 - 16 **App for improving eye contact when creating videos:** Nvidia.com, Captions.ai
 - 17 **App for improving audio quality:** Adobe Podcast
 - 18 **Resources page for this book:** Nowork.ai/resources
 - 19 **J.A.R.V.I.S., a character from the Iron Man movie, is an acronym for "Just A Rather Very Intelligent System."**
 - 20 **Eirini Kalliamvakou "Research: Quantifying GitHub Copilot's Impact on Developer Productivity and Happiness", 2022:** <https://github.blog/2022-09-07-research-quantifying-github-copilots-impact-on-developer-productivity-and-happiness/>
 - 21 **Evan Armstrong, "What Are AI Agents—And Who Profits From Them?", 2024:** <https://every.to/napkin-math/what-are-ai-agents-and-who-profits-from-them>
 - 22 **Autonomous negotiations:** Pactum.com, Donotpay.com
 - 23 **Marketplaces of AI coworkers:** Nexus.snikipic.io, 11x.ai, Taskade.com, Lindy.ai
 - 24 **Podcast Gradient Dissent, "Jensen Huang - NVIDIA's CEO on the Next Generation of AI and MLOps", 2022:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcI3OwQsBJQ>
 - 25 **Startup developing an AI app for healthcare professionals:** Carebot.com
 - 26 **Association that helps nonprofits to digitize** Sdruzenivnia.cz
- ### 3. DESTINATION: NO WORK
- 2 **TEDx, "Filip Drimalka - The Future of No Work" (Czech with subtitles):** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8k30ZB95ZE>
 - 3 **Apps for automation:** Make.com, Zapier.com, Bardeen.ai, Microsoft Power Automate
 - 4 **Apps for creating virtual avatars:** Synthesia.io, Heygen.com, Scena.ai, D-id.com
- ### 4. A WORLD FULL OF OPPORTUNITIES
- 1 **App for cleaning sounds:** Adobe Podcast
 - 2 **Apps for creating virtual avatars:** Synthesia.io, Heygen.com, Scena.ai, D-id.com
 - 3 **Scott Galloway, "Luddites", 2023:** <https://www.profgalloway.com/luddites/>
 - 4 **Noah Smith, American workers need lots and lots of robots, 2023:** <https://www.noahpinion.blog/p/american-workers-need-lots-and-lots>
 - 5 **Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck popularized the term "growth mindset," which refers to the belief that abilities can be developed and improved through effort and learning. In contrast, a "fixed mindset" is the view that abilities are unchangeable.** https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve?language=en
 - 6 **Apps for improving your presentation skills:** Poised.com, Microsoft Speaker Coach
- ### 5. THE FOUNDATION OF THE DIGITAL MINDSET
- 1 **Apps adding AI capabilities to spreadsheets:** Numerous.ai, Gptforwork.com, Rows.com

- 2 **Andrew Grove, "High Output Management", 1995:** <https://www.amazon.com/High-Output-Management-Andrew-Grove/dp/0679762884>
- 3 **Link for downloading No Work Navigator:** <https://www.nowork.ai/no-work-navigator>
- 4 **Copilots for programmers:** Github.com, Replit.com

6. HOW TO UPGRADE YOUR POTENTIAL

- 1 **Wesley Carpenter, "The Aha! Moment: The Science Behind Creative Insights", 2019:** <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/65968>
- 2 **Apps for transcription of voice notes:** Audiopen.ai, Superwhisper.com
- 3 **Newsletters focused on updates on AI:** Superhuman.ai, Bensbites.co, Therundown.ai
- 4 **Startup utilizing AI in architecture:** Maket.ai
- 5 **Linkedin profile of Maket.ai CEO, Patrick Murphy:** <https://www.linkedin.com/in/patrick-murphy-2685114a/>
- 6 **Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, "Ferrari's Formula One Handovers and Handovers From Surgery to Intensive Care":** <https://gwern.net/doc/technology/2008-sower.pdf>
- 7 **Apps for diagrams and visual workflows:** Miro.com, Figjam.com, Microsoft Whiteboard, Whimsical.com, Mural.co
- 8 **Apps for automation:** Make.com, Zapier.com, Bardeen.ai, Microsoft Power Automate
- 9 **Marketplaces of freelancers and outsourcing services:** Upwork.com, Fiverr.com, Toptal.com
- 10 **YouTube, "John Cleese on Creativity In Management.", 2017:** https://youtu.be/Pb5oIIP062g?si=w3Jc_zDaO-iC9c1U
- 11 **Free ebook "2 Second Lean" and Short Videos within the Concept of "Two-Second Innovation":** <https://www.fastcap.com/content/books-grid>

- 12 **Robert Iger, "The Ride of a Lifetime: Lessons Learned from 15 Years as CEO of the Walt Disney Company", 2019:** <https://www.amazon.com/Ride-Lifetime-Lessons-Learned-Company/dp/0399592091>
- 13 **YouTube, "Jeff Bezos discusses what made Amazon so successful, including his key principles", 2017:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJ3jw6TkVmc&t=292s>
- 14 **Link for downloading No Work Navigator:** <https://www.nowork.ai/no-work-navigator>
- 15 **Find out more about how to create your own Digital Vision:** <http://www.nowork.ai/digital-vision>

7. SKILLS FOR THE NEW ERA

- 1 **The importance of an open mind and the ability to learn is summed up by this quote: "The learn-it-all does better than the know-it-all."**
- 2 **David Sheff, "Interview with Steve Jobs", 1985:** https://allaboutstevejobs.com/verbatim/interviews/playboy_1985
- 3 **How to identify and measure your talents:** Wealtdynamics.com, Gallup.com, Red Bull Wingfinder
- 4 **Naval Ravikant: "The Almanack"** Navalmanack.com
- 5 **Marketplaces of freelancers and outsourcing services:** Upwork.com, Fiverr.com, Toptal.com
- 6 **Marketplaces of AI agents:** Nexus.snikipic.io, 11x.ai, Taskade.com, Lindy.ai
- 7 **IBM Institute for Business Value: "Augmented work for an automated, AI-driven world", 2023** <https://www.ibm.com/thought-leadership/institute-business-value/en-us/report/augmented-workforce>
- 8 **Apps for interior design:** Interiorai.com, Reroom.ai

8. WELCOME TO THE GOLDEN AGE OF CREATORS

- 1 **Blog post about the challenge of founding 12 startups in 12 months:** <https://levels.io/12-startups-12-months/>

- 2 **Levels calculated that only four out of his more than 70 projects were truly successful. He adds that the key is to keep trying and exploring.** <https://x.com/levelsio/status/1457315274466594817>
 - 3 **Derek Sivers, "Make a dream come true", 2019:** <https://sive.rs/ayw4>
 - 4 **A podcast by Petr Ludwig, the author of "The End of Procrastination":** <https://www.petriludwig.com/podcast>
 - 5 **You can automate this process using the following tools:** Apify.com for scraping data from the web, Chatgpt.com for analyzing the selected profiles, Videoask.com for conducting video interviews.
 - 6 **Lera Boroditsky, TED "How language shapes the way we think", 2018:** <https://youtu.be/RKK7wGAYP6k?si=oLFbt-kRrXEoWJiu>
 - 7 **Paul Graham, "Maker's Schedule, Manager's Schedule", 2009:** <https://paulgraham.com/makersschedule.html>
 - 8 **Every, "Capability Blindness and the Future of Creativity", 2023:** <https://every.to/chain-of-thought/capability-blindness-and-the-future-of-creativity>
 - 9 **Digital Leadership Masterclass (the training program for the development of digital and AI skills for leaders, managers and innovators)** <https://drimalka.com/en/masterclass>
 - 10 **Digi Challenge (an initiative designed to empower organizations to embrace and master digital tools):** Digichallenge.org
- 9. USE TECHNOLOGY TO YOUR ADVANTAGE**
- 1 **Apps adding AI capabilities to spreadsheets:** Numerous.ai, Gptforwork.com, Rows.com
 - 2 **Platform with a wide range of tools, models, and datasets for AI, machine learning and natural language processing:** Huggingface.co
 - 3 **Tools for quick access to various functionalities and applications on your computer:** Raycast.com, Flowlauncher.com
 - 4 **Automation can run continuously, 24/7. That's why one of my clients named their robot "Luna".**
 - 5 **Apps for automating sales communication:** Mixmax.com, Mailmeteor.com, Sendspark.com
 - 6 **Apps for automating communication on LinkedIn:** Octopuscrm.io, Dripify.io, Phantombuster.com
 - 7 **Apps for creating graphics and other visual materials:** Canva.com, Photopea.com
 - 8 **Apps for automated generation of visuals:** Bannerbear.com
 - 9 **App for text translation and suggestions for text improvement:** Deepl.com
 - 10 **Apps for generating voices and voice clones:** Play.ht, Elevenlabs.io
 - 11 **Apps for generating presentations:** Tome.app, Beautiful.ai, Pitch.com
 - 12 **Apps for generating music:** Suno.ai, Aiva.ai
 - 13 **Apps for creating virtual avatars:** Synthesia.io, Heygen.com, Scena.ai, D-id.com
 - 14 **Apps for video generation or editing:** Openai.com/sora, Runwayml.com, Krea.ai
 - 15 **Apps for automation:** Make.com, Zapier.com, Bardeen.ai, [Microsoft Power Automate](https://MicrosoftPowerAutomate.com)
 - 16 **Zapier Editorial Team, "The majority of workers use automation software at work – here's why", 2020:** <https://zapier.com/blog/automation-index-q3-2020/>
 - 17 **Tools and apps for keyboard shortcuts and text replacements:** [Text Replacement](https://TextReplacement.com) for iPhone, [Tasker](https://Tasker.com) for Android, [Text Blaze](https://TextBlaze.com)
 - 18 **Apps for creating texts (for inspiration on how to set up the ideal style of generated text, visit audiopen.ai/styles: Chatgpt.com, Poe.com, Reword.com)**
 - 19 **My favorite prompts:** <http://www.nowork.ai/favorite-prompts>

- 20 **Templates for documents and information management**
tools: Notion.so, Microsoft Loop templates
- 21 **Ready-made app templates:** Glideapps.com
- 22 **Database templates for use in spreadsheet apps:** Airtable.com/universe, Rows.com
- 23 **Ready-made prompts:** "Promptbase.com, Snackprompt.com"
- 24 **Templates for workshop and training activities:** Sessionlab.com
- 25 **Apps for automation:** Make.com, Zapier.com, Bardeen.ai, Microsoft Power Automate
- 26 **Portal with a comprehensive overview of AI apps** Theresanaiforthat.com
- 27 **Platforms with a comprehensive overview of bots:** Gptshunter.com, Poe.com/explore, Chatgpt.com/GPTs
- 28 **Platform with a wide range of tools, models, and datasets for AI, machine learning and natural language processing:** Huggingface.co

10. MASTER AI

- 1 **It's possible the roles of prompt engineer or prompt librarian may continue to exist, with responsibilities including standardizing and cataloging prompts and educating others.**
- 2 **Guides and tools for writing good prompts:** Best practices for text generation prompts, 10 AI Prompts to Level Up Your Product Work, Getsmartgpt.com, Copilot Lab
- 3 **Huberman Lab, "Teach and Learn Better with a Neuroplasticity Super Protocol", 2023:** <https://www.hubermanlab.com/newsletter/teach-and-learn-better-with-a-neuroplasticity-super-protocol>
- 4 **You can find plugins in the paid version of the ChatGPT application or on this page:** Whatplugin.ai
- 5 **An AI tool marketplace offering prompts for generating graphics and text:** Promptbase.com

- 6 **Create custom versions of ChatGPT with GPTs and Zapier:** <https://zapier.com/blog/gpt-assistant/>
- 7 **Directory of GPTs:** Chatgpt.com, Gptshunter.com
- 8 **Twitter/X, @tibo_maker, "I am surprised nobody has built an AI agent which: owns an email address, has its own Slack user, runs on GPT-4 / Claude 3, has long-term memory, and is able to create files. Enough to replace 50% of desk jobs.":** https://x.com/tibo_maker/status/1768234130142064682
- 9 **Build custom AI Assistants to automate any business workflow — no code required:** Lindy.ai
- 10 **Marketplaces of AI agents:** Nexus.snikipic.io, 11x.ai, Taskade.com, Lindy.ai
- 11 **Aleksandr Tiulkanov, "A simple algorithm to decide whether to use ChatGPT," 2023:** https://www.linkedin.com/posts/tyulkanov_a-simple-algorithm-to-decide-whether-to-use-activity-7021766139605078016-x8Q9/
- 12 **Ethan Mollick, "All my classes suddenly became AI classes", 2023:** <https://www.oneusefulthing.org/p/all-my-classes-suddenly-became-ai>

11. TAKE THE LEAD

- 1 **Apps for sharing information - the second (digital) brain for your team:** Notion.so, Microsoft Loop, Evernote.com
- 2 **Motivational posters from the startup world:** <https://startupvitamins.com/collections/posters>
- 3 **The UK government's design principles and examples of their application:** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-design-principles>
- 4 **You can apply the "replace dozens of small decisions with one decision" rule in your personal life too. Instead of deciding how much to save monthly, set up an automatic savings account transfer. If you and your kids argue about bedtime, agree on a clear time**

and system for extending it, such as 30 minutes each year.

- 5 **Buffer**, "How We Think About Time Off As a Global Team", 2019: <https://buffer.com/resources/time-off-global-team/>
- 6 **HubSpot: Benefits & Perks** <https://www.hubspot.com/careers/benefits>
- 7 **The "employee value proposition" is essentially everything a company offers its people to attract, retain and motivate them to do great work.**
- 8 **"Imposter syndrome" is a psychological phenomenon in which people doubt their knowledge, skills, or accomplishments, often feeling like a fraud despite evidence of their competence.**
- 9 **Robert Iger**, "The Ride of a Lifetime: Lessons Learned from 15 Years as CEO of the Walt Disney Company", 2019: <https://www.amazon.com/Ride-of-a-Lifetime-Lessons-Learned-Company/dp/0399592091>
- 10 **Apps for creating presentations:** Tome.app, Beautiful.ai, Pitch.com
- 11 **Apps for recording and sharing short videos:** Loom.com, Clapp.io, Vimeo Screen Recorder, Microsoft Stream
- 12 **IKEA, "VISION, CULTURE AND VALUES":** <https://ikea.jobs.cz/en/vision-culture-and-values/>

12. HOW TO LEARN (ALMOST) ANYTHING

- 1 **Apps for using podcasts as form of education:** Sendtopod.com, Podwise.ai
- 2 **Microsoft, "2024 Work Trend Index Annual Report":** https://assets-c4akfrf5b4d3f4b7.z01.azurefd.net/assets/2024/05/2024_Work_Trend_Index_Annual_Report_663d45200a4ad.pdf
- 3 **Dina Koutsikouri**, "Agile Transformation, How Employees Experience and Cope with Transformative Change", 2020: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-58858-8_16
- 4 **What is the 'Zeigarnik effect': The phenomenon named after Lithuanian**

psychologist Bluma Zeigarnik, who found that our brain returns to unfinished tasks more than to things we have already solved.

- 5 **The HMW ("How Might We") method transforms problems into opportunities for creative solutions by asking open-ended questions starting with "How might we...?"**

13. NO MEETINGS. NO DEADLINES. NO EMPLOYEES.

- 1 **An Article About Non-Traditional Methods and Work Organization at Gumroad, Sahil Lavingia: "No Meetings, No Deadlines, No Full-Time Employees", 2021:** <https://sahillavingia.com/work>
- 2 **An Article About Non-Traditional Methods and Work Organization at Gumroad, Sahil Lavingia: "No Meetings, No Deadlines, No Full-Time Employees", 2021:** <https://sahillavingia.com/work>
- 3 **At Gumroad, the Notion app acts as their information system and second brain, much like it does for our own company.**
- 4 **Anonymous, Information about personal "overemployed" experience.:** https://www.reddit.com/r/overemployed/comments/11m33fi/update_1_month_in_3_js_440k_tc_4_yoe/
- 5 **Studies on what people want in their job:** How Americans View Their Jobs, 2023, The Top 6 Things Employees Want in Their Next Job
- 6 **Marcus Buckingham, "Designing Work That People Love", 2022:** <https://hbr.org/2022/05/designing-work-that-people-love>
- 7 **In many companies today, employees don't have a fixed workplace. Instead, they alternate desks depending on their current task - whether it's handling an online meeting or focusing deeply.**
- 8 **Forbes, "Remote Work Statistics And Trends In 2024", 2024:** https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/remote-work-statistics/#sources_section

- 9 To calculate your cost to your employer, add your annual salary, benefits (e.g., health insurance and retirement contributions), and employer-paid taxes (like Social Security and Medicare). Then, add a portion of overhead costs (office space, utilities, etc.), typically estimated as a percentage of your total salary and benefits. Note that these costs vary significantly by country due to differences in taxation and benefit requirements.
 - 10 CDs (What is a "CD": For younger generations - music used to be sold on so-called CDs (compact discs), for which you even had to go to a brick-and-mortar store.)
 - 11 Business Insider, "I made \$1.4 million in revenue selling Canva templates working 10 hours a week. Here's how I've grown my digital product business.", 2022: <https://www.businessinsider.com/canva-templates-how-to-make-millions-selling-digital-products-2022-7>
 - 12 Business Insider, "I'm a pastor living in rural Arkansas, and I make up to \$3,000 a week with my side hustle using ChatGPT to make pitch decks for startups.", 2023: <https://www.businessinsider.com/arkansas-pastor-makes-pitch-decks-using-chatgpt-side-hustle-2023-2>
 - 13 Dror Gill, "The One Hour Startup", 2023.
 - 14 Greg Isenberg, LinkedIn, "I think we're going to see many \$25M/yr+ revenue, 1 person businesses over the next 5 years", 2023: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/gisenberg_i-think-we-re-going-to-see-many-25myr-activity-7029926910142898176-i-hj?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop
 - 15 Jason Fried, "On company size", 2022: <https://world.hey.com/jason/on-company-size-8095488d>
- 14. LET YOUR WORK DO THE WORK**
- 1 In the Czech Republic, "polio" commonly refers to both poliomyelitis and cerebral palsy, despite their different causes. Poliomyelitis, or polio, is a rare viral infection due to widespread vaccination. Contrastingly, cerebral palsy, a more common condition affecting movement and muscle tone, often results from early developmental brain damage.
 - 2 Project TroubleGang, an O KROK initiative, promotes workplace inclusion for individuals with disabilities. The team of disabled professionals assesses work environments and provides tailored solutions to create accessible, inclusive spaces. TroubleGang breaks down barriers and fosters a diverse, accepting work culture, ensuring individuals with disabilities can thrive professionally. TroubleGang website (Translated by Google Translate)
 - 3 Page with an overview of Google's discontinued projects Killedbygoogle.com
 - 4 Podcast (in Czech language), "Collaboration through digital technologies in the company from the HR perspective" (Guest: Martina Suchomelová, Gen Digital, previously Avast): Podcast with Martina Suchomelova (Gen Digital, previously Avast)
 - 5 Airbnb, "The Way We Build (How Rethinking the Airbnb App Changed the Way We Approach Design)", 2016: <https://medium.com/airbnb-design/the-way-we-build-511b713c2c7b>
 - 6 A "10x employee" is an exceptionally productive and efficient individual who delivers results significantly higher than the average employee in their role. These highly skilled, innovative, and driven employees often go above and beyond job requirements, creating substantial value for their organization.
 - 7 Application for creating and sharing personalized videos: Sendspark.com, Heygen.com
 - 8 GitLab, a well-known software development and collaboration tool provider, offers an extensive online resource called the GitLab Handbook that documents the company's

- processes, policies, and culture: The GitLab Handbook
- 9 **Add-on(s) for easier meeting scheduling:** FindTime for Outlook, Calendly.com
 - 10 **Add-on(s) for grammar correction:** Grammarly.com
 - 11 **Add-on(s) for reminding people who owe you a response:** Boomerangapp.com
 - 12 **Add-on(s) for AI-generated messages:** Microsoft Copilot for Outlook, Tryellie.com
 - 13 **Browser extensions for templates for frequently repeated texts:** Templafy.com, Textexpander.com, Blaze.today
 - 14 **Browser extensions for summary generators:** Tldrthis.com, Harpa.ai, Fireflies.ai, Tldv.io
 - 15 **Browser extensions for smart voice-powered assistants:** Speechify.com, Lipsurf.com
 - 16 **Synchronous communication includes real-time interactions like face-to-face meetings, phone calls, and video conferences. While company chat tools (e.g., Slack or Microsoft Teams) are sometimes considered synchronous, they often fall into a gray area. I tend to categorize them as asynchronous communication since they allow for delayed responses and don't always require immediate back-and-forth exchanges.**
 - 17 **Microsoft Worklab, "Research Proves Your Brain Needs Breaks", 2021:** <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/brain-research>
 - 18 **Geekbot, "Daily Standup Meetings: Everything You Need to Know", 2024.** (Geekbot is a great tool for asynchronous standup sessions or other innovative formats of communication.) <https://geekbot.com/blog/daily-standup-meeting/>
 - 19 **Elgato is a company known for producing high-quality solutions for content creators, including stream decks, lighting, and audio equipment:** Elgato.com
 - 20 **Apps for creative ways how to present online:** Mmhmm.app, Obsproject.com
 - 21 **App for asynchronous meetings and voice messaging:** Yac.com
 - 22 **Apps for transcribing and summarizing online meetings:** Fireflies.ai, Tldv.io
 - 23 **Apps for summarizing text and other AI-powered tasks:** Harpa.ai, Glasp.co
 - 24 **GitLab, a well-known software development and collaboration tool provider, offers an extensive online resource called the GitLab Handbook that documents the company's processes, policies, and culture:** The GitLab Handbook
 - 25 **Twist, "How GitLab's Head of Remote works async", 2022:** <https://async.twist.com/how-darren-murph-works-async/>
 - 26 **How to test your typing speed:** Typingtest.com, Ratatype.com, TType
 - 27 **Go from fuzzy thought to clear text. Fast:** Audiopen.ai
 - 28 **Write 3x faster, without lifting a finger (AI powered voice to text):** Superwhisper.com
 - 29 **Apps for recording and sharing short videos:** Loom.com, Claap.io, Vimeo Screen Recorder, Microsoft Stream
 - 30 **Building a Second Brain, "A Proven Method to Organize Your Digital Life and Unlock Your Creative Potential":** Buildasecondbrain.com
 - 31 **Seth Godin, "Digital prepwork", 2023:** <https://seths.blog/2023/04/digital-prepwork/>
- 15. HOW TO FIND CREATE YOUR IDEAL JOB**
- 1 **Sergio Pereira, "How To Reduce Meetings", 2022:** <https://medium.com/@sergiopereira/how-to-reduce-meetings-f90aa21f622f>
 - 2 **LNO Framework for Product Managers by Shreyas Doshi:** <https://www.aakashg.com/lno-framework-for-product-managers/>

- 3 **Cliff Hazell, "What's the use of 14,000 open Jira tickets? A quick story."**, 2023: <https://medium.com/@cliffhazell/whats-the-use-of-14-0000-open-jira-tickets-a-quick-story-662e9e3cc6a>
- 4 **Apps for diagrams and visual workflows:** Miro.com, Figjam.com, Microsoft Whiteboard, Whimsical.com, Mural.co
- 5 **In Agile project management, a retrospective is a meeting where the team reflects on their work process, identifies areas for improvement, and plans to implement those improvements.**
- 6 **Apps for diagrams and visual workflows:** Miro.com, Figjam.com, Microsoft Whiteboard, Whimsical.com, Mural.co
- 7 **Tim Ferriss, "Forget New Year's Resolutions and Conduct a 'Past Year Review' Instead", 2021:** <https://tim.blog/2021/12/27/past-year-review/>
- 8 **Michael Lopp (Rands), "The Seven Levels of Busy", 2022:** <https://randsinrepose.com/archives/the-seven-levels-of-busy/>
- 9 **Paul Wade, "Convict Conditioning: How to Bust Free of All Weaknesses Using the Lost Secrets of Supreme Survival Strength", 2012:** <https://www.amazon.com/Convict-Conditioning-Weakness-Using-Survival-Strength/dp/0938045768>
- 10 **Recommended catalogs of software, applications, and online services** Producthunt.com, G2.com
- 11 **Browser extension marketplaces:** Google Chrome Extensions, Microsoft Edge Plugins

16. THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE

- 1 **Our World in Data, "Affiliation of research teams building notable AI systems, by year of publication":** <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/affiliation-researchers-building-artificial-intelligence-systems-all>
- 2 **Future of Life Institute, "Pause Giant AI Experiments: An Open Letter":** <https://futureoflife.org/open-letter/pause-giant-ai-experiments/>
- 3 **Microsoft, "Global Online Safety Survey 2024":** <https://news.microsoft.com/wp-content/uploads/prod/sites/40/2024/02/Microsoft-Global-Online-Safety-Survey-2024.pdf>
- 4 **GitHub, "Research: Quantifying GitHub Copilot's Impact on Developer Productivity and Happiness", 2022:** <https://github.blog/2022-09-07-research-quantifying-github-copilots-impact-on-developer-productivity-and-happiness/>
- 5 **The lump of labor fallacy is the mistaken belief that there is a fixed amount of work within an economy and that increasing labor productivity or the number of working people must lead to job losses. In other words, it assumes that if some individuals work more or more people enter the workforce, they take jobs from others.** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lump_of_labour_fallacy
- 6 **Aaron Levie, Twitter, "One of the most common concerns about AI is the risk that it takes a meaningful portion of jobs...":** <https://x.com/levie/status/1776673128573284523>
- 7 **Marc Andreessen, "Why AI Will Save the World", 2023:** <https://a16z.com/ai-will-save-the-world/>

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"Work ennobles. But No Work elevates. Why? Because AI is going to change everything, and you want to be a part of it!"

TANIA LE MOIGNE, Managing Director, Google CZ & SK

We have been told for ages that technology would make our lives easier. Instead, we increasingly find ourselves drowning in tedious tasks and feeling trapped in the daily grind—overflowing calendars, endless to-do lists, and a never-ending stream of interruptions. And since we're always connected, our work never seems to end.

Fortunately, the AI revolution is here. And it's about to change everything.

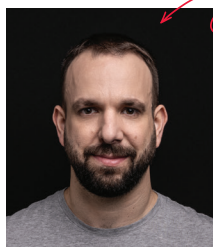
Imagine a world where technology finally starts taking care of all the boring stuff so you can focus on what really matters to you. Where smart AI apps empower you to create anything you can imagine, and even things you never would have thought of. Where you have the power to redesign work around your life, not the other way around.

This is the era of "No Work." It's not about escaping work but about using our skills and leveraging the possibilities unlocked by AI so that our days are primarily comprised of the things we are passionate about. Because that's how we can create something extraordinary.

Inside this book, you'll find hundreds of practical examples and tips:

- How to find, select, and use the right digital tools for anything you do.
- How to make your productivity skyrocket with AI and reclaim your time.
- How to do things your way—with greater freedom by automating more tasks.
- How to craft the work you want, whether you're an entrepreneur or an employee.
- How to seize new opportunities and build a future-proof career.

The book will provide you with loads of tips on the best apps and tools that are part of the AI revolution, but the real magic is how it changes the way you think. You'll learn new skills and timeless principles that will keep you ahead of the game, no matter how AI changes the way we work.



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