

Chapter 4

Prompt Engineering 101

“Prompting is not a technical skill. It’s first and foremost a communication skill. AI has immense knowledge – but it lacks human wisdom and curiosity, so it needs clear intent and guidance.”

Adam Walsh

I still remember the very first time I logged into ChatGPT in early 2023. While I was extremely inexperienced in AI, I was a very experienced human copywriter with a content marketing agency that was starting to struggle. I was curious about this shiny new (and free) threat that had crash-landed into my arena. How dare it! I remember my eyes scanning the basic page before me, then landing on the message bar, which looked very similar to the Google search bar I’d grown to know and trust. It was then that I plugged in my first ever prompt:

Why are copywriters better than ChatGPT?

Okay, yes, I was curious and just a *little* bit bitter – like all the other copywriters who were slowly creeping out of denial and starting to see the writing on the wall. However, I admit to instantly feeling a glimmer of hope when I witnessed extremely generic and robotic

words fill my screen. “Oh, this is crap!” I exclaimed out loud. “I could write sooo much better than this!”

Initially, I thought that was all I was up against. I hadn’t discovered prompt engineering yet. And I had no idea what greatness could be achieved after training up the tool. As a self-proclaimed non-techy professional woman, I hadn’t yet realised that I had the ability to turn ChatGPT into a highly valued member of my team.

Fast-forward a few months and I was starting to get it. I’d read *The Art of Prompt Engineering with ChatGPT* by Nathan Hunter, which explained everything in an easy-to-understand way. I had listened to a few podcasts. And I’d followed some AI enthusiasts on LinkedIn. As mentioned in the prologue, I then threw together a free webinar on “How to use ChatGPT and still sound human”, helping to cement my new-found knowledge by teaching others. And I’ve been teaching this topic ever since, even calling myself a “prompt engineer” from time to time.

More than two years later, I’m still meeting professionals who have no idea what prompt engineering is. Maybe that’s you? Well, while the words “prompt engineering” can send non-techy people into a sweaty panic, it’s actually not as bad as you think. You don’t need to be an IT geek or guru to get it. You don’t need to understand coding. And you don’t need to remember any specific formulas (and thank f*ck for that, because I would struggle massively if that were the case!). To put it simply, prompt engineering is all about crafting and tweaking instructions provided to a GenAI tool to ensure it delivers accurate and effective results.

Yep, that’s it.

Now we’re getting into the juicy prompt engineering stuff – the stuff you’ve been itching to sink your claws into since Chapter 1. If you’ve skipped ahead to this page, please head back to Part I – Humans, you cheeky monkey. Getting into the right mindset is

essential before diving into this section. Trust me. It will set you apart from, like, 90% of the population.*

In this chapter, my aim is to flip your thinking on what the precious words “prompt engineering” mean in the AI world. And I’ll explain how it all works. I think you’ll be pleasantly surprised. Some of these upcoming gold nuggets have been complete game-changers for the majority of my students and audiences.

What is prompt engineering?

It is absolutely key to provide GenAI tools with clear written or verbal instructions – otherwise known as “prompts”. When you don’t provide enough clarity or context, you’re looking at a pure example of “garbage in, garbage out”. Insert crappy, basic instructions and you can expect crappy, basic results. (The human copywriter within me screams every time I see this type of content published.)

From my experience, the majority of people are treating the GenAI message bar the same way they use the Google search bar. You know, smashing out demands for quick results:

Write me this!

What’s the answer for that?

Give me this!

Can you fix that?

You may be guilty of this too. But I’m here to tell you that while they look similar, these bars are *not* the same thing. With GenAI, you can’t just throw in a basic command and expect gold on the first go. It’s just not going to happen. When it comes to best prompt practices, it’s not about *what* you ask AI to do but *how* you ask it.

If your prompt doesn’t clearly outline exactly what you need, you’re going to struggle to get effective results. And that quite

* Completely made up – but likely correct – statistic by me.

often means wasting time, going backwards and forwards in an argument with your bot when you could have simply written or researched the information yourself! However, unlike maths equations, there are no *exact* prompts that you *must* use to ensure high quality. Honestly, I could plug in one prompt one day and get a certain response, and the very next day I could try it again and get something completely different.

What do you mean, Leanne? I have to come up with the prompts myself? But I have no idea what I'm doing with AI!

If that sounds like you, you're not alone. Discovering and uncovering the perfect prompts has been a barrier to entry for so many professionals and entrepreneurs. But trust me, there's no need to waste energy trying to source the perfect prompt for your needs. As mentioned in Chapter 1: Let's Press Pause, I purchased one of those "1,000 prompts for \$57" deals back when I started my AI journey and, honestly, I think I've only ever looked at it once, maybe twice. Whenever you come across generic prompts shared by AI enthusiasts and experts, they need to be seen as excellent starting points – nothing more.

Do you want to know why? Because those humans don't know you. They don't know your role, your company and your clients. They don't know what projects you've got coming up and what your priorities are. (Unless, of course, you've developed a strong human connection with them, as outlined in Chapter 2: The Importance of Human Connection!) Sure, they're keen to help you, and that's why they're sharing the information. But there's usually an agenda. They're trying to build your trust and pull you towards their pricey programs and podcasts. I get it – that's the whole point of content creation, after all. However, many of these prompts are also 100% AI-generated, and in many cases they haven't been tested to check the quality of output.

When I run AI workshops and programs, I'm always transparent with my clients when I ask tools to supply sample prompts for their

Prompt eGuides. Because unless they're in marketing, in many cases I wouldn't have the faintest idea what they do in their day-to-day roles and what wording would go into a decent prompt. But that's when we kick off the fun collaboration and critical thinking process. I get them to suggest and decide what should be changed and added. You ultimately need to make *all* prompts your own, because *you* are the human expert here.

Are there any 'magic' AI formulas?

As a content marketer and strategist, I admit to never following any prompt formulas or templates. I just think about the desired output (aka result) and work backwards from there, thinking about all the elements that must be included in the plan or content. But if you're an absolute AI newbie, you might find comfort in ticking off a checklist. Then you know you're entering all the essential information into the GenAI message bar without missing anything.

If that's the case, you can start with a formula until you become more comfortable with the prompting process. (I have another trick up my sleeve that will help, but I'll talk about that shortly.) I've pulled together a basic prompting formula for you as a starting point. I recommend including as many of these elements as possible into your initial prompt, as it will save you hours in the long run. If you forget an element, no worries – you can always “re-brief” the AI tool later.

Here are the core elements to be featured in a high-quality prompt:

- **Task.** You want to kick things off with a clear action and specific goal. This one should be fairly obvious.

Example: “Please create a list of 5 × social media posts, approximately 150–200 words each, to promote an AI training program targeting business executives.”

- **Context.** Provide background information to improve the response, including purpose, audience and platform. You'd typically find this information in a human-to-human project briefing.

Example: “The training program is aimed at business executives who want to stay ahead of the curve by integrating AI into their leadership and decision-making. The focus is on positioning AI as a tool for smarter, faster decisions and streamlining operations. We'll be focusing on the LinkedIn platform, with the goal of driving registrations and building thought leadership around AI training.”

- **Sample content.** To steer AI in the right direction, it's a good idea to include examples of what a “good” output looks like. You can provide past examples written by your team or something you've discovered externally for “inspiration”. (I'm not going to promote plagiarism here!)

Example: “Please use a style similar to these:

- Feeling swamped by AI hype? Discover how to cut through the noise and use AI to make smarter business decisions.
- AI isn't just for techies – it's for leaders like you. Learn how to guide your team into the future with confidence in our upcoming AI training.”

- **Persona.** You don't always have to do this, but I've found telling the AI who it's supposed to “be” while working on the task often improves the quality of the response.

Example: “Pretend you're a savvy social media marketer who knows how to connect with busy professionals, using a mix of wit, warmth and expertise to engage.”

- **Format.** Consider what your ideal output/results will look like. Without clear instructions about the structure and format, your tool will just do whatever it “feels” like!

Example: “Please deliver the posts in full draft form, ready for review. Each post should be 2–3 sentences long and include:

- a compelling hook or question to grab attention
 - clear messaging that highlights the benefits of the AI training program for business executives
 - a strong call to action (e.g. “Sign up now”, or “Learn more”).
 - relevant hashtags (e.g. #FutureReadyLeadership; #AIForBusiness)
 - sparing use of emojis to add visual interest and energy.”
- **Tone.** I talk about the importance of tone and brand voice in Chapter 6: Nailing Your Brand Voice. You mightn’t need to feature this aspect in every prompt if you’ve already trained your AI tool to recognise your writing style. (I can’t wait to share this stuff with you!) For now, let’s just say you may wish to specify the tone within your prompt to ensure it aligns with the vibe you’re going for.

Example: “As per the HumanEdge AI Training brand voice, please keep it friendly, relatable and a little cheeky – something that sparks curiosity and makes the audience feel seen.”

Add each of those core elements together and you have a fully engineered prompt!

Yes, you’ll notice it’s long – probably a lot longer than anything you’ve entered into GenAI to date! But can you see how thorough it is? By including all these details, you have a much greater chance of quality output. With regular use, you can train the tool to get to know you and your business inside and out. These days, I only need to make minor tweaks when I use AI. And it’s almost undetectable that I’ve used my little sidekick!

Let’s look at the unedited social media posts my tool produced from the above prompt.

Post one – Cut Through the AI Noise:

💡 *Feeling overwhelmed by all the AI buzzwords and jargon? You're not alone. AI can feel like an intimidating beast, but here's the truth: it's a tool—and a powerful one at that—for leaders like YOU.*

Our AI training program isn't about teaching you to be a programmer. It's about helping you make smarter, faster decisions, streamlining operations, and staying ahead of the game. We'll show you how to take the practical, human-first approach to AI integration in your leadership.

Ready to lead with clarity and confidence in the AI era? Let us guide you. 🚀

🔗 *Sign up now: [Insert link]*

#FutureReadyLeadership #AIForBusiness

Post two – Leadership in the AI Era:

AI isn't just for the techies anymore—it's for forward-thinking leaders like you. ✨

The future of leadership demands the ability to combine human insight with AI-powered tools. Our AI training program is designed to give business executives like you the skills to:

- ✓ *Streamline decision-making processes*
- ✓ *Identify AI opportunities in your operations*
- ✓ *Empower your team with future-ready strategies*

We keep things simple, actionable, and tailored for busy leaders. No tech jargon—just practical tools and insights to elevate your leadership game.

📁 *The future is here. Are you ready to embrace it?*

🔗 *Learn more and reserve your spot: [Insert link]*

#InnovationLeadership #AIForExecutives

Not too bad. I think it's about 80% to 90% there – and very aligned with my brand. But there's a good reason for that: as mentioned above, my GenAI tool knows me really well now. And it all started with a *proper* AI onboarding process.

What's an AI onboarding process, Leanne? Oh, I'm glad you asked. I'll introduce you to the concept now.

Meet your junior assistant or intern

Okay, get ready to have your mind blown.

When it comes to GenAI or LLM tools like ChatGPT, Copilot and Gemini, please don't approach them like on-demand search engines. Yes, technically that's what they are, but it's time to flick the switch on your thinking. I want you to interact with AI as though it's a *human* junior assistant or intern. Yep, treat it like a human.

Why? Because if you were meeting your human junior assistant on their very first day at the office, would you immediately start shouting vague demands like “Create a business plan for me”, or “Write this article”, or “Develop a marketing campaign”? Nope. But what if you did? In an attempt to please you, their boss, they'd try to complete the task to the best of their ability. After all, they know how to use the internet, so how hard could it be? The thing is, your junior assistant, on their *very* first day at work, knows *nothing* about your business or customers. So, they're likely to bring back useless results, like:

- a basic business plan that doesn't speak to your industry, your needs or your financial goals
- an article that's bland, lifeless and generic
- a mediocre marketing campaign without an understanding of who it's marketing to and why.

This is exactly what AI is currently producing for hundreds of thousands of people across the globe. And they have no idea why the output is so crappy. As soon as you see AI as a human junior assistant, it changes your thinking. What would you *actually* do on their first day of work? You'd kick things off with an *onboarding process*, right? So that's what you need to do with AI as well. Because to create authentic, high-quality, human-centric content you need to train your AI assistant first to understand your business, your brand voice and, most importantly, your customers.

That's step one, before you do anything else. But it's a step that the majority of the population completely skips over. It's not their fault, though – they don't know what they don't know. But now you *do* know. And we're going to work through the business onboarding process together in the following chapters. Once you complete that valuable initial step, you can start producing real magic – and bring on AI as a valuable extension of your team. Without replacing you, the human, of course!

Final thoughts...

I hope you're feeling a little less intimidated about prompts now. Because prompt engineering isn't rocket science (even though many AI enthusiasts online seem to completely overcomplicate things). It's just a matter of crafting clear, purposeful instructions and letting your expertise shine through. If you treat AI like your eager (but clueless) junior assistant, you'll begin to see phenomenal results.

AI-generated chapter summary *(with human tweaks)*

- “Garbage in, garbage out.” The quality of AI output depends entirely on the clarity and specificity of the input prompt.
- Generative AI tools like ChatGPT are not Google search bars. They require carefully crafted instructions to deliver valuable results.
- Prompt engineering is about crafting and refining instructions to guide AI effectively.
- Generic pre-made prompts are only starting points. They must be personalised to align with your role, business, and audience needs.
- Core elements of a high-quality prompt include:
 - *Task*. Clearly define the action and goal.
 - *Context*. Share relevant background and audience details.
 - *Sample content*. Offer examples of the style or output you want.
 - *Persona*. Specify the role or tone AI should adopt.
 - *Format*. Indicate the structure or style required.
 - *Tone*. Match the desired voice, such as friendly, cheeky or professional.
- A detailed prompt ensures the output is more aligned with your needs, saving time and reducing frustration.
- Treat AI like a junior assistant who requires onboarding to learn about your business, brand voice and audience before expecting quality results.