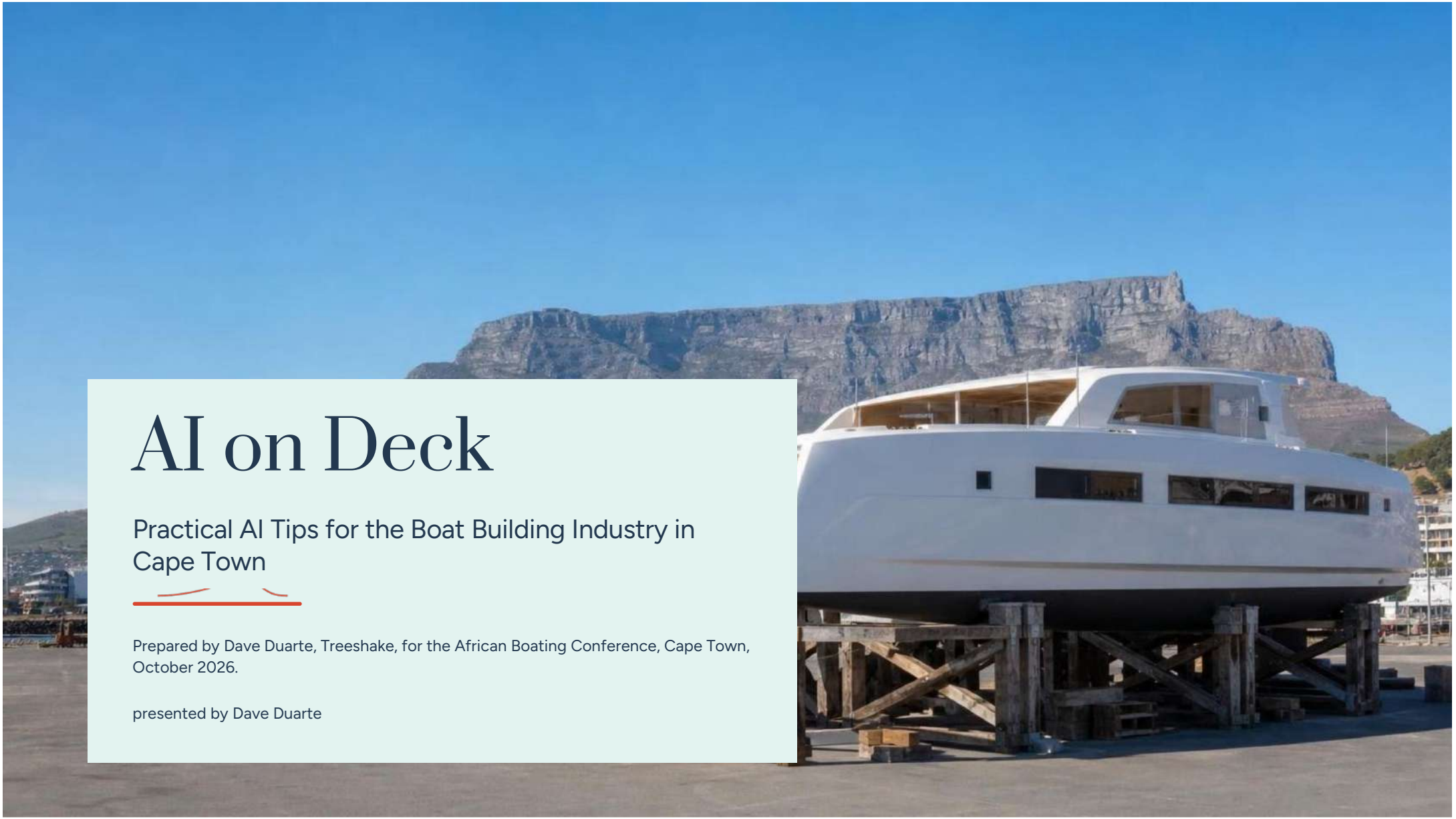


AI on Deck

Practical AI Tips for the Boat Building Industry in Cape Town

Prepared by Dave Duarte, Treeshake, for the African Boating Conference, Cape Town, October 2026.

presented by Dave Duarte

Cape Town's Boat Building Industry is World Class

330

Around 330 catamarans built in a year, most of them for export

R4.3 billion

R4.3 billion in boat exports in 2024, 96% of them yachts and pleasure vessels

65%

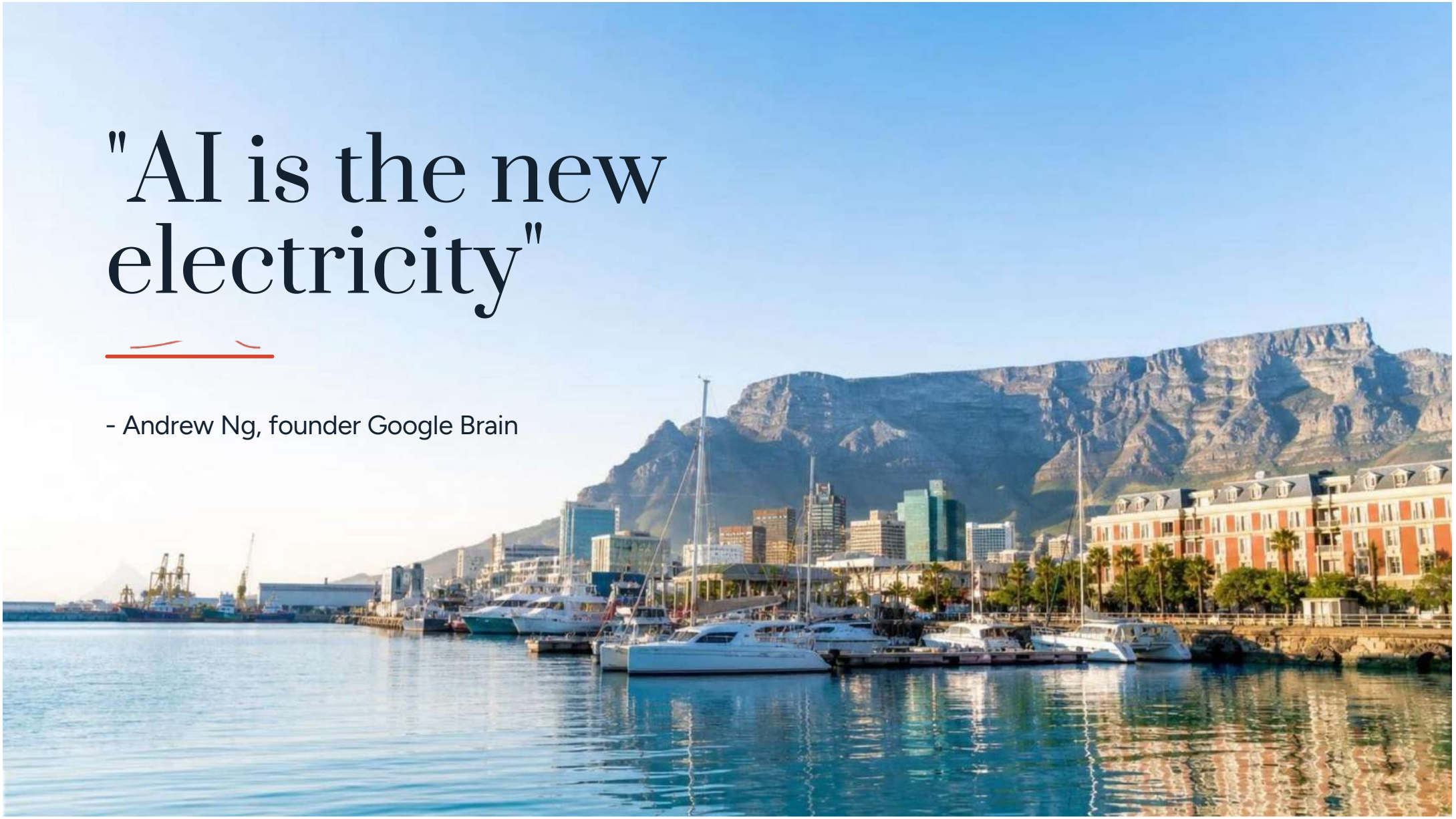
65% of South Africa's boat-building jobs are here

The Red Queen Effect: "It takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place."





AI can help us stay competitive in terms of sales and branding, cost and production quality.


"AI is the new electricity"
- Andrew Ng, founder Google Brain

Electrification of Factories

1



Steam

One central engine drove every machine through shafts and belts. The whole factory was built around the power source.

2



Electric motor swap

Factories swapped the steam engine for one big electric motor, but kept the same shafts and layout. Small gains.

Most of us are here with AI

3



Redesign

Every machine got its own small motor. Factories were rebuilt around the work, not the power source. That's when productivity took off.



Lessons from leading AI transformation

01 People & Culture First

Transformation is driven by people, not software licenses.

02 Center of Excellence

Avoid scattered experiments. Build a community of practice and shared prompt libraries, so what one person learns, the whole yard keeps.

03 Effectiveness > Efficiency

Focus on better boats, happier buyers and less stress on the floor, rather than only cutting costs.

People Approach AI Differently at Work

Where are you on the spectrum

01

Doomers

AI is an existential threat. Stop it.



02

Gloomers

It will cost jobs and trust. Slow it down.



03

Bloomers

AI is generally positive with risks we need to manage.



04

Zoomers

Full speed. Let the market sort it out.





AI transformation: LLM

L - Leadership:

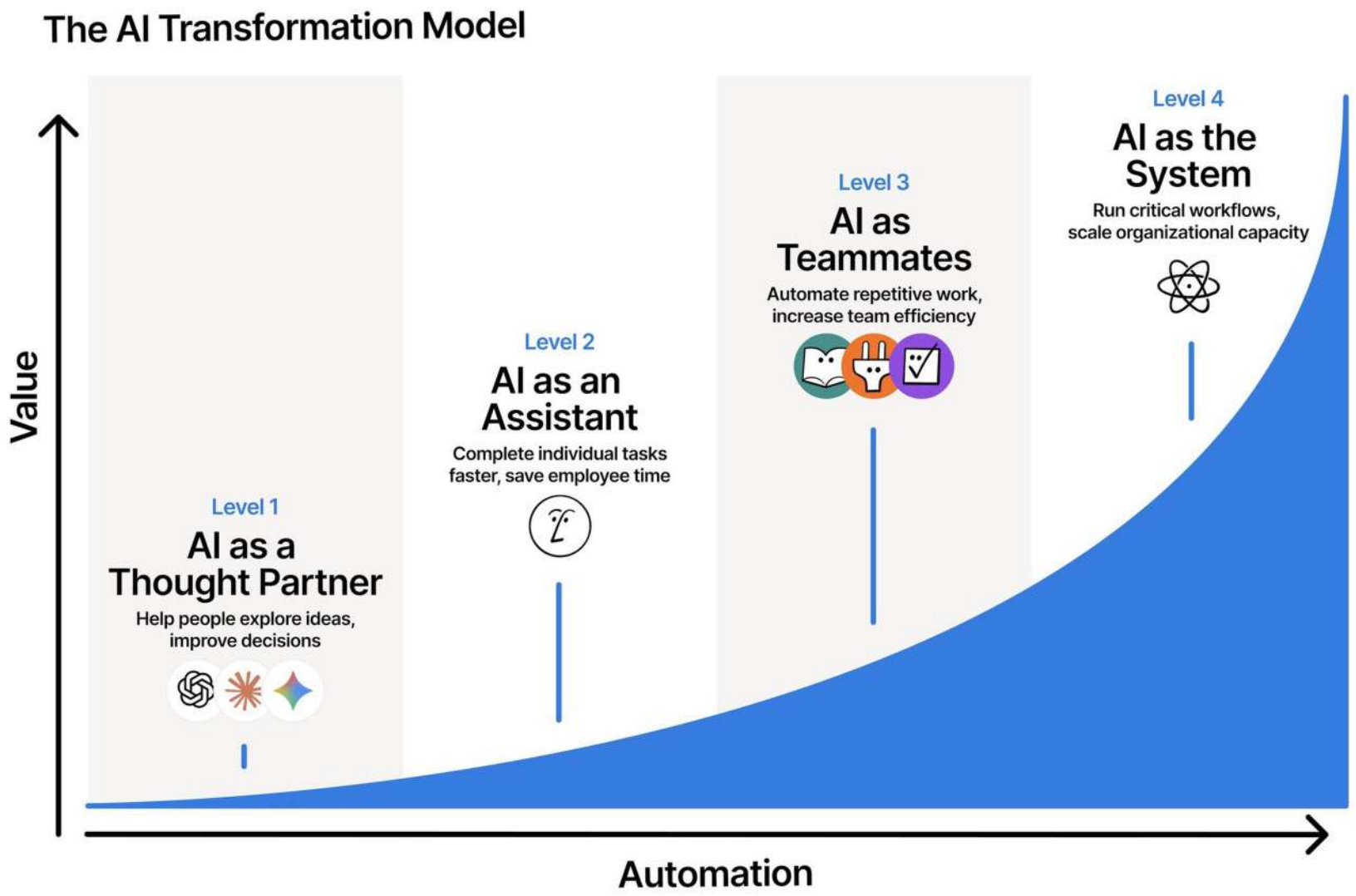
Link it to company strategy, values and performance objectives.

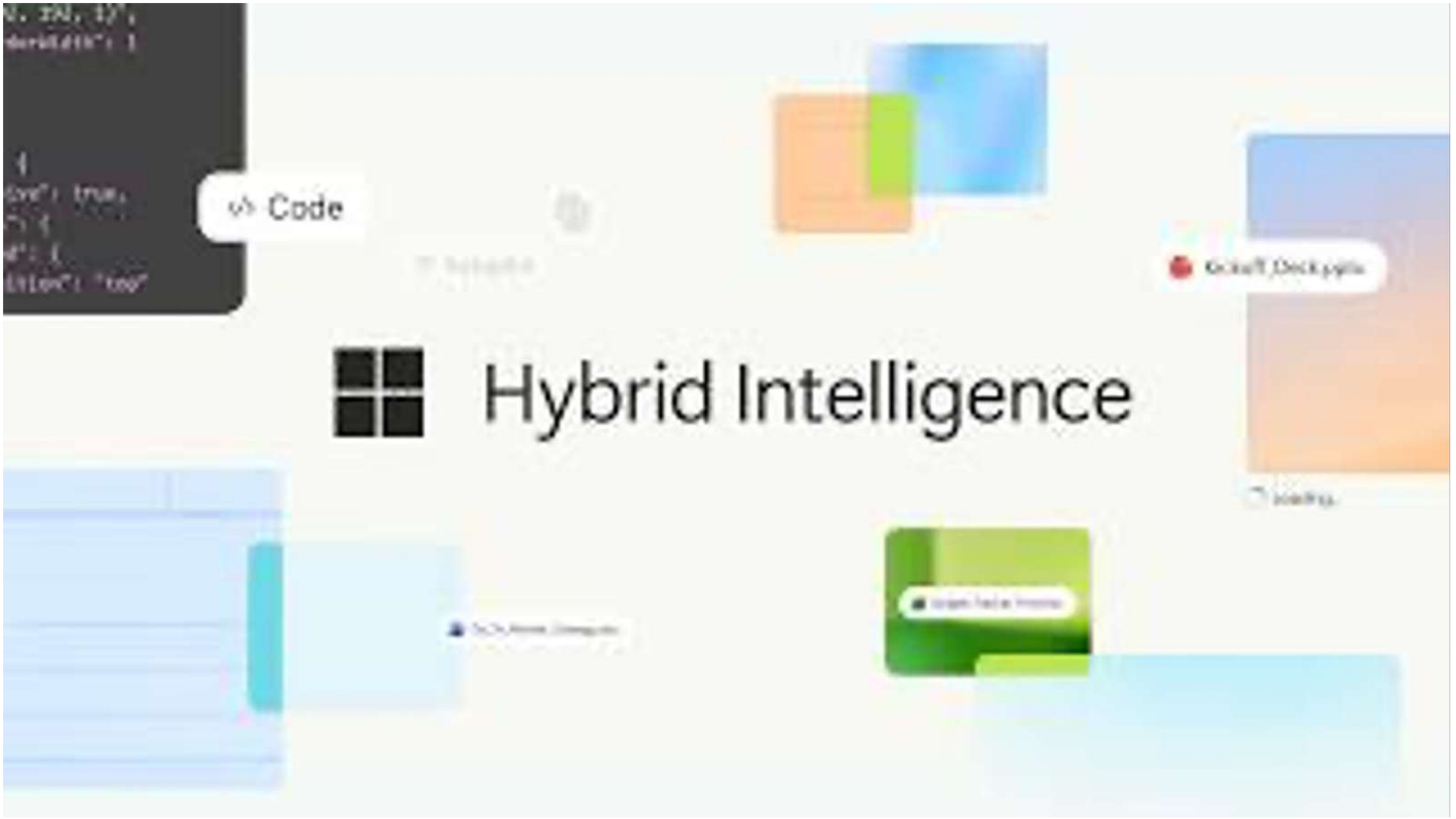
L - Lab:

Set dedicated time and resources to learning - not one-off, but ongoing. Not everyone is keen to experiment.

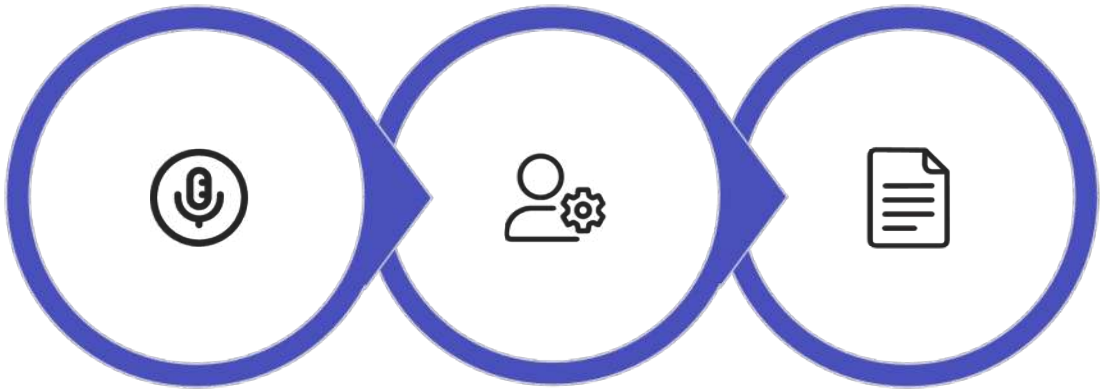
M - Movement:

Roll out proven workflows and get trained in safe, effective use of approved AI tools. Make use mandatory for those tasks.


The AI Transformation Model
Value
Level 1
AI as a Thought Partner
Help people explore ideas, improve decisions
Level 2
AI as an Assistant
Complete individual tasks faster, save employee time
Level 3
AI as Teammates
Automate repetitive work, increase team efficiency
Level 4
AI as the System
Run critical workflows, scale organizational capacity
Automation


Code
Hybrid Intelligence

An Agentic Workflow

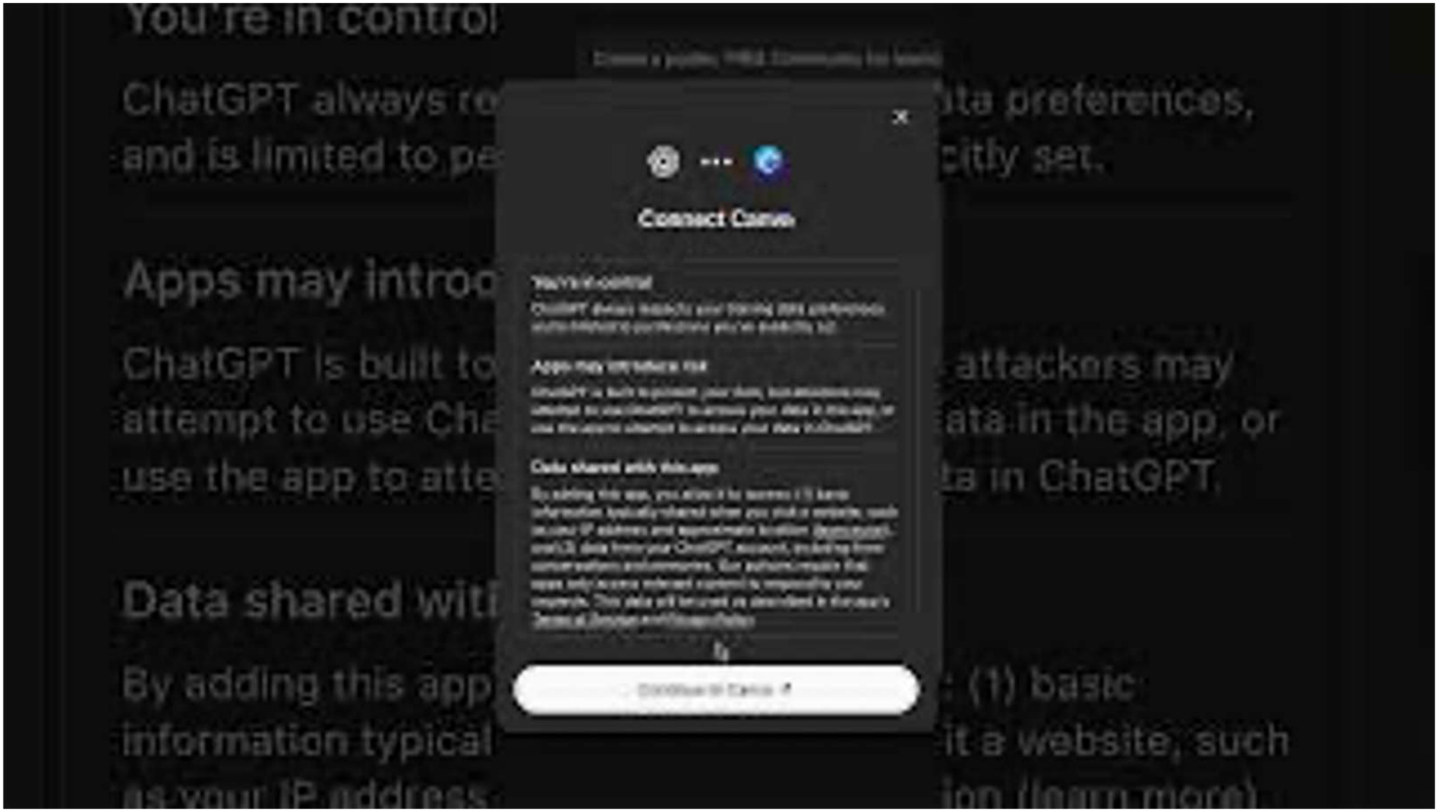


Meeting Transcript
Fireflies, Otter, Letterly, Granola

AI Processing
Claude, Perplexity, ChatGPT, Airtable

Actionable Outcome
Minutes Emailed
Presentation Deck Created
Press Release Drafted
To Do's Added


CLAUDE
CONNECTORS
CONNECT CLAUDE
TO YOUR APPS


Connect Canva

AI TO AI: INTELLIGENT AUGMENTATION

Loops

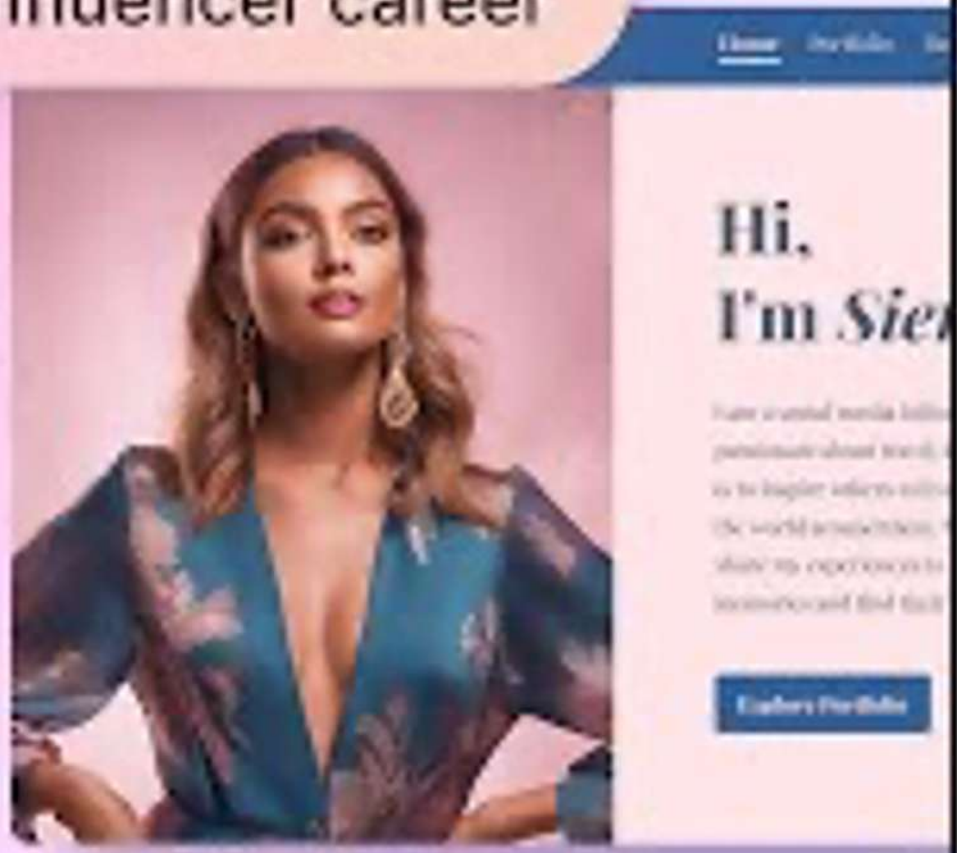
10%	80%	10%
Human: crafting the prompt	Agent: does the work	Human: refines, improves, hands off

Feedback, learning and memory make every lap better

The human owns the loop.

A website for my influencer career

Create Websites using AI



My current favourite AI tools and what I use them for.

Claude
My go-to AI orchestrator - does a LOT of work for me

Gemini
I use this with my colleagues at work - docs, slides, images

Notebook LM
Podcast creation from documents, spreadsheet analysis. Amazing presentations

Leonardo
Images, sounds and videos

Gamma
Create presentations and landing pages and reports

Canva
Lots of design stuff - works well with Claude

WisprFlow
Voice Typing

Granola
Record and transcribe meetings.

Runna & Strava
Personalized training plans.

Letterly
Voice notes (also voice typing

Zapier
Basic automation workflows. (mine tend to break)

Tally
Forms - as my interface for lots of AI stuff - proposals, time-sheets, marketing, events.

1 - 2 - 3

Example Loops from my work

1

Monthly newsletter

- Collate inputs and photos from the form.
- Assemble into standard template in Gamma.
- Send to the coordinator by quarterly due date.

±12 hrs to 2 hrs



2

Client proposal

- Record the meeting and gather the transcripts with Granloa.
- Match with current proposal offerings & identify follow-ups in Drive.
- Cost properly, get FD sign-off, send email, and create CRM tasks.

±5 days to ±1 day



3

27 Breakfast events

- Book the venue
- Set up the landing page.
- Collect the guest list.
- Send out the personal emails and manage RSVPs.
- Create personalised delegate profiles and introductions

!12 hours to 30 mins



"The hottest new programming language is English."



— Andrej Karpathy

INSIDE THE LABS

What could you do?

built by our own people

Quote builder:

client spec and price list in, draft quote and open questions out.

Job card to checklist:

photograph a handwritten job card and get a clean work instruction.

Delivery checker:

matches supplier deliveries to the build schedule and flags clashes early.

Layup photo log:

a photo of every ply and bond, with AI flagging anything that looks wrong.

Warranty helper:

answers owner and dealer questions from the yard's own build records.

New starter guide:

the yard's procedures turned into step-by-step guides and quick quizzes.



LAB. HACKATHON. LOOPS.

Our practical, replicable plan

01

Lab:

The people.

02

Hackathon:

Time to play, build and test loops

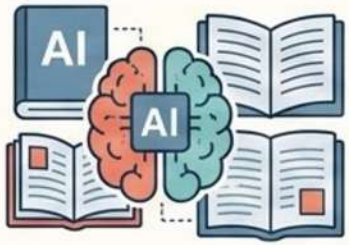
03

Loops:

Workflows you put in your “library”



PRACTICAL AI USE CASES IN SHIPYARDS



KNOWLEDGE ASSISTANT:

answers staff questions from your own manuals and specs

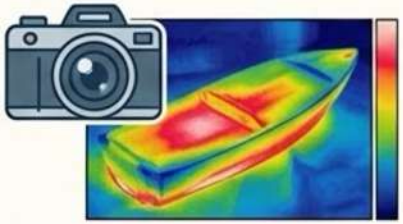


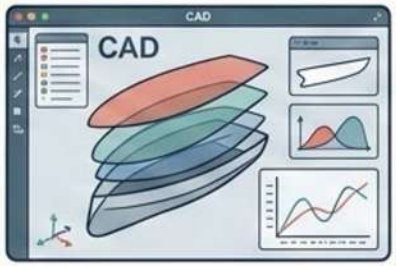
PHOTO AND THERMAL QC:

spots dry patches and voids before the hull is closed



PLANNING AND PROCUREMENT:

flags late parts before they stall a build



AI-ASSISTED DESIGN:

tests thousands of hull shapes in hours

Presented by Dave Duarte, Treeshake.
African Boating Conference · 2026


Gemini
Search a message...



24 practical tips to work better with AI

24

1. Delegate Well - more like a team-mate than a search engine

01

Start with the goal. Who it's for, and what "done" looks like.

02

Give context generously. The whole email thread beats a clever prompt.

03

Explain why. "Keep it short, they'll read it on a phone."

04

Say the format. Table, checklist, email, 150 words.

05

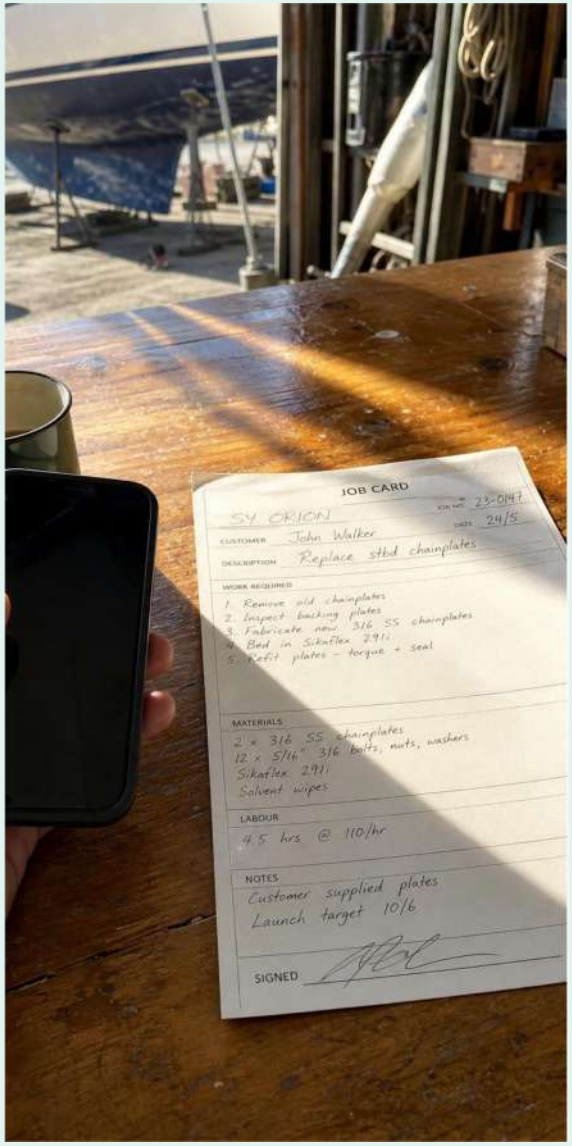
Ask for options. "Give me three different approaches."

06

Make it argue back. "What would a sceptical client say?"

2. Improve your outputs

1. Ask AI how to use AI. "Walk me through it step by step."
2. Talk, don't type. You give three times more context when you speak. (**Wisprflow, Letterly, Gemini)**
3. Ask it to interview you first. "What do you need to know to do this well?"
4. Push back and refine. The first answer is a first draft.
5. Show it things. Photos, screenshots, job cards, invoices.
6. Check what matters. Names, numbers and anything going to a client.





3: Set yourself up properly

1 Use the memory features. Projects and custom instructions save repeating yourself.

2 Write a context file. Your role, your yard, your style, in one document.

3 Keep your own files.
Organise your information in folders so you can use any AI you want.

4 Save prompts that work. Your own library of templates, sometimes called skills.

5 Pick the right model. Quick for drafts, heavy lifting for hard problems.

6 Connect your tools. Email, calendar and drive, starting with read-only.



Lighthouse Project

One high-visibility project that shows the whole business what AI makes possible.

- Pick a problem everyone recognises
- Use real work and real data, not a demo
- Give it a sponsor and a deadline, 8 to 12 weeks
- Measure before and after
- Share the story, then turn what worked into loops

It takes effort and stretches the team. Once it's done, people believe what's possible.

Amara's Law

"We tend to overestimate the effect of a technology in the short run and underestimate the effect in the long run."

— Roy Amara



Thank you

Get the field guide and report:

forms.treeshake.com/abc-ai