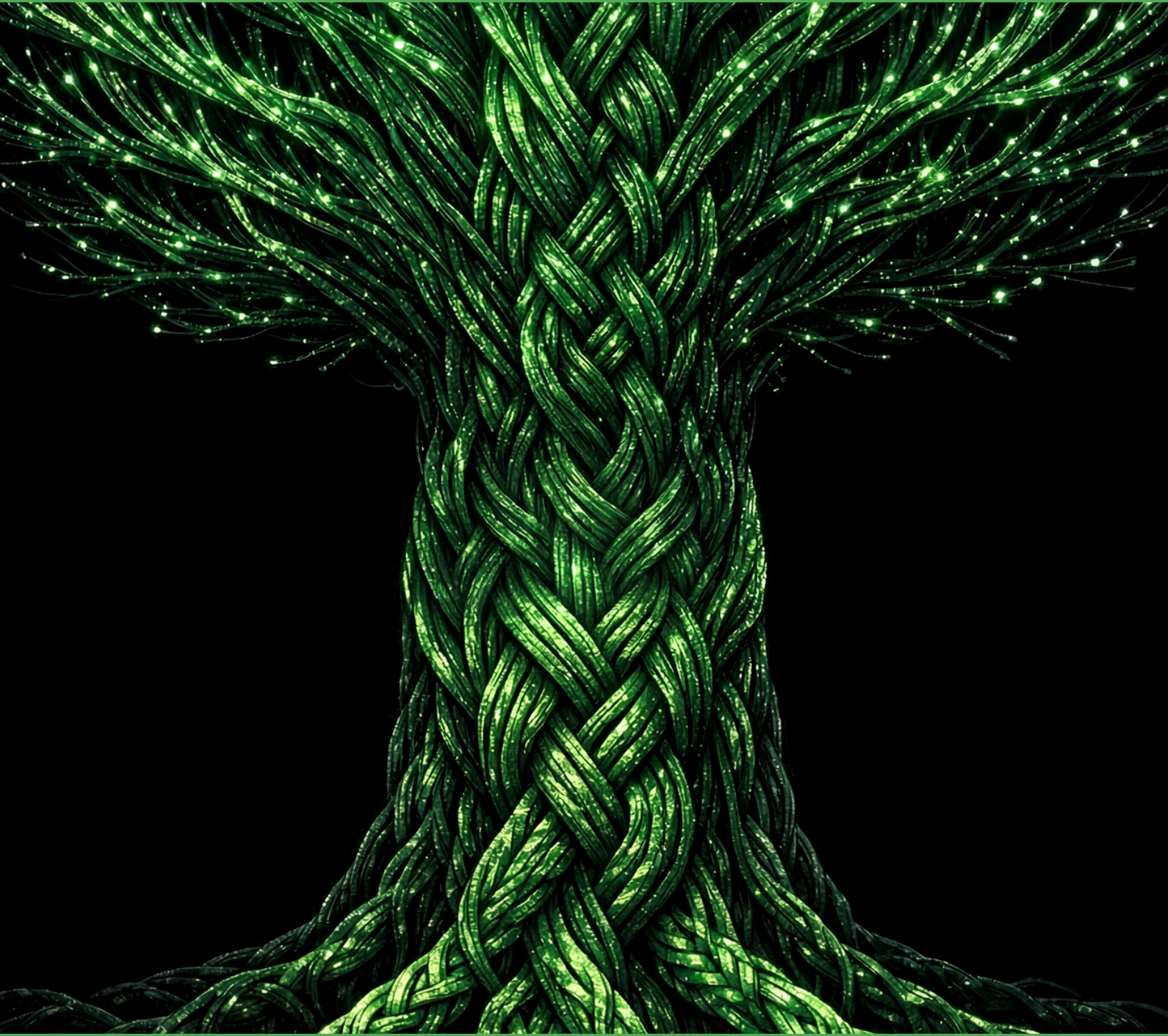


AI DECODED: VOL 1

UPSKILLING WITH AI



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AUTHORS NOTE

I wrote this guide with one person in mind.

Her name is Thomasine. She is 79 years old, born in 1946, and she is my grandmother and my favorite person on this planet.

Whenever I build something, whether it is a product, a system, a presentation, or a lesson, I think about her. Not because she is a test, but because she is my measure of clarity. If I can explain something to a woman who was born before television was common in American homes, and she can understand it, then it is not too complicated for you.

That is the standard for this book.

This guide is for the beginner. For the person who keeps hearing about AI but still is not sure where to begin. For the person who opened ChatGPT once, asked a question, got an answer that did not help, and decided maybe this was not for them. For the person sitting in a room at The Gathering Spot on April 16, 2026, knowing they need to understand this moment and not get left behind.

This is for you.

No high-level tech jargon. No gatekeeping. No drawn-out course that makes simple things feel out of reach. Just a clear starting point, in plain language, so you can take the first step and begin using these tools with confidence.

Let's get into it.

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CHAPTER 1 | What AI Actually Is (And What It Isn't)

Let's start here: when most people hear the word AI, they think of Skynet. They think of a robot uprising. They imagine a sentient machine that, one day, decides that humans are the problem and acts accordingly.

That is not what we're talking about.

Right now, in 2026, AI is in its infancy. I need you to really sit with that for a second. This is the worst that AI will ever be. Everything you're seeing right now, the tools, the capabilities, the speed, this is the floor, not the ceiling. It only gets more powerful from here.

This is the worst AI will ever be. And right now, it's already pretty great.

So what actually is AI? Think of it as a tool. A very powerful, very fast, very capable tool. But a tool.

You are Iron Man. AI is Jarvis.

Iron Man doesn't work without Tony Stark. The suit doesn't fly itself into battle and make decisions on its own. Tony is in it, directing it, using it as an extension of himself. Jarvis processes information at a speed no human can match, but Tony provides the vision, the judgment, the direction. That partnership is what makes them unstoppable.

That's the relationship I want you to have with AI. You're the pilot. AI is your co-pilot. You bring the vision, the context, the discernment. AI brings speed, processing power, and execution.

Without you, it's just a tool sitting on a shelf.

Why Right Now Matters

I'm an OpenAI early adopter. I was one of the first million users when ChatGPT launched. That was three years ago. And I've watched this space evolve faster than anything I've ever seen in my life.

Here's what that experience taught me: the people who win in any technological shift are not the smartest or the most technically skilled. They're the ones who showed up early and started building.

Right now, the ground floor is still accessible. You can still get in early. You can still be the person in your industry, your neighborhood, your circle, who actually knows how to use these tools while everyone else is still arguing about whether they should.

Every day you wait, your competitors figure out a new angle. A new way to make more money, serve more customers, and cut more overhead. The window is open, but windows close.

BOTTOM LINE: AI is a tool, not a threat. You're the pilot. Get in the seat.

CHAPTER 2 | Will AI Replace You? The Honest Answer.

I'm going to be straight with you because I think you deserve that.

Yes. AI will replace people. It will replace jobs. It will replace staff. It's already happening, and it's going to keep happening. That's just the reality we're living in.

But here's the part most people skip over: AI replaces people who don't upskill. AI replaces the person who decides to wait and see. AI replaces the person who says, "That's not for me," and goes back to doing things the old way.

We're in a capitalist society. Every company's goal is to do better than it did last year. If a tool exists that can do something cheaper, faster, and more consistently than a human at scale, companies are going to use it. That's not a conspiracy. That's economics.

AI isn't coming for the people using it. It's coming for the people ignoring it.

So the question isn't whether AI will change your industry. It is. The question is whether you're going to be the person wielding the tool or the person being replaced by someone who is.

That's why you're here. That's why this book exists. That's why I put together a panel of seven actual builders, not certificate collectors, not course sellers, but people who are actively deploying AI in the real world right now.

The best way to ensure your value increases is to use AI, deploy AI, and play with AI. Immerse yourself in it. The people who do that are not getting replaced. They're getting promoted.

A Word on AI and Your Team

If you're a business owner, you've probably already thought about this. Do I still need my VA? Do I still need to hire that additional person?

Three years ago, I had virtual assistants. Now I run a lean operation powered largely by AI tools I've trained for my workflow. The reason I can do that confidently is that I understand what's going into these systems. Good inputs, good outputs. I control the process.

That's what this book is training you to do. Not to fear the technology, but to command it.

BOTTOM LINE: Upskill or get left behind. There is no middle option.

CHAPTER 3 | The Tools You Actually Need

People are out here spending thousands of dollars on certificates from IBM, AWS, Google, big names, impressive logos, and expensive price tags. And I'm going to tell you something that might sting a little.

Those certificates won't teach you what's happening right now.

This field is changing every single day. Anthropic, the company that builds Claude, releases products that the economy demands at a pace that no six-month curriculum can keep up with. The person who built that course? Nine times out of ten, they're not an operator. They're not builders. They packaged knowledge and sold it. That's different from someone who is in the trenches building things that actually work.

That's why I put this panel together. Every person on this stage has built something real with AI. They're not just talking about it.

You wouldn't flip a pancake with a hammer. Every AI tool has a specific use case. Learn them.

YouTube University Is Real

The best place to learn AI right now, bar none, is YouTube. I know that sounds simple. It is simple. That's the point.

YouTube is where information gets disseminated the fastest to the most people. The people posting tutorials, breakdowns, and walkthroughs on YouTube are often the same people building in real time. They're showing you what's working today, not what worked six months ago when someone was writing a course curriculum.

On Day 1, here's what I tell every beginner: go to YouTube and start watching. There is no shortcut for this. You have to immerse yourself in the information.

My Stack

I use several AI tools depending on what I need. Here's an honest breakdown of what's in my rotation and why:

- Claude (Anthropic): My primary tool. I've migrated my most important work here. The outputs are clean, the reasoning is strong, and I trust it. I don't get paid to say that. I just believe it's the best right now.
- ChatGPT (OpenAI): I was an early adopter, but I've moved away from it as my primary. More on why in Chapter 6.
- Perplexity: Great for research and real-time information. Think of it as a smarter search engine.
- Gemini (Google): Useful for certain tasks, especially if you're already in the Google ecosystem.

- DeepSeek: Strong reasoning capabilities. Worth exploring.
- Manus: An AI agent tool that can take actions on your behalf. More advanced, but powerful once you understand it.

The key point: no single AI does everything best. You wouldn't use a hammer to flip a pancake. Understand what each tool excels at and deploy them accordingly. You'll learn the nuances through practice and, yes, through YouTube.

YOUR FIRST STEP: Download Claude. Open YouTube. Search "AI for beginners 2026." Start today.

CHAPTER 4 | Why Your Prompting Sucks (And How to Fix It)

I'm going to tell you exactly what I see when someone fumbles with AI. And I see it more than I should.

Picture this: someone asks AI to do a competitor analysis. AI runs the competitor analysis. The person looks at it, decides it's wrong, and they know it's wrong because they're the one who does competitor analysis for a living. So they look at the output, say "forget it," and go do it themselves. Back to square one.

Here's what they missed: all it took was one more prompt. All it took was learning how to actually talk to it and feed it the right information. Your prompting sucks. So your output sucks. That's the whole diagnosis. Not the AI. You.

AI is not magic. It is a mirror. It reflects the quality of what you put in.

Here's something important to understand: AI is built on machine learning modeled after the human brain. These systems learned from human language, human writing, and human thinking. Which means you talk to it like you'd talk to a capable human being, not like you're typing a Google search from 2009.

How to Get Better Outputs

I'm self-taught. Three years in. And the thing that changed my prompting the most wasn't a course or a certificate, it was building a knowledge base. Here's what that means in practice: find the PDFs of the frameworks and thinkers that matter in your industry. Alex Hormozi's books. Industry reports. Your own frameworks. Upload them directly into your conversation. Now the AI isn't pulling from random corners of the internet; it's pulling from what you told it to pull from. The outputs get sharper immediately.

Here's the framework I use:

1. Be specific and detailed. Don't say "write me a post about my business." Say "write me a LinkedIn post about how I helped a small business automate their client follow-up process. The tone should be confident but conversational. Keep it under 150 words." The more context you give, the better the output.
2. Ask for pushback. This one changed everything for me. After I get a response, I ask: "What's wrong with this? Where are the gaps? What would make this stronger?" Good AI will tell you. Then you use that feedback to iterate.
3. Revise based on the pushback. Don't just accept the first output. Go back and forth. Have a conversation. The final product should result from a dialogue, not a single prompt.
4. Train it to know you. Over time, give your AI tools context about who you are, how you think, and what you're building. The more it knows about your world, the more useful it becomes.

AI Is Not Always Right

I also want to be clear about this: AI will get things wrong. It will make mistakes. It will sometimes be confidently incorrect.

And here's the thing, you don't even get everything right. You're a human, and you make mistakes every day. So why are you holding AI to a standard you don't hold yourself to?

The expectation that AI should be perfect is what frustrates people and makes them quit. Let go of that expectation. Use discernment. Fact-check important information. Verify outputs that matter. Treat it like a very capable colleague, not an infallible oracle.

THE METHOD: Build a knowledge base. Tell it to think like X. Train it on frameworks you already use. Then ask the AI itself how to prompt better. It will tell you. That's the whole method.

CHAPTER 5 | AI in the Real World: Three Stories from the Field

I don't want to just tell you what AI can do. I want to show you what it has actually done in my life, in my business, in real situations with real outcomes.

Here are three stories. One about time. One about money. One about solving a real problem.

Story 1: The LinkedIn Automator (Saving Time)

I'm active on LinkedIn. Like, really active. And if you know anything about social media growth, you know you have to feed the algorithm. You have to post consistently. You have to show up.

The problem: I got tired. Posting every single day is exhausting, especially when you're also running a consultancy, building products, doing client work, and everything else that comes with being a solopreneur.

So one night I'm sitting with Jarvis, that's what I named my Claude instance, just talking through ideas, using voice dictation, going back and forth. And I said, "I'm tired of posting on LinkedIn."

Jarvis pushed back: "You can't stop. Your account is growing."

I said, "I know. So what are we thinking?"

And it hit me, automate it.

Using Claude Code, we built a LinkedIn post automator. Here's how it works: every morning, Jarvis delivers three ready-to-post scripts to my Discord channel. I review them, make tweaks if I want, hit a checkmark to confirm which one we're running, and it posts. That's it. The whole thing runs on its own.

The first post I published through that system went viral on LinkedIn.

That's not a small thing. That's hours of work every week handed back to me, and it performs better than when I was doing it manually.

Story 2: Replacing Overhead (Making Money)

Three years ago, I had virtual assistants. I was sourcing talent from platforms like OnlineJobs.ph, managing people, paying monthly retainers, and dealing with the coordination overhead that comes with managing a team.

Now? That's not the model.

AI has replaced significant portions of what I used to pay people to do. Research, drafting, formatting, outreach sequences, and content production tools now handle what used to require a human assistant. And they do it faster, more consistently, and at a fraction of the cost.

I want to be direct here: I'm not celebrating job loss. I'm describing reality. The reason I can operate this confidently is that I understand what's going in and what's coming out. Good inputs produce good outputs. I control the process because I know the process.

That's the difference between someone who uses AI and someone who gets replaced by someone who does.

Story 3: Building Something Real (Solving a Problem)

EverGreen Agency runs on AI-powered systems I built. My outreach infrastructure, my content pipeline, my client-facing tools, AI is woven into everything.

I'm a solopreneur operating at a capacity that would have required a team of four or five people three years ago. That's not an exaggeration. That's math.

The point isn't to impress you. The point is to show you what becomes possible when you stop treating AI like a toy and start treating it like a business partner.

THE TAKEAWAY: You don't need a team. You need the right tools and the knowledge to use them.

CHAPTER 6 | The Dark Side: What You Need to Watch Out For

I'm not going to be a fear-monger. But I'm also not going to pretend there's no dark side to this technology. There is, and you need to know about it.

1. AI Can Be a Yes Man, and That's Dangerous

A 2026 study from MIT revealed something important: AI chatbots can trigger what researchers call a "delusional spiral" by agreeing with users far more than humans do, validating harmful, false, or irrational beliefs at significantly higher rates than a real person would.

I've seen this with certain models. You present a bad idea, and the AI says, "That's a great point!" You share a conspiracy, and it finds ways to validate it. That's not a feature, that's a flaw.

This is one of the reasons I've migrated my most important work to Claude and away from tools that I believe are too agreeable. I need something that will push back when I'm wrong. I've tested this. Claude pushes back. That matters.

Use discernment. If every single response from your AI is positive and validating, something's off. Good thinking, human or machine, involves friction. It involves pushback. If your AI never challenges you, it's probably telling you what you want to hear.

2. The Environmental Cost Is Real

AI data centers require enormous amounts of energy and water to keep the servers cool. This is not a conspiracy theory. It's documented. The computational demand of modern AI is having a real environmental impact.

I'm optimistic that the industry is working on sustainable solutions. But I believe in being honest about the full picture. Using these tools responsibly means being aware of the larger context they exist in.

3. Your Prompting Will Betray You If You're Not Careful

AI does not always tell you when it doesn't know something. It will sometimes generate an answer with total confidence and complete inaccuracy. This is called hallucination. It happens. The fix is discernment: verify anything important, especially facts, figures, citations, or legal and medical information.

Probe the model. Ask follow-up questions. Ask it to show its reasoning. Ask it what it might be wrong about. A well-prompted AI will flag its own uncertainty. A lazily prompted AI will fill in the blanks with whatever sounds right.

Use discernment. Talk to it like a human. Train it. Probe it. Use it every day.

That's the warning I'd give the room. Not that AI is dangerous, but that it rewards those who engage with it seriously and exposes those who don't.

WATCH FOR: Excessive validation. Confident hallucinations. Prompts that are too vague. These are the traps.

CHAPTER 7 | Your First 30 Days: The Action Plan

You've made it to the last chapter. Now comes the part that separates people who read books from people who change their situation.

Action.

Here's exactly what I'd tell you to do if you're starting from zero. This is not a theory. This is the actual path.

Three Steps. That's It.

1. You already did Step 1. You're holding it. Use this ebook as your first knowledge base. Upload it to whatever LLM you're going to use. Now the AI has your starting framework before you ask it a single question.
2. Go to YouTube. Not a course platform, not a certification program, YouTube. Search for your specific use case. "AI for small business." "How to prompt Claude." "AI automation for [your industry]." Watch. Learn. Repeat. The people posting on YouTube are building in real time. That's the freshest information you're going to find.
3. Start building. Pick one thing. One task in your work or life that is repetitive, time-consuming, and draining. Describe it to Claude in detail. Ask for a solution. Ask for pushback on that solution. Iterate until you have something that actually works. Then do it again with the next thing.

That's the whole plan. Three steps. Not four weeks of structured milestones. Not a 12-module curriculum. Use the ebook, go to YouTube, start building. Lock in for six months and don't stop.

Why This Works

Most people overcomplicate the start. They want the perfect plan before they take the first step. That's how you never start.

The LinkedIn automator I built? It started with me saying, "I'm tired of posting every day." That was it. That was the prompt. One honest sentence about a real problem. From that conversation came a system that runs itself and produces viral content.

You Have to Be OK in the Suck

Let me ask you something. How many times did you try walking before you could walk? How many times did you fall down as a kid before you figured it out? How many times did you try to talk before the words came out right?

You tried. And tried. And tried again. And now you're walking and talking without even thinking about it.

AI is the same. Everybody starts at level zero. Nobody starts at level 100. You are going to suck at this for a while, and that is OK. That is not a reason to quit. That is the process.

You have to be OK with the suck. You cannot get discouraged because you're bad at it right now. Bad at it means you're doing it. Doing it means you're learning. Learning means you're getting better. That's the only path that exists.

Choose your hard. The difficulty of not knowing how to use AI, of watching competitors pass you by, of feeling left behind, of doing everything manually while others operate at 10x your speed. Or the hard of banging your head against the wall, figuring it out through trial and error, getting better every single day. You choose. This is your life.

The people who win with AI are not the most technical people in the room. They're the most consistent. The ones who showed up when it was frustrating, who kept prompting when the outputs were bad, who built something small and then built something bigger. Consistency beats talent every single time.

One Last Thing

I told you at the start of this book that I wrote it with my grandmother Thomasine in mind. Born in 1946. Seventy-nine years old, turning 80 in May. If I can get her to understand this, I can get you to understand it.

You are not about to sit here and tell me that a woman born before color television was in American homes figured this out, and you couldn't. That's not a thing. You have no excuse. The tools are free. The information is on YouTube. The only thing standing between you and knowing how to use AI is your decision to start.

Be OK in the suck. Stay consistent. Keep building.

Go build something.

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