A PROMPTING TOOL

The Five Roles

Five ways to use AI as a thinking partner, not a search engine.

Most leaders use AI for two things: writing, and looking things up. That captures maybe ten percent of what is possible. The shift comes when you stop asking AI to do things *for* you, and start asking it to think *with* you.

Each of the five roles below changes what AI does, and what you get back. Try one this week. Then another.

i

The Thinking Partner

For when you are stuck, circling, or know your thinking is half-formed.

AI does not get tired, attached, or defensive. It will keep probing your reasoning long after a colleague would politely stop.

TRY THIS

"I am working through *[problem]*. Here is what I think so far: *[your thinking]*. Ask me three questions that would sharpen this."

PUSH DEEPER

"Now ask three questions a sceptic would ask, and three a person closest to this work would ask. What did I miss?"

USE IT

Before a hard conversation. Before a strategy paper. Before a decision you are not yet sure about.

WATCH FOR

Answers that flatter your thinking. If AI keeps agreeing, ask it to disagree explicitly.

ii The Devil's Advocate

For when you suspect you are too close to your own view.

AI has no relationship with you to protect. It can argue against your position without it costing anything social.

TRY THIS

"Here is my position on *[topic]*: *[your view]*. Make the strongest case against it. Be direct, not balanced."

PUSH DEEPER

"Now name the two assumptions I am making that I have not examined, and the one piece of evidence I have not gone looking for."

USE IT

When everyone around you is agreeing. When a decision feels too easy. When you want to pressure-test before you commit.

WATCH FOR

Generic counter-arguments. If the pushback could apply to anyone's view, push for specifics to yours.

iii The Summariser

For when there is too much to read, and you need to know what matters.

AI reads faster than you do, but more importantly, it reads without an agenda. It is good at noticing what is missing as much as what is there.

TRY THIS

"Here is *[document, transcript, or email thread]*. Pull out the three things a *[your role]* would need to know, the one thing that is being avoided, and the question I should be asking."

PUSH DEEPER

"Now read it again as a *[lawyer, finance lead, or your most critical stakeholder]*. What would they take from this that I have not?"

USE IT

Long board papers. Meeting transcripts. Research dumps. Anywhere volume is hiding the signal.

WATCH FOR

Confident summaries of unclear documents. AI will smooth over real ambiguity, so ask it to map the confusion, not resolve it.

iv The Voice Editor

For when you have written something and want it tightened, not rewritten.

AI can hold a long piece of writing in mind all at once. It can see where you contradict yourself, hedge, or repeat.

TRY THIS

"Here is something I have written. Keep my voice, my structure, and my choices. Only flag where I am unclear, where I am hedging, or where a sentence is doing two jobs."

PUSH DEEPER

"Now show me the three sentences doing the most work, and the three doing the least. Suggest cuts, not rewrites."

USE IT

Important emails. Board papers. Public writing. Anywhere your voice matters more than the polish.

WATCH FOR

AI quietly making your writing sound more like itself. If suggestions flatten toward a neutral register, push back.

v The Scenario Tester

For when you are about to do something, and want to think it through first.

Most of us rehearse our preferred outcome and skip the rest. AI has no preferred outcome. It will hold all three with equal weight.

TRY THIS

"I am about to *[action]*. Walk me through three ways this could land: the best case, the most likely case, and the case I am not seeing."

PUSH DEEPER

"For the case I am not seeing, what is the early signal I would miss, and what would I do about it?"

USE IT

Before a difficult meeting. Before sending the email. Before announcing the change.

WATCH FOR

Plausible scenarios with no real friction. If every outcome feels manageable, ask for the one where something fundamental breaks.

THE FIVE ROLES, AT A GLANCE

i **The Thinking Partner**
Probes your reasoning when you are too close to it.

ii **The Devil's Advocate**
Argues against you so you find the holes first.

iii **The Summariser**
Tells you what matters, and what is being avoided.

iv **The Voice Editor**
Tightens your writing without taking it over.

v **The Scenario Tester**
Holds every outcome, including the one you avoid.

ONE PRINCIPLE UNDERNEATH ALL FIVE

> *You stay in the driver's seat.*

AI is not the one thinking. You are. AI is the one helping you notice what you would not have noticed on your own. If you find yourself accepting what it gives you without pushing back, you have slipped into the passenger seat. Get out.

Want to go further than five prompts?

These five roles are a doorway. *The Authoring* is the deeper work: staying the originator of your own thinking as AI becomes part of how you lead.

BOOK A CALL
support@creativeleadership.co.nz

THE NEWSLETTER
creativeleadership.co.nz/blog

From Creative Leadership NZ. One of three small offerings to accompany our May 2026 newsletter on leadership and AI. The others are Teach AI Who You Are and Bringing AI Into the Room. Find them at creativeleadership.co.nz.