

Getting Started with AI

Transforming the Awards & Personalization Industry

Justin R. Varn, Awards4U | Session Code: 101

VEGAS WORD SELECTION

JACKPOT	SHOWGIRL	ROULETTE
NEON	BLACKJACK	MIRAGE
STRIP	HIGHROLLER	DESERT

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Where are you with AI Today?

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Why This Seminar Matters

AI is no longer just for large corporations. Awards & personalization businesses are already successfully using AI tools to stay competitive.

01

Understand AI foundations

02

Explore creative tools

03

Learn effective prompting

04

Avoid legal pitfalls

05

Free up time and boost profits

What This Presentation IS



Understanding AI

What it can do for you and your business



Industry Tools

AI tools that matter to awards and personalization



Effective Prompts

Learning how to write prompts that work



Streamlining Operations

Using AI for efficiency and productivity



Legal Considerations

Understanding legal aspects of AI-generated content

What This Presentation is NOT

Marketing Deep Dive

Not a comprehensive marketing strategies course

Design Theory Course

Not a full graphics design or advanced design theory program

Human Replacement

Not a replacement for creativity or human expertise

Universal Solution

Not a one-size-fits-all technology solution



A Little Bit About Me

Justin Varn has led in the awards industry since 2011, growing up immersed in the business. At Awards4U, he's led sales, marketing, operations, IT, and customer service, driving growth and modernization.

He serves as President-Elect of the Awards and Personalization Association and chairs the AI Committee for Award Associates of America, guiding the industry through technology adoption while preserving meaningful human connection.

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Whatmakes you the most curious (or nervous) about AI?

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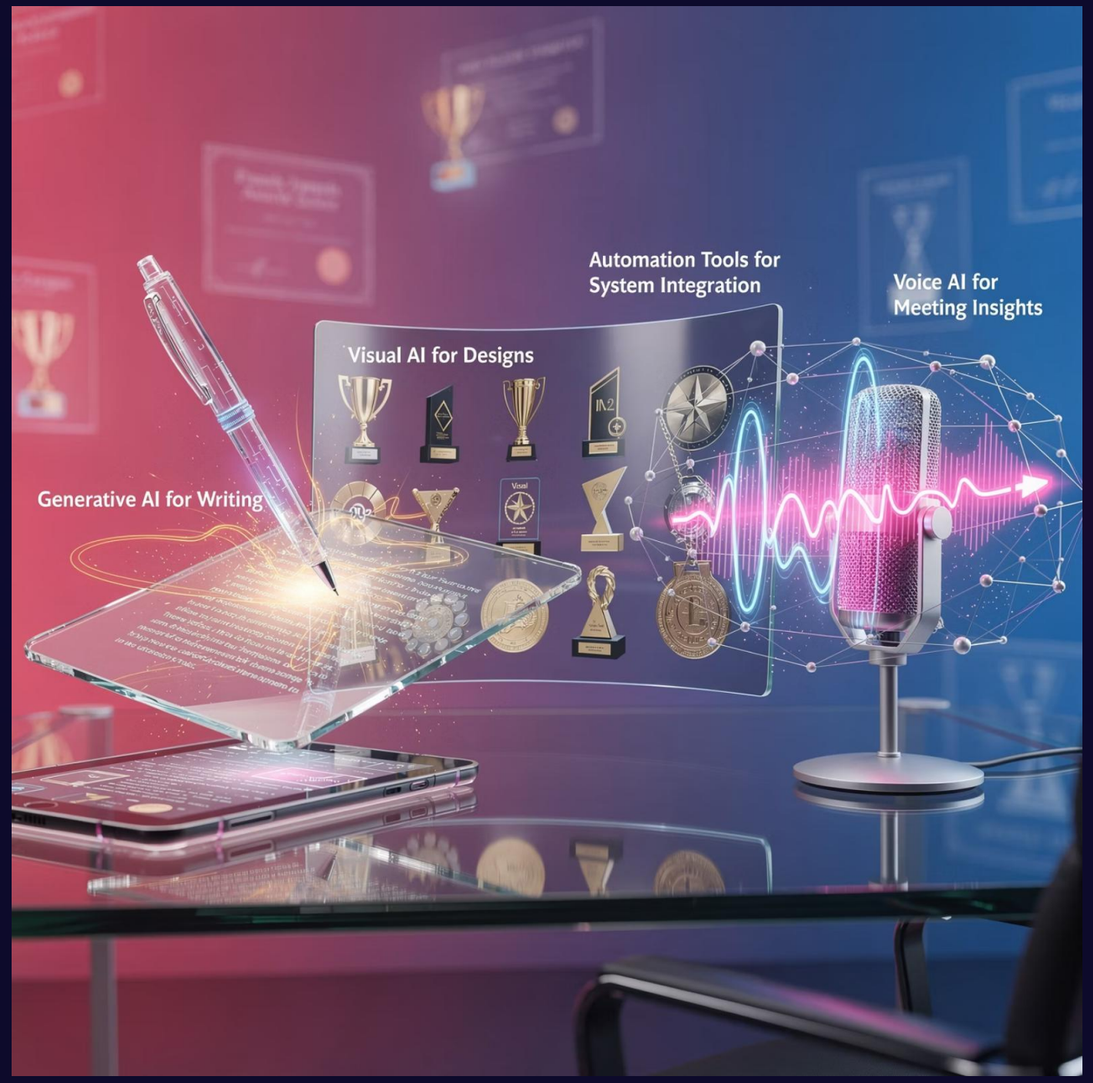
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What is AI?

AI = Machines or software programs that simulate human thinking, learning, and problem-solving



Types of AI for Your Business



Each AI type serves a specific purpose in streamlining your awards business.
Generative AI handles writing tasks
Visual AI creates designs,
Automation Tools connect your systems
Voice AI captures meeting insights.

Understanding these categories helps you choose the right tool for each task.



Ancient Foundations

The idea of AI is centuries older than the technology. Long before computers, philosophers and engineers contemplated artificial cognition, laying intellectual foundations for modern AI.

Foundational Milestones

1950: The Turing Test
Alan Turing proposes a test to assess machine intelligence

1956: Birth of AI
John McCarthy coins "artificial intelligence" at Dartmouth Workshop

1959: Machine Learning
Arthur Samuel introduces the term "machine learning"

1966: First Chatbot
Joseph Weizenbaum's ELIZA pioneers chatbots

1973: AI Winter
The Lighthill Report leads to reduced funding

Key Breakthroughs

1986: Backpropagation
Algorithm enables neural networks to learn effectively

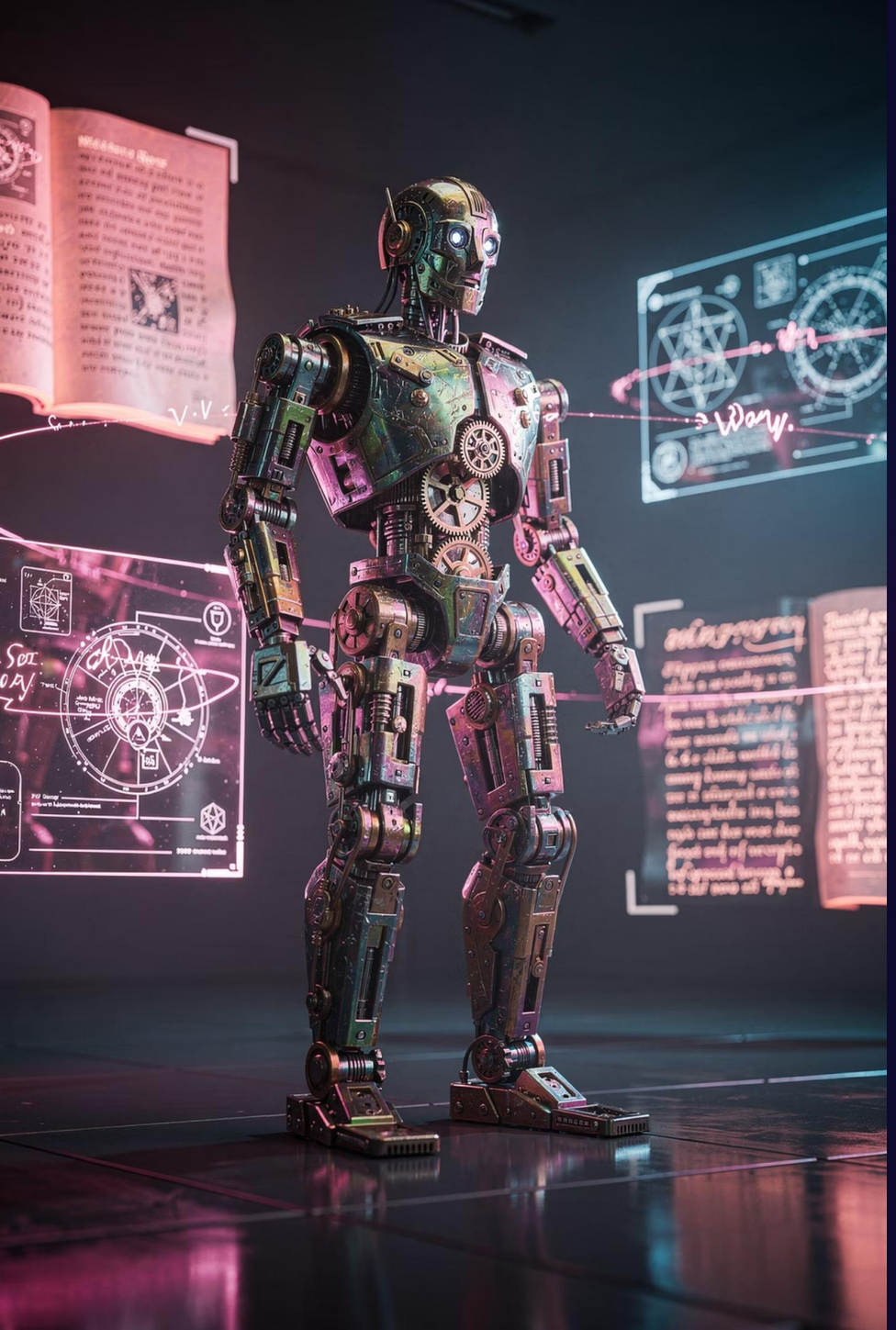
1997: Deep Blue
IBM's AI defeats chess champion Garry Kasparov

2011: Siri Launch
Apple makes AI mainstream

2016: AlphaGo
DeepMind defeats Go champion Lee Sedol

2022: ChatGPT
Public release accelerates generative AI adoption

2024: EU AI Act
World's first broad AI law passes



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The Scale of AI Investment

$109B

Global Private Investment

Total AI investment in 2024

88%

Enterprise Adoption

Organizations using AI in at least one business function

$34B

Generative AI

Investment attracted by generative AI ventures alone

280x

Cost Reduction

Decrease in running large AI models (Nov 2022 - Oct 2024)

Source: Stanford AI Index, McKinsey Global Survey

The Employment Paradox

Roles Created

170 million new roles by 2030



Jobs Displaced

92 million jobs displaced by 2030

Nearly half of employers expect to reduce workforce where tasks can be automated, yet new roles will demand analytical thinking, resilience, leadership, and social influence.

The Skills Transition Challenge

A net gain of 78 million positions is forecast, but this masks a massive skills transition challenge. Workers must adapt to new roles requiring uniquely human capabilities.

41% of Gen-Z fear AI hampers critical thinking, even as 47% use it weekly

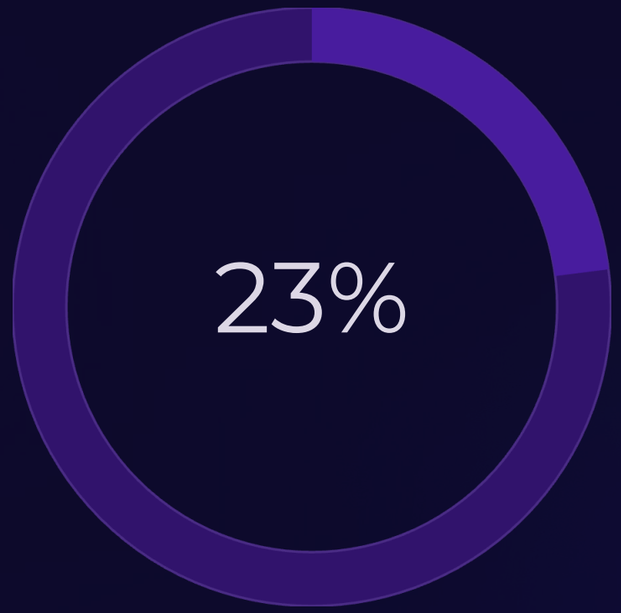
Autonomous AI Agents

AI that can independently plan and execute complex tasks, acting as digital coworkers.



Piloting Agents

Companies already testing autonomous agents



Scaling Up

Organizations beginning to scale agent deployment

Source: McKinsey

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Where would AI help your shop the most right now?

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AI in the Awards Industry

Custom Messages

Writing personalized messages for awards and plaques

Design Generation

Creating high-quality, unique designs

Production Organization

Organizing and streamlining production tasks

Customer Insights

Analyzing customer preferences and patterns



Industry-Specific Tools You Should Know



ChatGPT / Gemini

Write award messages, business letters, web copy, and customer support scripts



Canva / DALL·E

Auto-generate design drafts, posters, promotional materials, and award graphics



Zapier / Autopilot

Connect apps like Shopify, QuickBooks, CorelDRAW, and Ship Station



Fireflies.ai

Record and summarize Zoom/Teams meetings or customer consults



CorelDRAW AI Tools

Automatically align text, optimize images, and recommend layouts

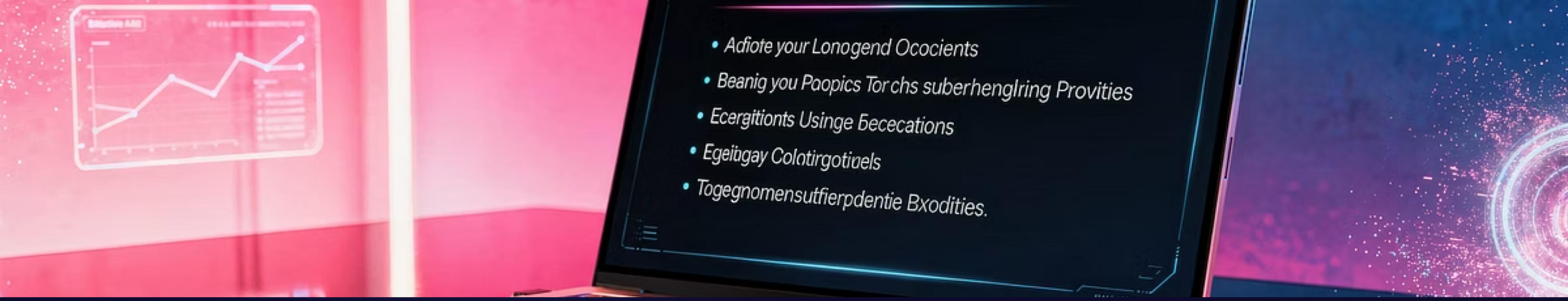
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What frustrates you the most when using ChatGPT or Gemini

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The Power of Prompts

A prompt is the instruction you give to an AI tool to get a specific result.

> "Write a formal award message for a 30-year service recipient in education"

> The better your prompt, the better the outcome

> AI is powerful, but only as good as your input

> Always treat the first response as a draft, not the final version

> Rewriting and layering instructions leads to better personalization



The Problem with Most Prompts

Most people fail with AI because their prompts lack specificity. Generic inputs lead to generic outputs. Getting ahead of 99% of users isn't about knowing obscure tools, but about mastering prompt techniques that build on each other.

> "I believe sequencing equals success. And ChatGPT can be the greatest strategist if it knows you."

Tips for Writing Great Prompts

Add these elements for precision:

1

Goal/Purpose

e.g., attract leads, email vendor, create sales pitch

2

Audience

coaches, corporate HR, event organizers, schools

3

Product Details

custom plaques, crystal awards, branded gifts

4

Unique Selling Points

fast service, local delivery, engraving, eco-friendly

5

Tone & Style

fun, heartfelt, professional, persuasive, luxury

6

Format

list, ad copy, blog post, email, script

7

Length/Structure

short social caption vs. 500-word blog

8

Call to Action

order now, book consultation, visit store

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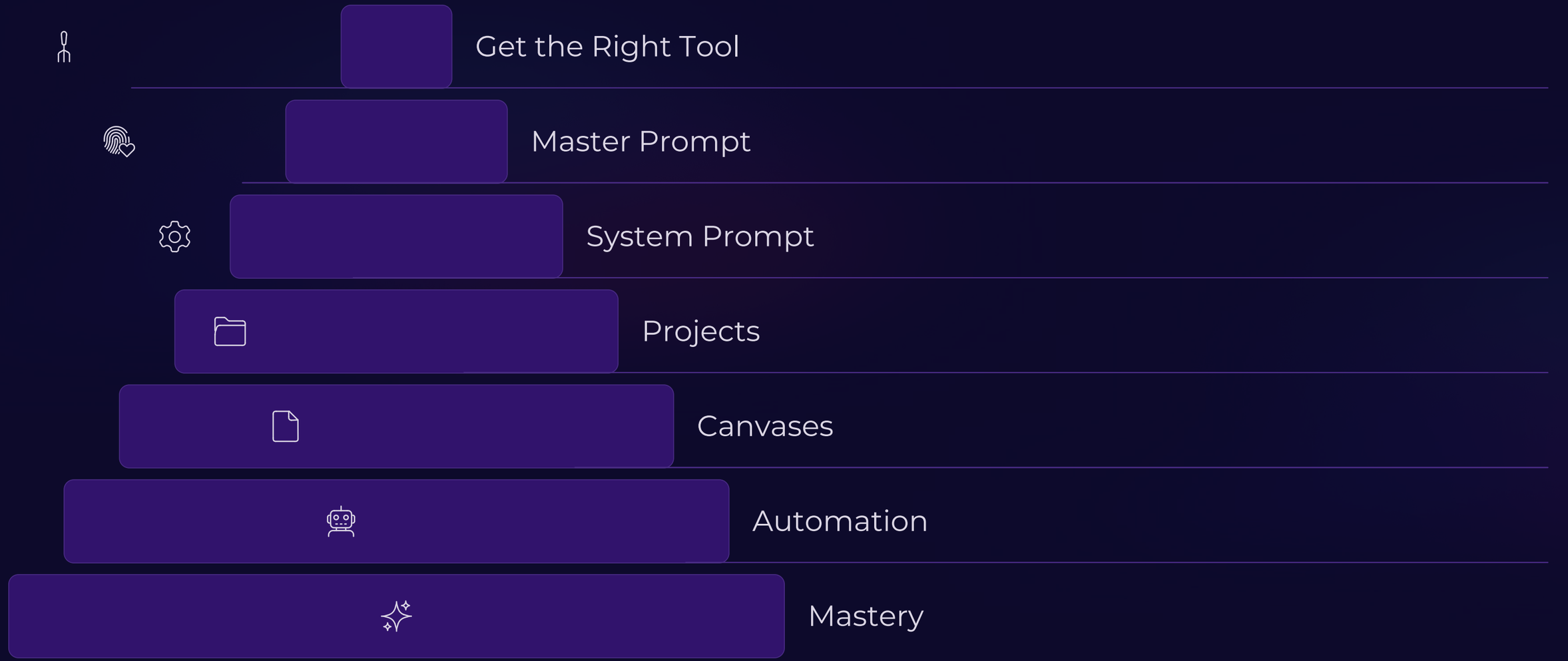
Which level are you operating at today?

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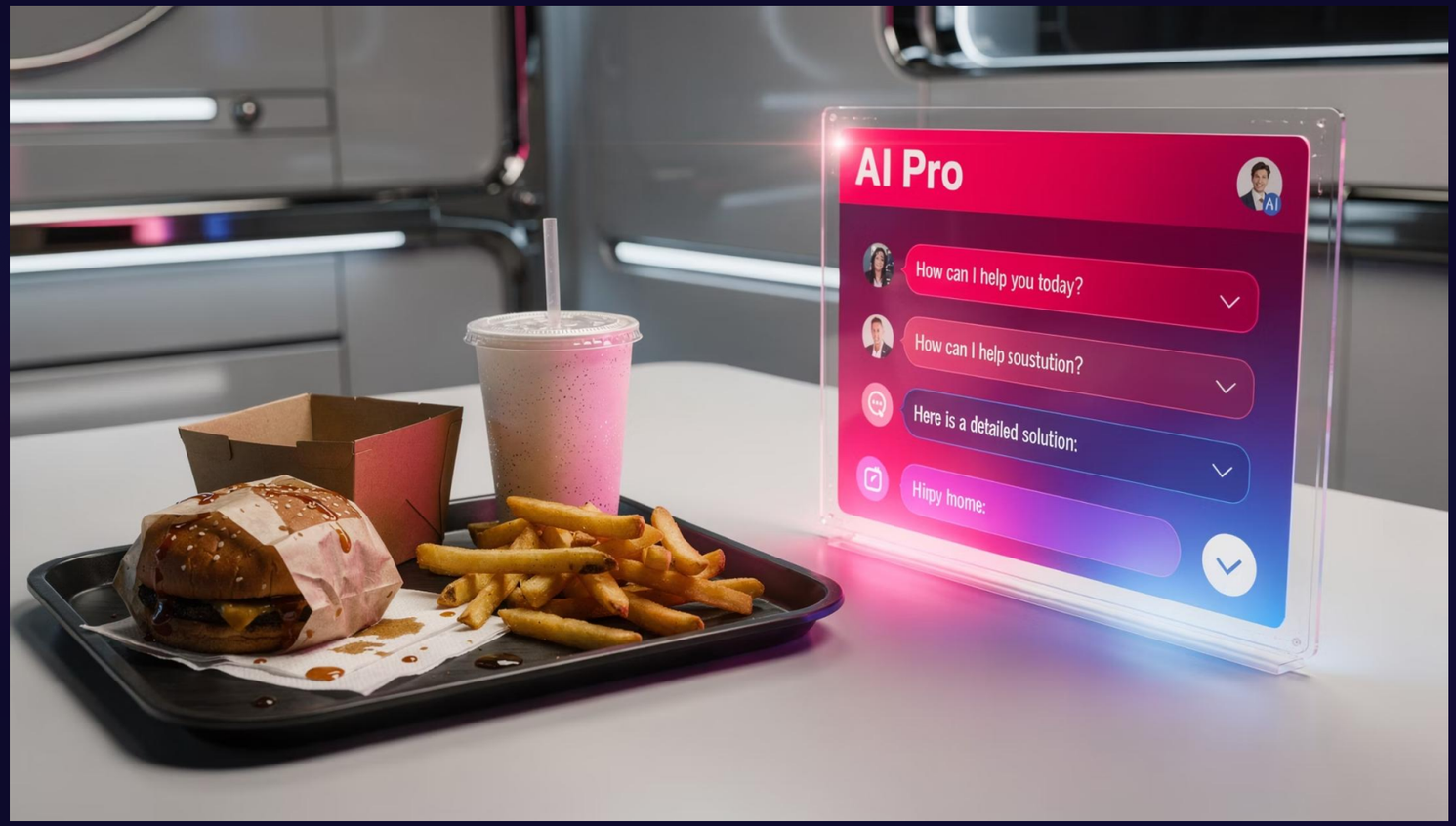
The AI Mastery Ladder

A 7-step framework that transforms you from beginner to sophisticated AI operator



Step 1: Get the Right Tool

Before building, you need a proper foundation. A professional-grade tool provides the necessary power and features for advanced techniques.



ChatGPT Pro

Cheaper than eating out, more powerful than free versions

Worth the Investment

It'll make you 10 times more money if you use these hacks

Step 2: The Master Prompt

Teach AI who you are with a comprehensive document detailing your role, company, expertise, preferences, values, and goals.



You Describe

Share your role and business details



AI Asks

AI generates questions to understand you



You Answer

Use voice dictation to respond



Final Prompt

AI creates your master prompt

Step 3: The System Prompt

Master Prompt vs System Prompt

Master Prompt tells AI **who you are**. System Prompt defines the **behavior** of how you want AI to respond for a specific task.

The Pro-Move

Reverse-engineer your perfect output:

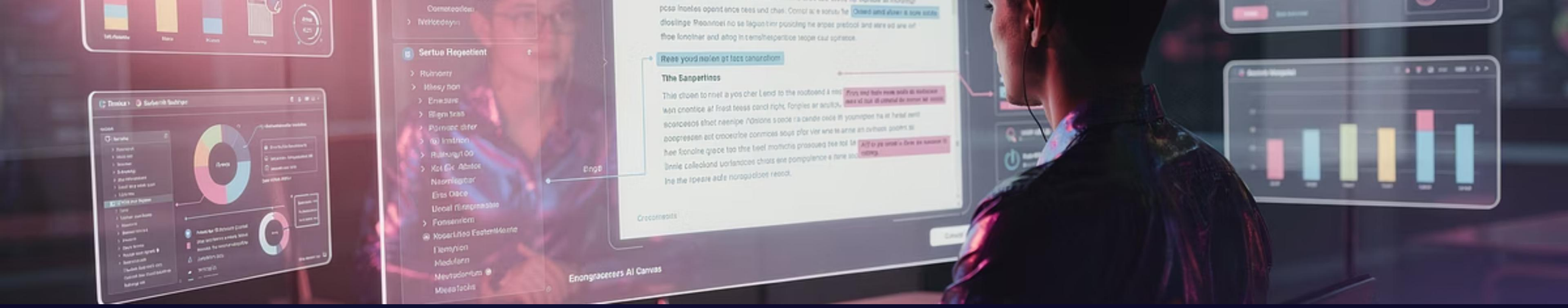
1. Generate an initial output
2. Iterate and refine through conversation
3. Ask: "Please write the system prompt that would have generated this final output"

Step 4: Projects

Build your context rooms. A Project is a dedicated workspace that holds all relevant context for a specific initiative—documents, files, instructions, and past conversations.

Real-World Example

Analyzing a home purchase in Cabo by gathering all context in one place, prompting AI to analyze comparables and risks, then making complex decisions with clarity.



Step 5: Canvases

A Canvas is a live, editable document that lives side-by-side with your chat. The AI's output appears in the Canvas, and you can chat to refine it or edit directly.

> "Anybody that uses ChatGPT to create content that doesn't use canvas you don't even know AI."

Why Canvases Are Game-Changers

Stops Full Rewrites

Updates existing text instead of starting from scratch

Combats Hallucination

You can manually tweak and remove any extra content

Improves System Prompts

AI learns from your manual edits and incorporates them

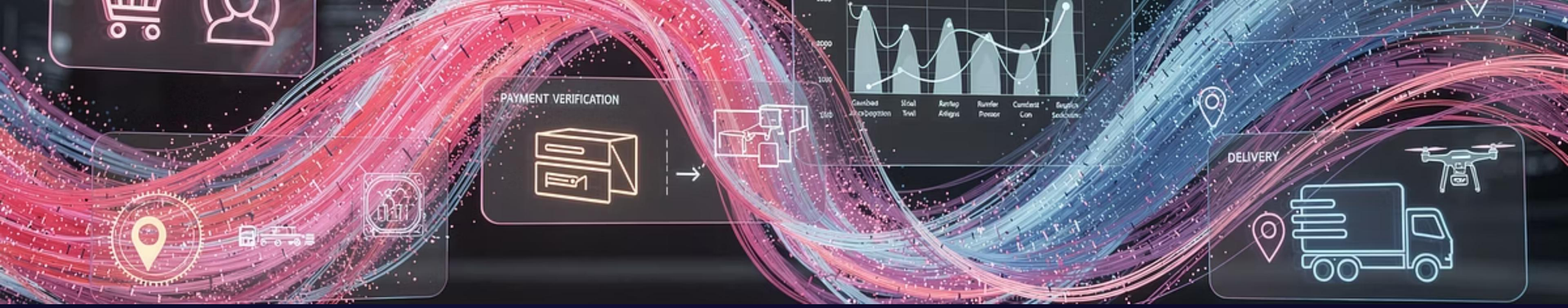
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What process costs you the most time each week?

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Streamlining Your Business with AI

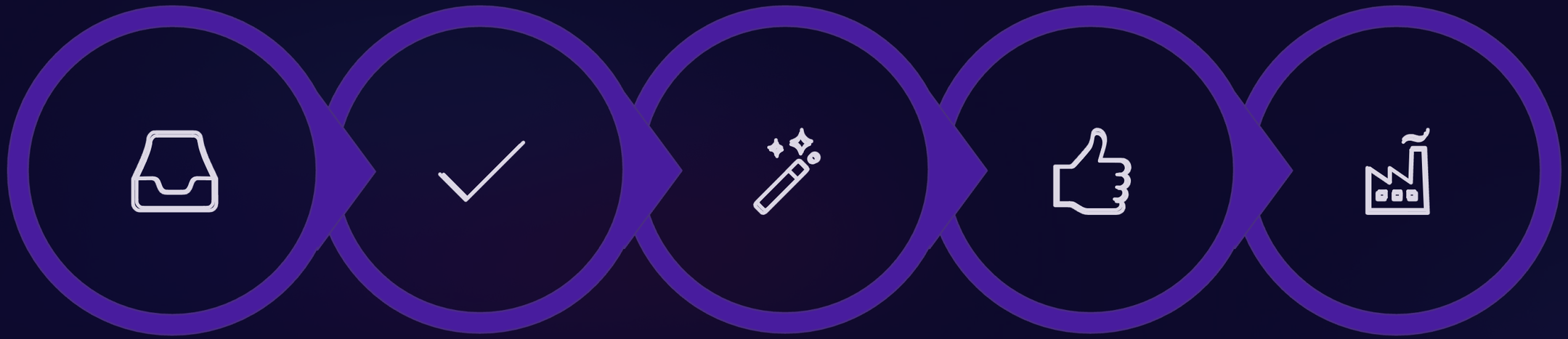
Automate Routine Tasks

- Order confirmations
- Customer updates
- Inventory syncing

Efficiency Gains

- Create award texts from spreadsheet inputs
- Generate quick visual proofs for approval
- Save hours on design edits and admin tasks

Real-World Automation Example



Order Received

Auto-Confirmation

Design Generated

Customer Approval

Production

This automated workflow reduces manual touchpoints while keeping customers informed throughout the entire process.

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Do you currently have AI language in your contracts?

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Securing Your ChatGPT or Gemini Account

Follow these steps to keep your account safe & personalized!

01

Open Settings

Click on the bottom left where it lists your name

02

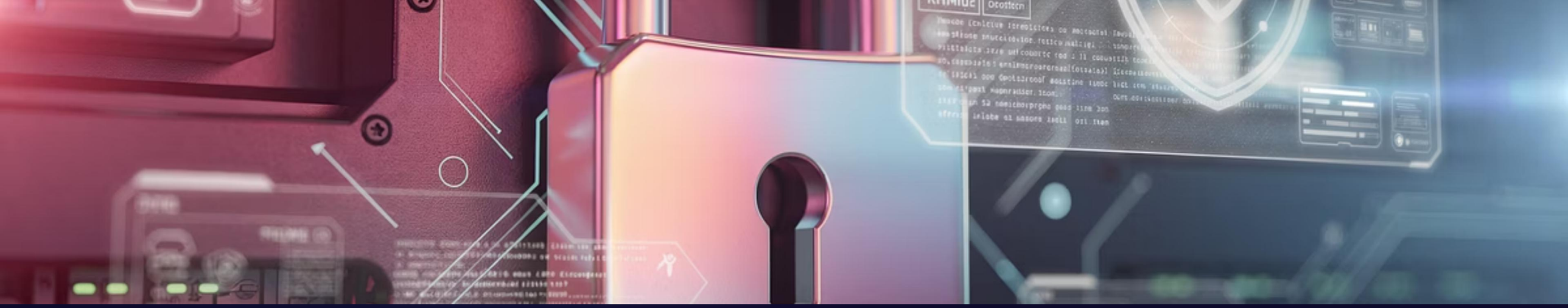
Data Controls

Select "Data Controls" & turn off "Improve the model for everyone"

03

Personalization

Click "Personalization" & fill out the "About You" tab with nickname, occupation, and details



Keep Your Account Secure

Privacy First

Ensures your data stays private

Personalized

Helps AI learn more about you

Protected

Your information remains secure



Legal & Ethical Considerations

Licensing Caution

AI-generated designs may not be 100% protected under copyright law

Disclosure

Clearly disclose when AI is used in your creative process

Stay Informed

Monitor emerging legal standards from industry associations

Copyright Compliance

Avoid using copyrighted images or text without proper checks

Update Contracts

Add language about AI-generated content and indemnity clauses

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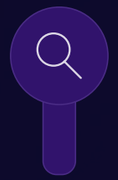


What is ONE thing you will implement in the next 30 days?

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Your AI Implementation Roadmap



Research & Learn

Explore available AI tools and understand their capabilities



Identify Use Cases

Determine which processes could benefit most from AI



Start Small

Begin with one tool or workflow, test thoroughly



Train Your Team

Ensure staff understands how to use AI tools effectively



Scale & Expand

Expand AI usage as you gain confidence and see results

Contact Information

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AWARDS4UENCOURAGE. RECOGNIZE. CELEBRATE.

Connect with me to continue the conversation about AI in the awards industry. I'm here to help you navigate this exciting transformation.



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Questions

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