

HUMAN FIRST,

HOW TO COLLABORATE WITH AI
TO IMPROVE YOUR IDEAS

HUMAN LAST

AI VS. HUMAN CREATIVITY? WHICH ONE WILL WIN?

“It’s me or the machine.
(And I’m worried it won’t be me).”

One of our greatest fears around AI is that it is a threat to human creativity. That the cold machine will replace the human soul and we’ll see the end of empathic art and all the jobs and callings that go with it.*

*This opening was written by AI, having learned Lisa’s preferences and tone.**

**Only kidding.

This opening argument is actually very similar to the perceived threat we once saw in electronic music. [Bjork](#) can speak more accurately to this than I can.

Bjork on electronic music:

“There’s this constant fear with electronic music, like it’s made by aliens, cold and obviously music done by computers, people are complaining that it hasn’t got soul in it... it doesn’t matter what music you do, at the end of the day, if it’s a human being expressing yourself...your soul will eventually come out if you want it to.”

WE'RE AI OPTIMISTS. YOU COULD SAY AI AF.

Generative AI is (at least for now...) a tool, not a threat. It has huge potential to supercharge our ideas and our creativity if we approach it with some discipline and thought.

This is because generative AI systems are only as interesting as:

the data set they are trained on; the prompts they are given; and the mind that refines and iterates them. Just as it takes practice, skill, musical talent, and a broad mental musical reference bank for a DJ to be able to remix samples and sync beats into new chart topping “bangers,” so does it take practice and skill to be able to use generative AI to produce truly engaging, novel creative content. Sure, AI can be used to provide inspiration and help explore new possibilities, but ultimately it is still up to the human to flex their critical, creative, and ethical thinking muscles in order to produce something authentically human that will truly resonate with other humans.

SO WHAT'S A MORE HELPFUL MINDSET FOR AI?

AI is your thinking partner. Or, more fancily, your “cognitive collaborator.” AI is something you think with, rather than something that thinks for you, or instead of you. We like to think of it as a cognitive collaborator rather than just a creative collaborator because not all parts of ideation are actually creative. By giving AI the role of “thinking partner” you actually broaden its application.

AI can liberate your brain.

The number one benefit of AI right now is as a resource that can handle the grunt work of thinking, the laborious things that don't add much to the process but require a lot of time. The “busywork” that consumes so much of our days. [Initial research](#) out of Harvard Business School into AI-enabled teams is finding that teams simply using GPT-4 were already working better and faster. [McKinsey](#) predicts that 60-70% of employees' time today will be automated by generative AI. So while we're all thinking about how to use AI, there is perhaps a bigger question we should be grappling with: what to do with the extra headspace AI has just freed up? We believe you should apply it to more strategic and innovative thinking. This is a chance to get back to the deep work that really moves the needle.


Our ChatGPT (aka Goldie) agrees, albeit dramatically:

“AI might make us more creative! By handling the data grunt work, it frees our minds to explore wild and uncharted territories of creativity. It's like having a personal butler who tidies up so you can focus on being the mad scientist of ideas.”

THE PREDICTION IS:

People will not be replaced by AI;
they will be replaced by people
working with AI.

So, how can I use AI
to improve my ideas?



A LITTLE CONTEXT FIRST THAT WILL MAKE YOU SOUND AI AF.

...And have a deeper understanding of what is around the corner. This is the geekiest part of this paper. It's only 307 words, so hang in there!

AI is not a new thing.

Chances are that you have been using some form of AI for years. Even your standard calculator is a form of artificial intelligence. The term was first coined at the Dartmouth Workshop in 1956, when a bunch of mathematicians and scientists came together to enjoy a six-week brainstorm. But in fact AI is a centuries-old concept. Pretty much ever since humans have been able to think, we have been trying to think of ways to outsmart ourselves. You can trace AI back to the automata of ancient civilizations where mechanical devices like automatons and clockwork figures were created to mimic human, animal, and celestial movements. Complex mechanical devices are known to have existed in Hellenistic Greece, although the only surviving example is the Antikythera mechanism, the earliest known analog computer, used to predict astronomical positions and eclipses years in advance. OK, OK, but what happened between then and ChatGPT? AI went through various periods of hype and disappointment throughout the 1950s and the end of the century. Cool fact: a period of reduced funding and interest is called an AI winter.

So why the massive fuss about AI in the past year or so? The capabilities of ChatGPT 3 and ChatGPT 4 shocked even its creators: Sam Altman, Greg Brockton, Ilya Sutskever, Dario Amodei, Mira Murati, and Daniela Amodei (two women - yay!). (Daniela and Dario Amodei have since left to found Claude.) This team had a breakthrough because they bet big on the idea of scale in neural nets. Translation: that what was needed now was not new machine learning approaches, but how to apply the processes we already had at a vast scale, with vast compute power. The result was an AI language model that could instantaneously answer questions with emergent capabilities that even the founders don't quite understand the mechanics behind. When that moment arrived, we, the people, experienced "future shock." We sat up and started paying attention to the things people in the field of machine learning had been saying for decades.

What are the different types of AI?

AI: This is narrow or weak AI.

It is designed to perform specific tasks or solve particular problems. It operates within a limited domain and does not possess broader general intelligence or consciousness. Examples include virtual personal assistants, like Siri or Bard; recommendation algorithms on e-commerce websites; and computer vision systems for image recognition. All the AI tools we use today currently fall into this category, even if they sometimes give the impression of having broader emergent capabilities.

AGI: This is general or strong AI.

This is a theoretical form of AI that has a broader intelligence with the ability to understand, learn, and apply knowledge across a wide range of tasks, much like a human being except with access to vastly larger amounts of data (like every book or article ever in the public domain) and infinitely faster processing speed. AGI would be able to plan, reason, adapt to new situations, and exhibit human/superhuman cognitive abilities. AGI does not yet exist and is the subject of much ongoing research, speculation, and controversy.

The big AI tools out there

(at time of press):

Language models:

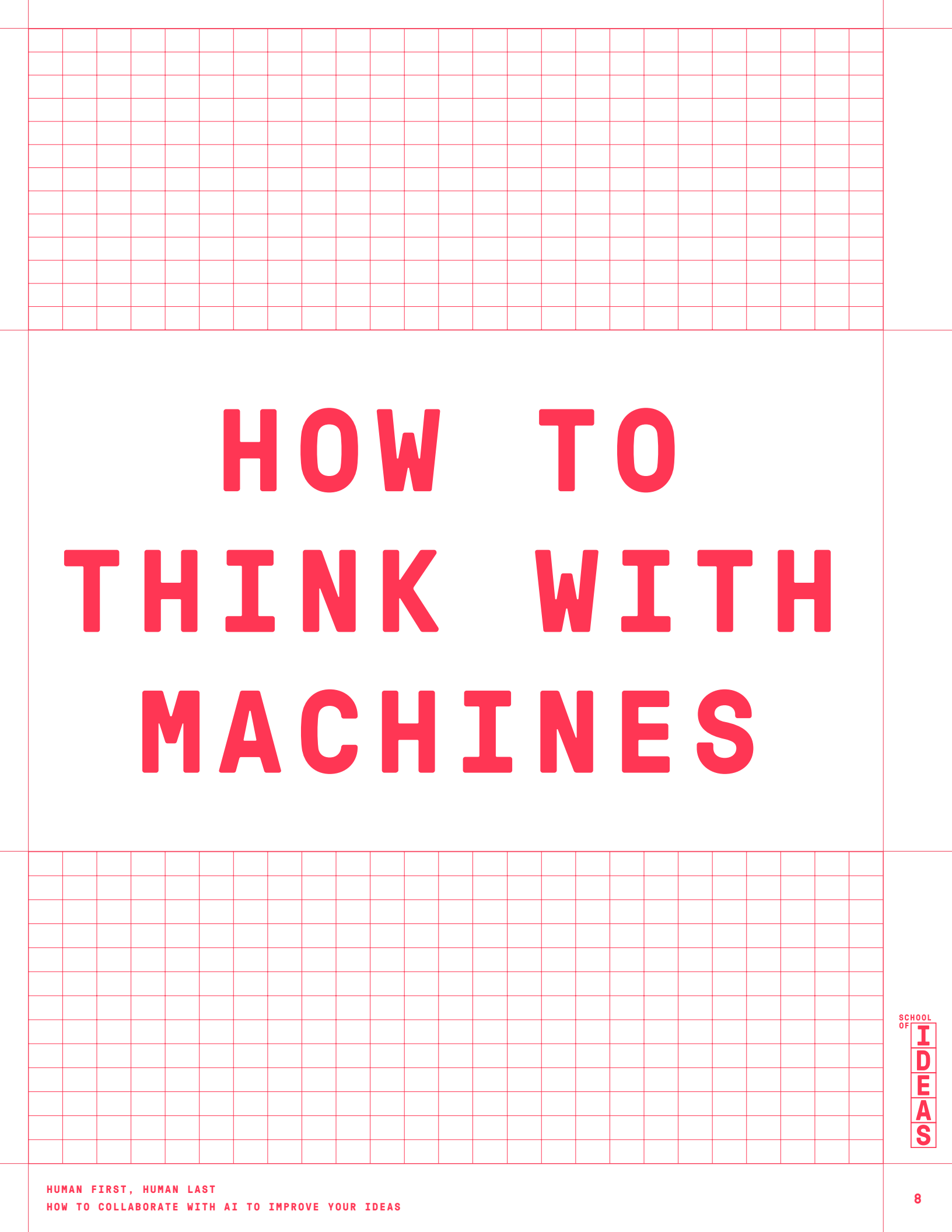
Chat GPT, AI Claude, Bard, Poe,
Perplexity, Pi, Bing Chat

Asset generator tools:

Canva, Midjourney, Runway, Adobe Firefly

Enough already.

How can I use AI to make my ideas better?



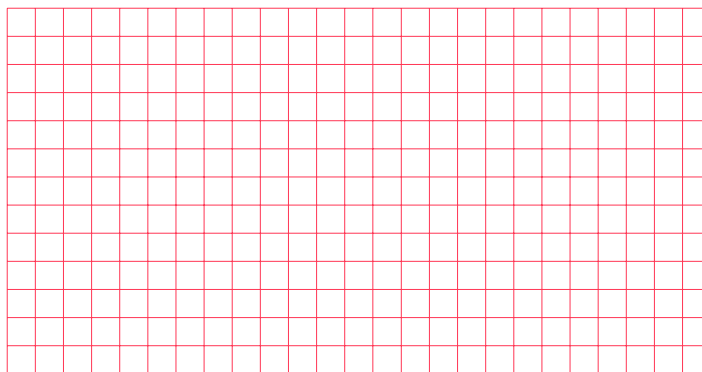
HOW TO THINK WITH MACHINES

**HUMAN
FIRST,**

HERE'S YOUR MANTRA:

**HUMAN
LAST**

We're in a new era of human creativity. If you can imagine it, AI can create it. If you can think of a question, chances are AI can help you answer it (with some checks and balances). AI really shines in data analysis and the execution of assets. For this reason, marketing is going to see a huge impact from AI. In fact, it is predicted that marketing is an industry that will be disproportionately impacted by AI. This is because AI can take on a lot of the legwork in this field, whether it is creating assets in your brand voice, or analyzing huge amounts of data, or more automation with your software stacks.



But back to the broader business of ideas. As we heard recently “the magic sparkle” button is coming to all our programs, but the bigger question remains, “what do we want to do with the button?” AI needs quality direction: what types of questions should you be asking? What types of assets are going to serve your needs? What does success look like? AI can do the work, but it needs quality direction from the very beginning. Human-led, good-quality thinking has never been more important to get the most out of these tools. At the same time, what AI also lacks is judgment, so the results that come out the other end need the human touch too. Is this result true? Is it on brand? Is it an ethical idea? Is it serving our needs? In short, getting the most out of AI starts and ends with the quality of your strategic and conceptual thinking. The mega skills we need to think with machines are in fact the mega skills of strategic and conceptual thinking.

Specifically: How to ask good questions, or create good prompts, and how to think critically. Back to that incredible McKinsey stat again. It's time to strap in.

It's predicted that marketing will be disproportionately influenced by AI, with up to 60%-70% of how we currently spend our time becoming automated in the next few years. It's essential that we reinvest that time in strategy and innovation.

(Source: “The economic potential of generative AI,” McKinsey)

The mega skills
we need to think
with machines are
in fact the mega
skills of strategic
and conceptual
thinking.

We want AI to produce powerful ideas, not just any ideas.

If we want to use AI to generate powerful ideas, not just any idea (tomato crossed with a snake, anyone?), then we have to be thoughtful about how we approach it. Like humans, AI can benefit from the right type of creative rigor. Rigor that fuels, vs. crushes, ideas. To get the most out of AI, we need to start with these three approaches:

- What role am I giving AI in this scenario?
- What prompts am I using?
- What are the ethics of this situation?

ROLES:

What role am I going to give AI in this scenario? Arguably AI can span more roles than humans. Is it an intern* cranking through the boring research? Is it an advanced data analyst? Is it your patient teacher? Your sparring partner? A perspective taker? An expert? An outsider? A point of view from the first day on the job? We're going to give you some ideas for how to utilize your AI. Think of deBono's Six Thinking hats, but for AI.

PROMPTS:

The next one is more obvious: what prompts can you give AI? We'll all need to get excellent at our prompts. Think of it as a new arm of your leadership training. We'll give you some ideas for more interesting prompts.

ETHICS:

And lastly, we've got to cover ethics. There is extraordinary risk with AI - from security and data leaks, to hallucinating (AI-speak for completely making things up), to bias, to copyright issues. Are individuals and brands using AI prepared for their stance on these issues? We'll flag some areas that are going to become part of values-based work in the future, whether for your personal brand or the Fortune 500 company you're running.

Let's talk ethics first.

One of the major challenges of AI is the ethical questions it raises. Helpfully, Microsoft has put out an ethical blueprint on how to responsibly think about AI systems. If you're using AI, you should have a stance on these issues.

FAIRNESS

RELIABILITY & SAFETY

PRIVACY & SECURITY

TRANSPARENCY

ACCOUNTABILITY

INCLUSIVENESS

FAIRNESS:

Is your AI model replacing workers or supercharging workers? For example, [Levi's](#) use of AI models to increase diversity earlier this year created backlash because it took opportunity away from the actual models. *Note: we have referred to "intern" as a role for AI. This is not because we want a world without human interns. Our (perhaps naive) hope is that human interns will be used for more interesting tasks because of AI.

Another aspect of fairness is whether your AI model is treating everyone in the same way. E.g., are they giving different groups of people the best recommendations? Be aware of how the model was trained; be aware of inherent biases it may have.

And lastly, the hot potato of copyright, does the AI model you are working with steal work from creators? Right now, [Getty Images](#) is suing Stable Diffusion for a staggering \$1.8 trillion. Does the model you are using acknowledge the role of human creators? Are you only embracing models that are copyright forward?

ETHICS

RELIABILITY AND SAFETY:

Is your AI model protected against negative human manipulation? (Or is your supermarket AI meal planner suggesting recipes that would create chlorine gas? Yep, that [happened](#).) Hallucinations: Is the information that you are getting back correct? And lastly, how are you managing for the possibility of deep fakes? [Gartner](#) predicts that 80% of marketers will deal with content authenticity issues by 2027.

PRIVACY AND SECURITY:

Pretty obvious. But essentially if you're not paying for the product, then you are the product. In this case, the model is taking your data sets and learning from them. Check the small print. Check the settings. Don't be [Samsung](#), whose's employees gave away proprietary information to ChatGPT.

INCLUSIVENESS:

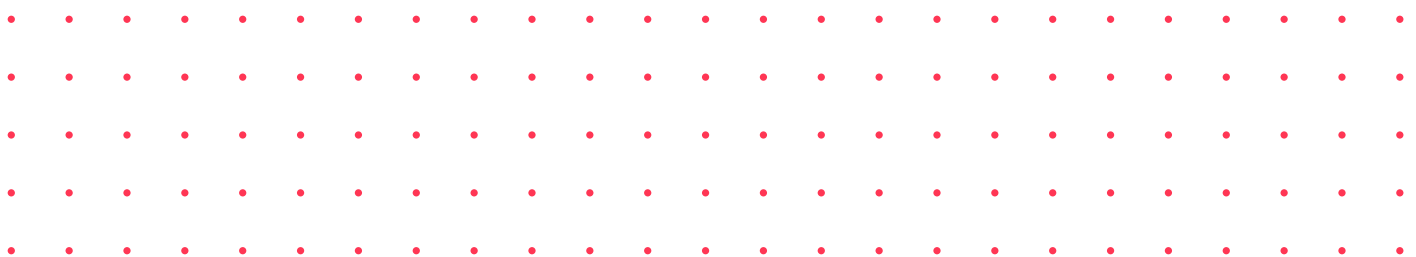
Does your model have inherent biases that you are not aware of? Once again, be aware of how the model was trained and be aware of inherent biases it may have.

TRANSPARENCY:

Is your model open about how it's making decisions, e.g., approving customers for certain benefits?

ACCOUNTABILITY:

Who is ultimately accountable for the model? Ideally, it's a human!



WHAT'S A HELPFUL STRUCTURE TO GUIDE COLLABORATIONS WITH AI ON IDEAS?

Generating ideas with other humans benefits from some guiding steps. Because AI needs more direction than a human to produce quality ideas, the importance of these steps doubles when working with AI. School of Ideas is all about sharing helpful structures for the creative process. Structures that liberate vs. crush creativity. Part of this is deciding what to make automatic so brain power and computing power can be put to better use. The simple structure we share for ideation with humans is

PROBLEM

INSIGHT

IDEA

All great ideas begin with a well-defined problem. Are unlocked by an insight (which gives us a new way to think about our problem). And result in an idea (a novel and valuable solution to a problem). Not only are these simple thinking steps great for cracking ideas with humans, without wasting precious time on what to do next, but they are also a great structure for guiding your idea journey with AI. We're not preaching formulas here, but form. Think color theory vs. paint by numbers.

Problem/ Insight/ Idea is a simple, effective process for thinking about ideas with AI. As it is with other humans.

/PII + AI

For those of you who get hot under the collar about whether something is a strategic or creative idea, both are actually ideas - they're just steps in an idea, strategic idea followed by creative idea. So let's just say idea and keep it simple for now. Also Problem/ Insight /Solution has a less charming abbreviation.

WHAT'S OUR PROBLEM?

ROLES: **Advanced Data Analyst** **Strategic Intern** **Patient Teacher**

When it comes to problem identification, AI can really excel in the following areas:

Advanced Data Analyst

AI excels with summarizing (and using) complex information. Remember that you can also ask AI questions about the data and not just have it summarize it for you. You can now talk to your spreadsheets! We've got prompts to follow, but here are a couple of big watch-outs.

"Never go near data without a question in mind"; I was taught this as a (human) strategic intern and it is never more true than when dealing with AI. Do not put private data through an off-the-shelf model. Data leaks can occur. Only use this approach with an enterprise version, or a version where you can control how the data is used.

Strategic Intern

One of our favorite uses of AI is the "first pass" use case or the versioning use case. E.g have AI write versions of your problem statement. Have it help you with focus.

Patient Teacher

The great thing about the language models like ChatGPT is that you can ask all the stupid questions you were ever afraid to ask, and it will never, ever laugh at you, and it will keep explaining it in different ways, until you finally get it, without ever losing patience. So if you're struggling to grasp some information feeding into your problem areas, use AI as a patient teacher to guide you. We forget that with AI we can raise or lower the complexity of its responses (far more easily than with a human), so this can be a great tool for understanding and comprehension. E.g., explain it to me like I'm a professor. Explain it to me like I'm five.

PROMPTS

Here are some specific prompts you may not have thought of.

For the Advanced Data Analyst

Sentiment analysis: Please synthesize the following data (transcripts from qualitative research/customer reviews, etc...) and synthesize into key negative and positive themes, then cross reference these against our brand's service or product offer.

Fighting hallucinations: Please only base your answers on the material provided or provide verifiable sources and references for all your quoted material.

Please share evidence for what refutes our problem hypothesis and for what supports it.

Please share any similarities or contradictions in the data.

For the Strategic Intern

Please perform the 5x WHY function on each problem statement, drilling down further into the fundamental drivers behind each problem.

Please provide ten different articulations of the same problem.

For the Patient Teacher

Please explain it to me like I'm a professor.
Please explain it to me like I'm five.

WHAT'S OUR PROBLEM?

PROMPTS

Remember human first, human last. You're in charge of the last 100 yards. Sense check the review process undertaken by your language model in case you feel it has made obvious omissions or hallucinations. Which problems strike you as hitting that sweet spot of being the most relevant to most people, but also genuinely solvable?

For those of you who are curious, here's the 5 × WHY in action.

People don't want to drink rainwater, can you please perform the 5 x WHY function on this problem?

Certainly, let's use the "5 Whys" technique to explore why people don't want to drink rainwater:

1. Why don't people want to drink rainwater?

-Because they believe it might be dirty.

2. Why do they believe rainwater might be dirty?

-Because rainwater can collect pollutants from the atmosphere as it falls.

3. Why does rainwater collect pollutants as it falls?

-Because it can come into contact with airborne contaminants like dust, pollen, or chemicals.

4. Why is there concern about these contaminants in rainwater?

-Because some of these contaminants, especially in urban areas, can potentially be harmful if consumed.

5. Why do people believe these contaminants might be harmful if consumed?

-Because they have concerns about the safety and purity of rainwater, which may not be treated or purified like municipal tap water, and they want to ensure the water they consume is free from potential health risks.

WHAT'S OUR INSIGHT?

ROLES: **Outside Expert** **Beginner's Mindset** **Perspective Taking**

So as we now know, insight is thinking about your subject in a new way. The mega skill behind this is being able to escape your existing thought patterns. Being stuck in certain ways to think has many names: the curse of expertise, design fixation (an overreliance on standard design forms), functional fixedness (a lack of ability to imagine a use beyond the traditional one), and finally the Einstellung effect (where individuals' previous experiences impede them from considering new ways to solve problems). Helping us escape our existing thought patterns is an area where AI can really excel. But how exactly?

Outside Expert

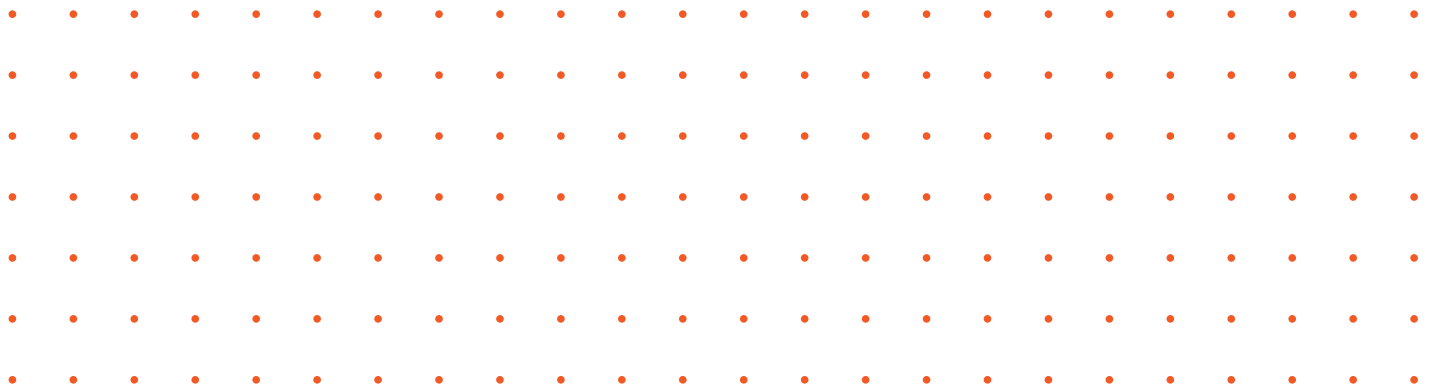
You can rope AI in as an outside expert. How would an industry other than ours solve our problem? Where has a problem like this been solved in other fields and how? AI doesn't have the baggage we have and can cross-reference huge amounts of data quickly.

Strategic Intern

The other side of this is having a beginner's mindset. AI doesn't have as many preconceived notions of how to do things, so it can spitball out many, many options to begin. It's already being used in this way to generate insightful ways to think about product design.

Perspective Taking

Last but not least, AI can be great for perspective taking. You can literally ask AI to generate five different viewpoints on the same topic. Will they be perfect or true? Maybe not, but it can be a good head start.



WHAT'S OUR INSIGHT?

GENERATIVE AI CAN SUPPORT DIVERGENT THINKING.

...By making associations between remote concepts. Here's a visual example that appeared in the [Harvard Business Review](#) (but it would be very easy to generate your own). They asked AI to combine an elephant and a butterfly. HBR dubbed it the phantaflly. This is just a fun visual example of AI's ability to merge concepts.



HERE'S AI SHOWING OFF ITS BEGINNER'S MINDSET.

The HBR team asked AI to generate ideas for artisanal chocolates based around the phantaflly. These are fun examples but the thinking is powerful: easily combining two unrelated concepts and then suggesting some initial interpretations for prototypes that aren't burdened by conventional thinking. In short, AI is the ultimate "what if?" tool.



PROMPTS

There are the obvious prompts for AI: once you have narrowed down the problem, prompt your AI (e.g., enterprise ChatGPT) to search for and synthesize information that relates to that problem. Once again, check the model will handle your proprietary data in a secure way before supplying the following. Sample information could include: your own qualitative data, market reports, news articles, and blog posts. Be very specific in what you ask the AI to search for and how you ask it to structure its feedback. A good prompt might be: I am going to upload five documents. Please could you read them and find all the most relevant passages that relate to the following problem statement:(X); please could you provide bullet points, referenced and sourced genuine quotes from the documents organized by key themes; please analyze how you see these themes relating to each other; please identify the key similarities and contradictions that emerge from your analysis; please highlight any potential bias or ethical issues you see in your own analysis; etc.

But we want to show you some other, more innovative prompts...

For the Outside Expert

Please give me five ways other categories or fields have solved a similar problem.

Please suggest further avenues for research outside of these documents, based on your findings.

Please highlight any potential bias or ethical issues you see in your own analysis.

For Perspective Taking

Please provide me five different perspectives on this issue. Please state the source of each perspective.

Please provide a perspective from... (complete with any group outside of your own experience).

Please highlight any potential bias or ethical issues you see in your own analysis.

WHAT'S OUR INSIGHT?

PROMPTS

Perspective taking is also a great use of AI. In particular, you can ask the AI to provide information on the perspectives of groups that are outside your own experience. E.g., how might this problem manifest itself in the life of low- or high-income families; individuals who follow the teachings of a particular religion; or who come from a different geographic region. Use AI to challenge your own natural biases. And last but not least, write a summary of your insight, then ask the machine to rewrite your summary a few times to see if it betters you or prompts ideas as to how you can better yourself.

Human empathy is your superpower here. Once you have asked AI to do the legwork, read through the output and ask yourself what is missing here? What has the machine not considered because it is not embodied? And then most importantly, ask yourself what you can bring in terms of visceral human feelings and emotions; what does it “feel” like to be in this situation, or to have this problem? Again, with machine intelligence, this is a cognitive dance, not a relay. It’s an interplay of thinking styles rather than a handing over of the baton.

WHAT'S OUR IDEA?

ROLES:

Strategic Intern

Writing Intern

Visualizer

Our mantra again:
Human First, Human Last.
You direct the problem and the insights. You judge the output.
At this point of the process you can really put AI to work.

Use it as a strategic intern. You give it a great brief. Go make a cup of tea (or honestly, just stare at your dog for 30 seconds) and come back to initial solves. Then build on it from there. It goes without saying that you can use AI to write/rewrite/visualize/revisualize any supporting materials you develop.

WHAT'S OUR IDEA?

Pro Tip: Don't be afraid to get super specific with your prompts. For example, we asked our AI pal (Goldie) to come up with an idea for a Weird Barbie holiday resort using this multilayered prompt.

Dear Goldie,
Please help me figure out a strategy for a new holiday resort from Weird Barbie.

Her business objective is this: she needs to launch a resort that will generate at least \$1.2m in profit in the first 36 months.

To unlock this objective she needs a strategic idea that will solve this problem: how can her new holiday resort stand out in a crowded market?

We have three insights that we think could unlock this strategy.

- 1) Play is essential for mental health, but as adults we don't really know how to play.
- 2) Unexpected experiences are the new luxury. Especially experiences that break the conventions of my everyday life.
- 3) Midlife is an underserved market in the resort business - (big challenges + high spending power).

Please come up with five different strategic ideas for how the resort could be positioned using the problem statement supplied and the three different insights.

Please order your solutions from safe to wild card.
Please provide pros and cons for each solution.
Please highlight any potential bias or ethical issues you see in your own analysis.

Thank you.

We were blown away by the specificity we could get into. You can check out Goldie's response [here](#).

(For those of you who can be bothered to go to a second location, what fascinated us most about these answers is the last one, when they suggested that the resort did not have to be a fixed place. We had a fixed mindset around that one and this was a great demonstration of AI being freed from that. And yes, their ethical answers left a lot to be desired.)

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS:

Use your P's + Q's.

Remember if we are not paying, then we are the product, or, in this case, the training set. If we are helping to develop a new intelligence, let's make it a nice one. For this reason, at School of Ideas we always begin our prompts with Please and end with Thank you. We drew the line at teaching AI how to properly set a table. But then again, AI probably already knows how to do that.

AI can free our words and our ideas.

Not everyone is a writer or an artist. A lot of people can struggle to express their thinking in powerful words or persuasive visuals. In this scenario, the communication of the idea becomes a block to the idea. AI can release this blockage and save the ideas that have previously died on that perilous journey from mind to page. Could AI actually give us more ideas from more people?

ONE LAST THOUGHT...

Think like an octopus.

Time and again, you will see people talk about artificial intelligence as achieving human or superhuman cognitive capabilities. But why, when we are starting from scratch in building an intelligence, are we limiting ourselves to trying to remake a human intelligence but better? What about all the amazing cognitive abilities of animals and even plants that are currently outside our scope of creative thinking? What might an artificial intelligence built to include these types of intelligence be like?

What if we had a machine that could solve problems like an octopus?

If you arrived here, then hopefully you're feeling more informed about AI and how you can start using it to generate ideas this very afternoon. AI is yet another tool in our idea toolboxes. We hope your toolbox is feeling full.

The world needs your ideas,

L.P

Want to hear more from us on creativity and ideas?
You can sign up for our newsletter [here](#), or explore our programs [here](#).