

# The Deck That Built Itself

August 4, 2026 | Communication + Change

Turn raw material into a decision-focused presentation by building the argument before the slides.

## August 4, 2026

With Cheryl Thompson

### Who it is for

Professionals presenting recommendations, proposals, or budget requests

### Inside this playbook

7 copyable prompts and practice blocks.

[Open the online playbook](#)

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The recorded session

## Watch the Learning Lab.

Follow the session, then use the playbook with your own work.

[Watch replay on Vimeo](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

## What to take into your work

1. Build the argument before building the slides.
2. Make the decision or recommendation clear.
3. Give AI your evidence and review the resulting story.

Use the learning

## Your playbook

Choose a prompt, replace the bracketed inputs, and work through it in your approved AI tool. Review the result and adapt it to your situation.

This playbook accompanies the August 4, 2026 session. Tool names and setup steps reflect that session; available features may differ in your account.

# Welcome to Your AI Toolkit

**You needed budget for something that mattered. You built the deck. Twenty-two slides, clean formatting, every number sourced. And somewhere around slide four you watched the person who decides stop looking at the screen. The information was all there. The argument never was.** Everyone can make slides now. Making someone care is still the hard part. This playbook gives you one prompt that turns messy notes, a transcript, or a whiteboard photo into a presentation built to get a decision, plus the follow-up moves that keep it from falling apart under questioning.

- You don't need to use everything at once. Start with the next deck you actually have to build.
- This works across platforms: Copilot, ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, or your company's internal AI tool.
- The prompt includes a main version (for licensed tools) and an alternate version (for free Copilot or tools with limited input).
- AI will get things wrong. Every prompt here is built to be checked, not trusted.

## How to Use This Playbook

- **Start with the Belief Gap prompt.** Paste your raw material and let it build the argument before any slide exists.
- **Answer the discovery questions yourself.** This is the only moment where your expertise enters the work. If you let AI invent the answers, you get a confident deck built on facts nobody can source.
- **Read the objection pass as a to-do list** , not a critique. It tells you what to go build before the meeting.
- **Close the weakest link.** One real invoice beats a clean estimate every time.
- **Then, and only then, build slides.** Prompt, outline, deck. In that order.

## The Belief Gap Framework

**Every deck that fails, fails in the space between what your audience believes today and what they would have to believe to say yes. Slides do not close that gap. An argument does.**

| The Question                      | What You Are Really Asking                     | What Happens If You Skip It                                            |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. What decision am I asking for? | The specific approval, the owner, and the date | A deck that informs instead of deciding. Everyone nods. Nothing moves. |

| The Question                                     | What You Are Really Asking                                         | What Happens If You Skip It                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>2. What do they believe right now?</b>        | Their current position, including anything they already said no to | You argue against a position nobody holds and never touch the real objection. |
| <b>3. What is the one claim that moves them?</b> | The single load-bearing fact that changes the answer               | Twenty-two slides of evidence, none of it weighted. The point never lands.    |
| <b>4. What will they say no with?</b>            | The objection most likely to kill it, named before the meeting     | You get ambushed by a question you could have answered on slide five.         |

**Key Insight:** The deck was never the bottleneck. The argument was. Answer those four questions and the deck is basically written. Skip them and you get context, context, context, and a hopeful last slide. **Headlines Are Claims, Not Labels**

- **A slide title that names a topic makes the reader wait for the point.** "Q3 results" tells them nothing.
- **A slide title that makes a claim delivers it.** "Q3 margin held because we stopped expediting" is the whole slide in one line.
- **Change nothing else about your deck and this single fix improves it.** It also forces you to know what each slide is actually for.

## The AI Efficiency Ladder

**Know where you are. Know where you're going.**

| Level                             | What It Looks Like                                                                           | Time / Task                |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>1. On-the-Fly Prompting</b>    | Opening an AI chat, typing a question, getting an answer. Starting from scratch every time.  | 5–10 minutes, inconsistent |
| <b>2. Repeatable Prompts</b>      | Saved templates you fill in. Same quality every time because same structure.                 | 2–3 minutes, consistent    |
| <b>3. Custom AI Projects</b>      | AI pre-loaded with your context – your role, industry, frameworks. Works like a team member. | 1–2 minutes, personalized  |
| <b>4. Automation &amp; Agents</b> | AI connected to your systems, triggered automatically. Runs without you.                     | 0 minutes, scales          |

**Your goal:** Move from Level 1 to Level 2. The prompts in this playbook get you there.

**Where Skills Fit (the Level 2 to Level 3 move)** Level 3 has two different doors, and most people only know about one of them.

|              | What It Holds                                                                   | When It Fires                                               | Setup Cost           |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Saved Prompt | The words. Nothing else.                                                        | When you find it and paste it.                              | Two minutes          |
| Project      | Your context. Role, company, audience, brand, the files you always reference.   | Every chat you start inside it.                             | Twenty minutes, once |
| Skill        | Your procedure. The sequence, the rules, the reference material, the standards. | Automatically, when the work matches what the skill is for. | An hour, once        |

**A Project knows who you are. A Skill knows how you work.**

**Why this prompt is a good Skill candidate** It is not really a prompt. It is a five-step method with a pause in the middle, a fixed output order, an anti-fabrication rule, and a formatting standard for headlines. Every time you paste it, you are re-teaching the model something it could just know. As a Skill, it can also carry things a prompt cannot: the objection-closing playbook, the three-column comparison structure, the capacity comparison logic, and the tells list. So instead of "here are your three objections," you get "here are your three objections, and here is the comparison table you need to build to answer the first one." **The honest bar:** a Skill pays off when the work recurs. For one deck, a saved prompt is plenty. Persuasive decks recur.

## The Bad Prompt (and Why It Fails)

**This prompt circulates widely. It looks thorough. It produces a competent deck that loses the room.**

### The prompt everyone shares

|                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PROMPT TO COPY                                                                                                                                    |
| ROLE: You are Dr. Alex Morgan, a renowned presentation strategist who has helped Fortune 500 CEOs create memorable, results-driven presentations. |

PROMPT TO COPY

CONTEXT: I need to create a [LENGTH] slide presentation about [TOPIC] for [AUDIENCE]. The goal is to [DESIRED OUTCOME], and the tone should be [TONE].

REQUEST: Create a complete slide deck including:

1. Engaging opening slide
2. Clear agenda/overview
3. Main content slides
4. Supporting data/examples
5. Call to action/next steps
6. Q&A preparation

QUESTION: Please ask any clarifying questions

| What's Wrong                                    | Why It Costs You                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Fake persona</b>                             | "Dr. Alex Morgan" does not exist. The model plays a character instead of doing work.                                  |
| <b>Length is an input</b>                       | Slide count is an output of the argument, not a constraint on it. Ask for 12 and you get 12 whether you need 5 or 18. |
| <b>"Ask any clarifying questions" is a punt</b> | Different questions every run. In Copilot Work mode, often no questions at all.                                       |
| <b>Hardcodes the agenda slide</b>               | The most persuasion-killing default in corporate decks, baked in as a requirement.                                    |
| <b>Nowhere to put your raw material</b>         | With no source, the model invents the content.                                                                        |
| <b>No guardrail against fabrication</b>         | It will happily produce an ROI number nobody calculated, in front of your CFO.                                        |
| <b>Nothing falsifies</b>                        | Not one instruction asks AI to attack the argument or find the weakest claim.                                         |
| <b>Emoji section headers</b>                    | They leak into the output and manufacture the exact tells you are trying to avoid.                                    |

**The pattern to learn:** this is a generation prompt wearing the costume of a strategy prompt. It produces slides about a topic. You need a deck that gets a decision. Every fix in the next section comes from closing one of these eight gaps.

# Key Prompts from This Lab

One prompt, built to think before it builds. Everything else in this playbook supports it.

## Prompt #1: The Belief Gap Deck Builder

**What it's for:** Turning messy notes, a transcript, or a whiteboard photo into a short presentation that gets a decision rather than covers a topic. **When to use it:** Budget requests, capital approvals, selling an idea internally. Anything where the why has to land before the details do.

### Main Version (Licensed Copilot / ChatGPT / Gemini / Claude)

PROMPT TO COPY

ROLE  
You are a senior communications strategist who builds decks for executive decision meetings in manufacturing and automotive. You have sat in the room when a budget request died on slide three. You care more about whether the argument holds than whether the deck looks good.

CONTEXT  
I am going to paste raw material. It may be messy: meeting notes, a transcript, bullet fragments, or text pulled from a whiteboard photo. It will be incomplete and out of order. I need to turn it into a short presentation that gets a decision, not a presentation that covers a topic. The audience is a specific person or small group with the authority to say yes or no. If a number or claim goes in front of this audience and it is wrong, I lose credibility I do not get back.

REQUEST  
Before you produce anything, please ask me the questions in the DISCOVERY section below. Ask them all at once, in a single numbered list. Wait for my response. Once I answer, accept whatever I write, even if it's a paragraph or covers multiple questions at once. Do not re-ask the full list. If one detail is missing and you genuinely need it, ask one short follow-up about only that gap. Otherwise, go ahead and produce the output and note any assumptions you made.

Only after I have answered the DISCOVERY questions, produce:

1. THE BELIEF GAP  
One short paragraph. What this audience believes today, what they need to believe to approve, and the single claim that has to carry the weight in between.

2. THE SPINE  
The argument in six sentences or fewer, before any slides exist. If the argument does not hold in six sentences, say so and tell me what is missing.

**PROMPT TO COPY****3. THE SLIDE PLAN**

One line per slide. Each line has the slide's headline written as a claim, not a label, and one sentence naming what evidence sits on that slide. Recommend the slide count based on what the argument needs. Do not pad to a target. Do not include an agenda slide unless I ask for one.

**4. THE OBJECTION PASS**

The three strongest objections this audience will raise, ranked by how likely each is to kill the request. For each one, name the slide that answers it, or tell me the deck currently has no answer.

**5. THE WEAKEST LINK**

The one claim in my material that is least supported. Say plainly what would make it hold.

Use only what I give you. Do not invent numbers, dollar amounts, dates, customer names, part numbers, or results. If something is unclear or missing, flag it inline as [CLARIFICATION NEEDED] instead of guessing. Keep dates, owners, numbers, and terminology consistent across all five outputs. Write slide headlines the way a person would say them out loud. No title case, no colons splitting a label from a subtitle, no "Key Takeaways."

**DISCOVERY**

1. Who is in the room, and which one person actually decides?
2. What exactly am I asking them to approve or do, and by when?
3. What do they believe about this today, including anything they have already pushed back on?
4. What is the cost of doing nothing, stated in their terms?
5. How much time do I have, and is this a live meeting or a send-ahead?
6. What is the one number or piece of evidence I am most confident in?

**Alternate Version (Copilot Free / Limited Context)****PROMPT TO COPY**

This is a new task. Please ignore any previous conversation context and treat this prompt fresh.

**STEP 0 (do this before anything else)**

Read the bracketed details below. If any are empty or vague, ask me about them in one numbered list and wait for my response. Don't search for context, don't draft anything, don't pull from prior conversations. Just ask the questions.

**STEP 1 (only after I answer Step 0)**

Produce the deliverable below.

**PROMPT TO COPY**

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You are a communications strategist who builds decks for executive decision meetings in manufacturing.

MY RAW MATERIAL: [paste messy notes, transcript, or whiteboard text]

WHO DECIDES: [name and role]

WHAT I'M ASKING FOR: [the decision, and by when]

WHAT THEY BELIEVE TODAY: [current position, past pushback]

COST OF DOING NOTHING: [in their terms]

MY STRONGEST EVIDENCE: [the one number I trust]

Produce, in this order:

1. The belief gap in one paragraph.
2. The argument in six sentences or fewer.
3. A slide plan, one line each, headline written as a claim not a label, plus what evidence sits on it. Recommend the count. No agenda slide.
4. The three objections most likely to kill this, ranked, each mapped to the slide that answers it or flagged as unanswered.
5. My weakest claim and what would make it hold.

Use only what I gave you. Do not invent numbers, dates, names, or results. Flag gaps inline as [CLARIFICATION NEEDED].

**Why the Step 0 / Step 1 structure:** without it, free Copilot fast-forwards past the pause and starts drafting from whatever it can find in your files. The numbered steps and the "ignore previous context" opener are what make it stop.

## The Six Questions It Will Ask You

The prompt is designed to stop and ask before it builds. When it does, you will see these six:

1. Who is in the room, and which one person actually decides?
2. What exactly are you asking them to approve or do, and by when?
3. What do they believe about this today, including anything they have already pushed back on?
4. What is the cost of doing nothing, stated in their terms?
5. How much time do you have, and is this a live meeting or a send-ahead?
6. What is the one number or piece of evidence you are most confident in? **Do not skip this.** Answer in shorthand. A paragraph is fine. Out of order is fine. But answer them yourself. If you tell AI to make up the answers, you get a confident deck built on invented facts, and later you will not remember which parts were yours.

Example Scenario: The CMM Capital Request

EXAMPLE TO COPY

Here is a photo of the whiteboard from our Tuesday shift meeting. Three people wrote on it. One thing is circled in red and one line is crossed out.

Example Scenario: The CMM Capital Request

EXAMPLE TO COPY

What's on it: CMM #1 down 3x since March, four days each waiting on Zeiss service. Outside lab (Precision Metrology) at \$1,850 per PPAP submission, eleven last quarter. Inspection queue backed up six days at its worst point in May. Two lots shipped on deviation because we could not measure in time. New Zeiss quote \$312K installed, 14 week lead. Refurb around \$180K with no service contract. Already declined once in January, told to run the existing one harder. Cap committee meets Sept 12. New crossover bracket program launches Q1 and adds about 40 PPAP submissions a year.

Answers to your six questions:

1. WHO IS IN THE ROOM: COO, CFO, Ops Manager, and the Inspection Supervisor. The CFO holds the cash veto. The Ops Manager sponsors it. The Inspection Supervisor owns the data.
2. WHAT I AM ASKING FOR: Approve capital for a new CMM by end of quarter, so we can hit the 14 week lead time ahead of the crossover bracket launch.
3. WHAT THEY BELIEVE TODAY: That we can keep paying overtime and rehab the machine that is down. This was already declined once in January. The read in the room is that measurement is not the constraint.
4. COST OF DOING NOTHING: A quality event we cannot contain, and a launch we cannot support. Deviation shipments continuing, and outside lab spend that does not stop.
5. TIME AND FORMAT: Send-ahead first, then a live meeting. It has to survive being read alone before anyone is there to defend it.
6. STRONGEST EVIDENCE: The two deviation shipments, and the six day inspection backlog at its worst point in May. Both are documented.

## 6 Questions

### PROMPT TO COPY

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6. STRONGEST EVIDENCE: The two deviation shipments, and the six day inspection backlog at its worst point in May. Both are documented.

### Notice what changed.

The whiteboard is about a machine being down. The answers reveal the decision is actually about cash versus risk, and that the downtime argument already lost once. Those are two completely different decks. The prompt found that gap before a single slide existed.

**Where This Goes Next: One Prompt, Five Tools** The same prompt runs in Claude, ChatGPT, Copilot, and Gemini. What changes is what happens after the thinking. In Copilot, open your branded template first and run the prompt in the side pane. The builder uses the layouts already in the open file, so your branding survives. In Claude or ChatGPT, save it as a Skill or a Project so it is one click away. In Gamma, paste the slide plan and get a formatted deck in seconds. Same prompt structure. Different ending. The people who get good at architecting prompts now are the ones ready when the tools around them get better.

## Answering the Objection Pass

**The prompt hands you three objections and a weakest link. That output is not a criticism of your deck. It is a to-do list with a deadline.**

"You haven't shown this is financially better than the cheaper option."

This is almost always the objection that kills a capital request, and it is almost always answered with a number you do not have yet. **What you'd build before the meeting:** a three column comparison over the same time window.

| Line Item               | Do Nothing              | Refurbish                | Buy New       |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Equipment cost          | \$0                     | Quote                    | Quote         |
| Service / maintenance   | Current run rate        | No contract, estimate it | Contract cost |
| Outside lab spend       | Continues, likely grows | Reduced, not eliminated  | Near zero     |
| Overtime and expediting | Continues               | Continues                | Reduced       |
| Deviation handling      | Continues               | Continues                | Reduced       |
| Useful life             | Declining               | How many years?          | Full life     |

You do not need precision. You need every column built the same way so the comparison is honest. A defensible estimate beats a missing number. **The line that lands:** the cheaper option is only cheaper until the year it isn't. Show them the year.

"Why can't we just refurbish for less?"

Refurbishment is rarely defeated on price. It is defeated on capacity and on risk. **Three things to establish:**

- **Capacity.** A refurbished machine is still one machine. If your constraint is throughput, refurbishing does not add a lane.
- **Warranty and uptime.** No service contract means the same waits that caused the problem in the first place. Name that explicitly.
- **Useful life.** How many years does the refurbish buy, and what happens at the end of them?  
**The trap to avoid:** do not argue that refurbishment is a bad machine. Argue that it solves a different problem than the one you have. That distinction is what keeps you from being walked into a cheaper yes that leaves you exposed six months later.

"The launch isn't actually at risk."

This one gets answered with a capacity comparison, not a story. **Three numbers, one slide:**

1. Inspection hours required during launch

- 2. Dependable available hours today, meaning hours you can count on including outages, not theoretical capacity
- 3. Available hours after the new equipment If line 1 exceeds line 2, you have proven the constraint. If it does not, you do not have this argument and you need a different one. Better to know that now than in the room. **The supporting move:** connect the deviation shipments directly to launch consequence. Two deviations during normal volume is a problem. Two deviations during a launch is a containment event with a customer watching.

The Weakest Link

The prompt names the one claim least supported by your material. Treat closing it as the highest value hour of work you can do before the meeting.

| Strength   | Move                                                                                     | Why It Works                                                                                |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strongest  | One real record. An actual invoice, a containment labor entry, a documented charge-back. | One real number beats a clean estimate every time. It cannot be argued with, only verified. |
| Good       | A defensible estimate with the method shown. Name the inputs.                            | They argue with the inputs instead of with you. That is a much better conversation.         |
| Acceptable | Name it as an open item you are bringing to committee.                                   | Weaker, but honest. Far better than a confident number nobody can source.                   |
| Never      | Let AI fill it in.                                                                       | That is exactly the number that gets checked, and the one that ends your credibility.       |

**Watch what different tools do here.** Run the same prompt in two places and you may get two behaviors. One will invent a plausible cost and flag it as the weakest link. Another will refuse to invent it and tell you to go get a real invoice. Neither tool is reliably the careful one. That is why the check is you, not the tool.

The Tells That Make a Deck Look AI-Built

**These are the adjustments I found the hard way. Most take under a minute.**

| The Tell                                     | The Fix                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Headlines that label instead of claim        | "Q3 results" becomes "Q3 margin held because we stopped expediting" |
| An agenda slide                              | Delete it. Nobody was ever persuaded by an agenda slide.            |
| Section divider slides                       | Delete unless the deck runs past fifteen slides.                    |
| Perfect three-bullet symmetry on every slide | Vary it. Real arguments are not evenly weighted.                    |
| Title Case Everywhere                        | Sentence case reads like a person talking.                          |
| "Key Takeaways" or "Overview" headers        | Say the takeaway instead of announcing that one is coming.          |
| Em dashes everywhere                         | Periods, commas, colons.                                            |
| Stock icon rows                              | Cut them, or replace with one real image.                           |
| Padded slide count                           | If the plan said five, do not accept eight.                         |

**One caveat on the agenda slide.** Some leadership teams expect one, and some people genuinely use it to orient themselves. If that is your culture, keep it. The point is not that agenda slides are forbidden. The point is that AI adds one by default, and a default is not a decision.

**Two things to watch for in the output itself** The tools quietly make decisions in the gaps you left. One swapped a template footer without being asked. One reordered slides and mentioned it in a sentence at the end. Read the summary paragraph after the build, not just the deck. And the prettier deck is not the more accurate deck. Check every number against your source. You cannot tell by looking.

## The Eight-Deck Comparison

**Same whiteboard. Same six answers. Same hard rule: invent nothing, flag every gap. Eight builds across every tool. Then we had Claude score them against weighted criteria and rank them.**

### The criteria, and what carried the most weight

| Criterion                                                   | What It Measured                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Source fidelity and no fabrication</b> (heaviest weight) | Did it stick to what it was given, and flag what was missing? |

| Criterion                | What It Measured                                                |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Belief gap reframe       | Did it find the real argument (deviations, not downtime)?       |
| Argument spine           | Does the case hold in six sentences?                            |
| Objection pass           | Did it name what would kill the request?                        |
| Headline discipline      | Claims, or labels?                                              |
| The ask                  | Specific approval, owner, date?                                 |
| Send-ahead survivability | Does it hold up when read cold, with nobody there to defend it? |
| Internal consistency     | Do the numbers and terms match across every slide?              |

The three results worth remembering

- **Copilot was the most sendable.** It invented nothing and flagged every missing number. Least flashy deck in the set, and the only one you could send tomorrow with confidence.
- **Gamma was the most dangerous.** Best looking deck by a wide margin. Invented numbers presented as fact, with the disclosure banners and notes stripped out. That is the version that loses the room.
- **The bad prompt was the floor.** Same tool, same whiteboard, same six answers. **The number that makes the point**

| Setup                                     | Score |
|-------------------------------------------|-------|
| Claude with the full prompt and the skill | 4.35  |
| Claude with the bad prompt, no skill      | 1.9   |

Same tool. Same source material. The entire difference was the prompt. **One more finding worth sitting with** The free version of Copilot Chat scored highest of all eight decks. It invented nothing and told us exactly where clarification was needed. Read that carefully, because it is easy to take the wrong lesson from it. It does not mean the free tier is where you should live. It means that on this one narrow task, with a well-built prompt and six good answers, the tier was not the variable. The prompt was. If your company has you on free Copilot Chat, you are not blocked from doing this work well. Start now. But the capabilities we cover in the rest of this series (memory, plugins and connections, skills, scheduled tasks, and grounding in your own files) live on the paid side. If you are serious about this, a licensed version is worth the money, whether your company provides it or you buy your own.

**Failure is not invention. It is invention without disclosure.** Every tool in this comparison had to fill some gaps. The ones that scored well said so, with banners, notes, and inline flags. The one that scored badly stripped the flags out and let invented numbers read as sourced fact. When you hand a deck to a decision maker, the risk is not that AI helped. The risk is that nobody can tell which parts it made up.

### Six lessons from the run

1. The prompt matters more than the tool.
2. That is not a case for staying on the free tier. It is a case for building better prompts, then giving them a tool that can actually reach your files, your calendar, and your systems.
3. The best-looking argument in the set was built on invented numbers.
4. Failure is invention without disclosure, not invention itself.
5. Only the disciplined tools flagged gaps instead of guessing.
6. Most tools default to label headlines. Claim headlines have to be asked for.
7. Watch for the quiet errors, not just made-up dollars. Overclaims and misread numbers do the same damage.

## Quality Check: Before This Deck Goes Anywhere

- [ ] **Does every slide headline make a claim?** If a title names a topic instead of stating a point, rewrite it.
- [ ] **Can you say the argument in six sentences without the deck?** If not, the deck is carrying weight the argument should carry.
- [ ] **Is the ask specific?** What exactly are you approving, who owns it, by when. If that is fuzzy, the answer will be "let's discuss next quarter."
- [ ] **Did you close the weakest link, or at least name it?** Assume they will find it. Better that they find it labeled.
- [ ] **Does it survive being read alone?** For a send-ahead, nobody is there to fill in the gaps. Read it cold.
- [ ] **Did you verify every number against your source?** Especially the ones you did not personally put on the whiteboard.

## How to Build the Deck in Each Tool

**The thinking is the same everywhere. Only the buttons change.**

### Copilot, three different ways

#### Way 1: Copilot chat, with your template uploaded

1. Open Copilot chat
2. Paste the main prompt and attach your whiteboard or notes
3. Attach a copy of your branded deck too
4. Answer the six questions
5. Say create the deck It will not literally use your template. It reads the colors and fonts and tries to mimic them, which gets you close. **Way 2: Inside PowerPoint, in the side pane** (the one that actually keeps your branding)
6. File, New, Personal, then your branded template. It opens as a new deck.
7. Open the Copilot pane inside that deck
8. Paste the prompt and your raw material there
9. Answer the six questions in the pane
10. Tell it to create the deck Because the layouts are already in the open file, the build uses them. **Way 3: Free Copilot**
11. Use the alternate version of the prompt, the one with Step 0 and Step 1
12. Upload your template into the chat and say: please follow these colors and this font
13. Answer the six questions
14. Ask it to build the deck

## Claude

1. Start a new chat and attach your whiteboard photo or notes
2. Paste the main prompt, or type / and pick your saved skill
3. Answer the six questions
4. Say create the slide deck **To install the skill:** Settings, then Customize, then Skills. You can create a skill with Claude, write instructions yourself, or upload a skill file. If you built one in a chat, download it first, then choose Upload a skill and pick it from your downloads. **To trigger it later:** type / and the skill name. **Worth knowing:** Claude can also hold your brand colors and fonts, either inside the skill, in a project, or committed to memory, so you stop pasting them every time.

## ChatGPT

1. Attach your whiteboard photo or notes
2. Paste the prompt, or type @ and pick your saved skill
3. Answer the six questions

4. Ask for the deck **To install a skill:** plugins, then skills. **To trigger it:** the @ sign, then choose the skill. ChatGPT now has a chat version and a work version. Check which one you are in before you start.

## Gamma (fast, but read the warning)

Gamma is not where you think. Do the thinking in Claude, Copilot, or ChatGPT first, then bring the slide plan over.

1. Ask your thinking tool: give me a prompt I can paste into Gamma, just what goes on each slide, nothing else
2. In Gamma, click **Create new**
3. Choose **Paste in text** (you can also generate from a one-line prompt, or create a webpage, document, social post, or graphic)
4. Paste the slide-by-slide plan
5. Add: preserve this text exactly
6. Click **Continue to prompt editor**
7. Pick a theme, or leave the default
8. Choose **Preserve** rather than Generate or Condense
9. Click **Generate**
10. To get a PowerPoint out: **Share** , then **Export** , then PowerPoint **The warning:** Gamma produced the best looking deck in our comparison and the most dangerous one. It dropped the disclosure banners and let invented numbers read as fact. If you use it, put the flags back manually before anyone sees it.

## Gemini

1. Paste the prompt
2. Attach the whiteboard or notes
3. Answer the six questions
4. Ask for the deck Gemini produced a good-looking deck in the comparison, though it scored lower on source fidelity than Copilot or Claude.

**The pattern underneath all five.** Do the thinking in a chat tool. Get the slide plan. Then hand the plan to whatever builds slides. The builder is a formatter, not a thinker, and it will format a bad argument just as happily as a good one.

## Copilot Basics (If You Use Microsoft 365)

- **Work IQ (the toggle at the top left):** this is what used to be the Work and Web split. Switched on, Copilot can see your organization's files, email, Teams, and SharePoint. Switched off, it works from what you give it and the open web. Turn it on when the deck depends on your actual documents. Turn it off when you want a clean draft with no interference. Work IQ is powerful and occasionally overeager, which is why the alternate prompt opens by telling it to ignore prior context.
- **The Chat and Cowork tabs:** Chat is the conversation you already know. Cowork is the newer mode where Copilot takes on longer multi-step work using Skills. Start in Chat for this prompt.
- **The left rail:** New chat, Search, Library, and Notebooks sit at the top. Below that is your Agents list, which includes Microsoft's built-in ones (Researcher, Analyst, PowerPoint) plus any your company built, plus New agent if you want to make your own.
- **The PowerPoint agent** is in that Agents list. It produces better slides than plain chat but pushes its own themes and asks for a slide count up front, so you lose your brand template. Use it for speed, not for anything client-facing.
- **The side pane inside each app:** Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Teams each have their own Copilot pane that works on the file in front of it. That is the one that respects your branded template.
- **Notebooks:** a grounded workspace. Load your sources and it answers only from them.
- **The path that works for decks:** open your branded template first, then open the Copilot side pane inside that deck, then paste the prompt with your raw material attached. Answer the six questions. Review the outputs. Then tell it to build the slides. Doing it in that order is what keeps your branding, because the builder uses the layouts already in the open file.
- **Getting your template to show up:** save your branded deck as a PowerPoint Template (.potx) into Documents, then Custom Office Templates, on your own machine rather than SharePoint. Restart PowerPoint. It appears under File, New, Personal. If IT locks that folder, use Design, then Themes, then Browse for Themes and point at the .potx. That carries fonts and colors but not always custom layouts, so treat it as the fallback.
- **You can now choose the model.** There is a model picker next to Work IQ at the top. You can select which underlying model runs your request, including Claude Opus 5. Worth knowing when one model gives you a weak answer and you want to try another without leaving Copilot.
- **Prompt Lab is where saved prompts live.** Under the message box you will see a row of suggestion chips: File Insights, Inbox Triage, People Search, Meeting Prep, and then three dots. Click the three dots to open Prompt Lab. The left side has Your saved prompts at the top, then Prompt topics (Analyze, Ask, Assist, Catch up, Code, Collect, Create, Edit, Explore, and more), plus a keyword search at the bottom. Microsoft's own prompts are marked Suggested by Microsoft, and each card has a bookmark icon to save it.

- **You can schedule saved prompts to run on their own.** A weekly calendar review, a daily email summary, a Monday morning news scan. Set it once and the output shows up without you asking.
- **Save this prompt there.** Run it once, then bookmark it so it lands under Your saved prompts. A prompt you have to hunt for is a prompt you will not use. This one is long enough that retyping it is not an option.
- **A note on Copilot Cowork.** It has moved to usage-based credits. If you build something substantial in it, check your credit balance before you rely on it live. Running out mid-demo is a real possibility.
- **Reminder:** follow your company's AI policy. If you are unsure whether a document can go into a tool, ask before you upload it.

## Gemini Notebook: The Other Half of the Work

**Everything above is about output. This is about input.** If you walk into a room with an AI-built deck, you had better know what it says. This is how you get up to speed on a topic fast enough to defend it. Gemini Notebook was previously called NotebookLM. Same tool, new name, and you will still see the old name in places.

| Step      | What You Do                                                                 | What You Get                                                                 |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Load   | Add your sources: a YouTube link, a PDF, a spec, a standard, your own notes | A grounded workspace that only knows what you gave it                        |
| 2. Listen | Generate the audio overview                                                 | Two hosts discussing your sources. Play it on the drive in.                  |
| 3. See    | Generate a mind map                                                         | How the concepts actually connect, at a glance                               |
| 4. Retain | Generate a quiz or flashcards                                               | The difference between understanding it and remembering it under questioning |

**What it can produce from your sources** Audio overview (two hosts talking, roughly twenty minutes, with an interactive mode where you can ask questions mid-conversation). Mind map. Infographic overview. Blog post. Quiz. Flashcards. Slide deck. Report. Video. **Three ways people are actually using it**

- **Learning a topic before you have to present on it.** Pull in a training channel's videos and listen to the audio overview on the drive in.

- **Learning a piece of software.** Load the vendor's training videos, then ask questions against only those videos instead of hunting through documentation.
- **Capturing someone's thinking.** Pull a speaker or author's full channel into a notebook, then use it as the back end for a custom GPT or project built around their frameworks. **What makes it different:** it does not pull from the web. It answers only from what you loaded. If the answer is not in your sources, it tells you rather than inventing one. That makes it a research tool, not a drafting tool. **What not to use it for:** building the persuasion deck. It will summarize your whiteboard rather than argue from it. Learn the subject here, then make the case with the Belief Gap prompt. ★ **YouTube to Notebook Extension:** Install it once, and a YouTube to Notebook button appears on any YouTube channel. Click it and it pulls every video from that channel into a new notebook and transcribes them all.

**Load two or three sources, not one.** The audio overview is noticeably better when it has more than one thing to synthesize. And the video needs captions, or it will not process.

## Staying Current Without Drowning

**This came up in the session. AI changes weekly, and nobody has time to keep up with all of it. You do not need all of it. You need the part that touches your job. Two sources worth your time**

| Source | What It Is                                                                                                                                       | Who It Suits                                                                                                              |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|        | Daily podcast, livestream, and free daily newsletter, hosted by Jordan Wilson. Live every weekday at 7:30 AM CST. Episodes run 30 to 45 minutes. | Anyone. Practical, career-focused, not technical. Good for the commute.                                                   |
|        | Free daily newsletter, five minute read, every weekday.                                                                                          | Leans technical. Covers research papers and developer tools alongside industry news. Some will love it, some will bounce. |

If TLDR feels too dense, covers similar ground with a more practical, how-to angle for general professionals. **Better than reading everything: have AI filter it for you** Save this as a scheduled task and it runs every week without you asking. In Copilot, save it in Prompt Lab and set a schedule. In ChatGPT or Claude, save it as a project or a scheduled task.

## Staying Current Without Drowning

### PROMPT TO COPY

#### ROLE

You are a practical, human-centered AI adoption advisor. You write for people across all skill levels and life roles, and you care about what real people actually do with AI rather than what the technology can theoretically do.

#### CONTEXT

I want to stay meaningfully current with AI without drowning in noise. Here is my profile so you can filter everything through what actually matters to me:

MY ROLE OR PROFESSION: [job title or industry, e.g. quality manager, HR business partner, plant supervisor]

MY CURRENT AI EXPERIENCE LEVEL: [beginner / occasional user / regular user / power user]

THE AI TOOLS I CURRENTLY USE: [list tools, or none yet]

MY BIGGEST INTEREST IN AI: [e.g. saving time at work, writing better, automating reports]

PARTS OF MY PERSONAL LIFE AI COULD HELP WITH: [e.g. parenting, side business, health, finances, hobbies]

TIME I CAN REALISTICALLY SPEND ON AI EACH WEEK: [e.g. 15 minutes, 1 hour]

#### REQUEST

Generate my Weekly AI Update, a personalized briefing I can run every seven days to stay sharp without the overwhelm. Structure it exactly like this, with these five headings and no others:

#### THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES THAT MATTER TO ME

Filter the most recent AI news down to the two or three developments that actually affect someone in my role and life. Skip the hype. Tell me why each one matters to me specifically.

#### ONE THING TO TRY THIS WEEK

Recommend exactly one new tool, feature, or technique matched to my experience level. Give me a three-step try-it-right-now mini tutorial I can complete in under the time I said I have.

#### MY ROLE-SPECIFIC PROMPT OF THE WEEK

Write one ready-to-use prompt tailored to a real task someone in my profession or personal life actually faces. Make it copy-paste ready, with a brief explanation of why it works.

#### WHAT TO IGNORE THIS WEEK

Name one or two AI stories getting a lot of attention that I can safely skip given my level and goals, and tell me why they are not worth my time yet.

#### MY PROGRESS NUDGE

**PROMPT TO COPY**

Based on my current experience level, give me one short reflection question or micro-challenge that helps me grow slightly beyond where I am today, without pressure.

Use plain headings. No emoji. Write the way a person would say it out loud.

**BEFORE YOU START**

Read my profile above. If any bracketed field is empty or vague, ask me about those specific fields in one numbered list and wait for my answer. If the profile is complete, go ahead and produce the briefing.

**Why this beats subscribing to more newsletters.** A newsletter tells you everything. This tells you the two things that touch your job, one thing to try, and what to ignore. The What to Ignore section is the one people skip and the one that saves the most time.

## What to Try This Week

- [ ] **Take the next deck you actually have to build.** Run the Belief Gap prompt on it before you open PowerPoint.
- [ ] **Answer the six questions in writing** , even if you never run the prompt. That alone will change the deck.
- [ ] **Rewrite every headline in one existing deck** as a claim instead of a label. Notice how much shorter the deck wants to be afterward.
- [ ] **Save the prompt** as a Skill in Claude, a Project in ChatGPT, or a saved prompt in Copilot.
- [ ] **Load one thing you have been meaning to learn** into Gemini Notebook and listen to the audio overview on your commute.
- [ ] **Set up the Weekly AI Update** as a scheduled task so it runs without you remembering.
- [ ] **Time the difference.** How long does a persuasive deck take you now? Run it once this way and compare.

## Resources & Next Steps

- [Link to AI Learning Lab Library](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

### Key Frameworks from This Lab

- **The Belief Gap:** every deck that fails, fails in the space between what your audience believes today and what they would have to believe to say yes.
- **The Four Questions:** what decision am I asking for, what do they believe now, what one claim moves them, what will they say no with.

- **Headlines are claims, not labels.** A title that names a topic makes them wait. A title that makes a claim delivers.
- **Prompt, outline, deck.** In that order. Most people skip to the builder, which is why every AI deck looks the same.
- **The objection pass is a to-do list** , not a critique.

What's Coming in Beyond Prompting

- **Lab 1 (done):** The Deck That Built Itself. Turning messy input into a deck that gets a decision.
- **Lab 2:** Giving AI a memory. Including something I built at home that maps directly onto several work situations.
- **Lab 3:** Plugins and connections. Wiring AI into the systems you already use.
- **Lab 4:** Skills. Going deep on the thing we only touched today.

What We Didn't Cover (Yet)

- Building the financial comparison model that answers objection one.
- Designing the capacity analysis that proves a constraint is real.
- Claude Design, which scored near the top of the comparison but did not get a live demo.
- Using AI to rehearse the meeting, playing the role of the person most likely to say no.

Next Steps

- Run the Belief Gap prompt on a real deck this week. Bring the objection pass to whoever sponsors it.
- Close one weakest link with one real record before your next approval meeting.
- Save the prompt somewhere permanent so the second time costs you two minutes instead of twenty.

Questions or feedback? [cheryl@cherylthompson.net](mailto:cheryl@cherylthompson.net) <sup>[3]</sup>

The Mental Model: Argument Before Artifact

Today's session was built on one idea: making slides and making someone care are two different jobs. AI got very good at the first one. The second one is still yours.

| Step     | What It Is                                                       | What Happens If You Skip It                              |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Argument | The belief gap, the spine, the one claim that carries the weight | A deck that covers a topic instead of getting a decision |

| Step             | What It Is                                                        | What Happens If You Skip It                                        |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Objection</b> | The three things most likely to kill it, named before the meeting | You get ambushed by a question you could have answered on a slide  |
| <b>Artifact</b>  | The slides themselves, built from the plan                        | Nothing. This is the easy part now, and that is exactly the point. |

**Every tool in this lab can make slides. None of them know your plant, your customer, or the person who already said no in January.**

**The deck built itself. The argument didn't.**

- Run the prompt on one real deck this week.
- Rewrite your headlines as claims.
- Your expertise is the judgment. Check its work.

Related resources

**Keep working with the material.**

**Embedded image: Whiteboard\_Image.jpg** → <sup>[4]</sup>

**Links and resources**

These links are clickable in the PDF. For a paper copy, use the numbered references below.

**[1]** <https://vimeo.com/1215567164/9d12d6a3b0?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>

**[2]** <https://www.cherylthompson.net/learning-labs#browse>

**[3]** <mailto:cheryl@cherylthompson.net>

**[4]** <https://www.cherylthompson.net/learning-labs/2026-08-04-the-deck-that-built-itself>