

**Cochise College Center for Lifelong Learning**

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**Artificial Intelligence for Business**

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*For Lifelong Learners*

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## Introduction

Artificial Intelligence isn't just changing business—it's making powerful tools available to everyone, regardless of technical expertise. In this updated session, we'll explore the latest AI capabilities that can transform how you work, from having natural voice conversations with AI assistants to analyzing documents instantly.

You don't need coding skills or a technology background. We'll focus on practical demonstrations and real-world examples that show you exactly what AI can do for your business today. Whether you're running a retail shop, offering services, or managing a team, the tools we'll explore can save you time and help you make better decisions.

### What's New in 2025

Since early 2024, AI tools have added remarkable capabilities:

- Natural voice conversations with AI (like talking to a knowledgeable assistant)
- Real-time web searching built into AI responses
- Ability to analyze photos, documents, and spreadsheets instantly
- Canvas-style editing where you and AI collaborate on documents
- Longer "memory" that can process entire business plans at once

### Learning Goals

By the end of this session, you will:

- Understand what modern AI can actually do for small businesses
- See practical demonstrations of AI handling real business tasks
- Learn to write prompts that get useful results
- Walk away with a library of ready-to-use prompts
- Know which free tools can help your specific business

### About This Class

This is a demonstration-focused session. While you won't be able to try everything in class due to account restrictions, you'll see what's possible and

receive resources to explore at home. We'll also use Pi.ai, which requires no login, for hands-on practice during class.

## Module 1: What AI Can Do Now (That It Couldn't Do Last Year)

The pace of AI development has been remarkable. Let's look at what's changed and what it means for your business.

### Voice Interactions

You can now have natural voice conversations with AI, just like talking to a knowledgeable colleague. This is particularly useful when you're driving, multitasking, or simply prefer talking over typing.

#### Practical applications:

- Brainstorm business ideas while commuting
- Discuss customer service challenges while walking around your store
- Review the day's events and plan tomorrow while closing up
- Practice presentations or pitches with instant feedback

**Available in:** ChatGPT (Advanced Voice Mode), Gemini Live, Pi.ai (voice enabled on mobile)

### Document and Image Analysis

Modern AI can "see" and understand images, PDFs, spreadsheets, and even hand-written notes. Upload a photo of your inventory, a competitor's price list, or your financial statements, and AI can analyze it instantly.

#### Practical applications:

- Take a photo of a competitor's display → get merchandising suggestions
- Upload a messy spreadsheet → receive cleaned, organized data
- Snap a picture of a customer's space → generate design recommendations
- Photograph a receipt → extract and categorize the expense

### Real-Time Web Research

Tools like Perplexity and the latest ChatGPT can search the web in real-time, providing current information with sources cited.

#### Practical applications:

- Check competitor pricing before making your own pricing decision
- Research current industry trends affecting your business
- Find the latest regulations or requirements for your business type
- Discover what customers are saying about similar businesses

### Collaborative Document Editing

Features like Claude's Artifacts and ChatGPT's Canvas let you work on documents, business plans, or marketing materials side-by-side with AI, making edits together.

#### Practical applications:

- Draft and refine a business plan iteratively
- Develop marketing copy with instant revisions
- Create and polish website content
- Build email templates with multiple variations

### Module 2: Which AI Tool for Which Job?

Different AI tools have different strengths. Here's a practical guide to choosing the right tool for your needs.

## Tool Comparison Chart

Tool	Best For	Free Version Limits
ChatGPT	General writing, brainstorming, document creation	3-hour message limit (resets), no file uploads
Claude	Long document analysis, detailed writing, careful reasoning	Lower daily message limit
Gemini	Research with web search, Google Workspace integration	Good free tier
Perplexity	Real-time research, competitor analysis, current events	Limited questions per day
Pi.ai	Friendly conversation, quick questions, no login needed	Unlimited, always free
Microsoft Copilot	Office integration, work documents	Limited features in free tier

### Free vs. Paid: What You Really Need

**Most small businesses can start with free versions.** Consider paid tools (\$20/month) only if you:

- Use AI for multiple hours daily
- Need to upload many large files
- Want priority access during busy times
- Require advanced features like custom AI assistants

#### Money-Saving Tip

Try rotating between free tools. Use ChatGPT until you hit the limit, then switch to Claude or Gemini. This gives you access to AI throughout the day without paying.

## Module 3: Strategic Planning with AI

AI excels at helping you think through business decisions systematically. Let's explore modern approaches to business planning.

## Voice-Based Business Planning

One of the most natural ways to work with AI now is through conversation. Instead of typing out long prompts, you can discuss your business ideas naturally.

### Activity 3.1: Voice Planning Session (Demonstration)

Watch as I have a natural conversation with ChatGPT about:

- Developing a new service offering
- Analyzing whether to expand to a new location
- Working through a challenging business decision

Notice how the AI asks clarifying questions, suggests considerations you might have missed, and helps structure your thinking.

## Document-Based Planning

For more formal planning, you can upload existing documents for analysis.

### Activity 3.2: Upload and Analyze (Demonstration)

**Scenario:** Uploading an existing business plan or financial statement

**Useful prompts:**

I've uploaded my current business plan. Review it critically as if you were a bank loan officer. What strengths do you see? What weaknesses might prevent loan approval? What specific improvements would make this stronger?

Analyze this financial statement. What are the three most important things I should focus on improving? Explain each in terms a non-accountant can understand.

Based on this data, create a 3-month action plan with specific, measurable goals. Make it realistic for a small business owner working 50 hours per week.

## Competitive Analysis with Current Data

Using tools like Perplexity, you can get up-to-date competitive intelligence.

### Activity 3.3: Real-Time Competitive Research (Demonstration)

#### Sample prompt for Perplexity:

I'm opening a plant nursery specializing in native desert plants in Sierra Vista, Arizona. Who are my main competitors in Cochise County? What services do they offer? What do their customer reviews say are their strengths and weaknesses?

Watch how AI searches multiple sources and provides cited information you can verify.

## Industry Trend Analysis

Stay current with what's happening in your industry.

### Activity 3.4: Hands-On with Pi.ai

Use Pi.ai on your phone or computer (no login needed) to explore trends:

What are the biggest trends in [your industry] right now? Focus on trends that would affect a small business in rural Arizona.

What new technologies or services are customers in [your industry] expecting in 2025?

What are the biggest challenges facing small businesses in [your industry] according to recent reports?

## Module 4: Understanding Your Customers Better

AI can help you make sense of customer feedback, reviews, and behavior patterns quickly and thoroughly.

### Analyzing Customer Reviews

Whether from Google, Yelp, or Facebook, AI can quickly identify patterns in customer feedback.

### Activity 4.1: Review Analysis (Demonstration)

#### **Step 1: Taking Screenshots**

Simply screenshot your Google reviews or Facebook comments.

#### **Step 2: Upload and Analyze**

I've uploaded screenshots of my business reviews. Analyze the sentiment overall. What are the top 3 compliments customers give? What are the top 3 complaints? What's one specific action I should take based on this feedback?

#### **Step 3: Response Generation**

Generate a professional, empathetic response to the most critical negative review. Acknowledge the issue, take responsibility where appropriate, and offer a path forward. Keep it under 100 words.

### Survey Analysis Made Simple

If you have customer survey data in a spreadsheet, AI can find insights you might miss.

### Activity 4.2: Survey Insights (Demonstration)

#### **Uploading a survey spreadsheet and asking:**

Analyze this customer satisfaction survey. Group responses by age if possible. Are younger customers more satisfied than older customers? What patterns do you see?

From the open-ended comments, create three main themes. For each theme, quote one specific customer comment as an example and recommend one action I could take.

Calculate our Net Promoter Score and explain in simple terms what this number means for our business.

### Understanding Customer Behavior

AI can help you spot patterns in how customers interact with your business.

### Activity 4.3: Behavior Pattern Analysis

**For businesses with sales data:**

Here's our sales data for the past year. What seasonal patterns do you see? Which products are trending up? Which are declining? What should I stock more of for the next quarter?

**For service businesses:**

Analyze these appointment booking patterns. When are our busiest times? When do we have unused capacity? How could we better schedule staff or offer incentives during slow periods?

## Module 5: Streamlining Daily Operations

AI can help with the routine tasks that consume your time, from inventory management to employee scheduling.

### Inventory Intelligence

Modern AI can analyze inventory data and provide actionable recommendations.

### Activity 5.1: Smart Inventory Management (Demonstration)

**Photo-based inventory:**

Take a photo of your inventory shelves and ask:

What products do you see in this photo? Suggest how I might reorganize this display to increase sales. What products should be at eye level? What might pair well together?

**Data-based inventory:**

Upload your inventory spreadsheet and ask:

Identify products that are overstocked based on sales velocity. Which items should I discount to move? Which items are understocked and need reordering? Calculate how much cash I have tied up in slow-moving inventory.

Based on the past 12 months, forecast demand for each product category for the next quarter. Account for any seasonal patterns you observe.

## Staff Scheduling Optimization

AI can help create fair, efficient schedules that meet your business needs.

### Activity 5.2: Schedule Creation (Demonstration)

#### Basic scheduling prompt:

I have 5 employees with the following availability [paste availability]. I need coverage for these shifts [list shifts]. Create an optimized schedule that distributes hours fairly, respects availability, and ensures experienced staff work during busy periods.

#### Advanced scheduling:

Consider employee certifications and skills. Ensure at least one person with first aid certification works each shift. Don't schedule anyone for more than 5 consecutive days.

## Workflow Automation Ideas

AI can suggest ways to streamline your business processes.

### Activity 5.3: Process Improvement

I run a [type of business]. My typical day involves [describe tasks]. What repetitive tasks could I automate or do more efficiently? Suggest practical solutions that don't require expensive software.

Walk me through an ideal workflow for [specific task like processing customer orders, handling returns, preparing for events]. Include what should happen at each step and who should be responsible.

## Module 6: Creating Marketing Content

AI has become remarkably good at creating marketing materials, from social media posts to email campaigns.

## Multi-Platform Content Creation

One of AI's superpowers is repurposing content across different platforms.

### Activity 6.1: Content Multiplication (Demonstration)

#### The prompt:

I want to announce that we're hosting a workshop on desert gardening. Create content for multiple platforms:

1. A Facebook post (engaging, 2-3 paragraphs)
2. An Instagram caption (brief, with emojis)
3. A Twitter/X post (under 280 characters)
4. An email subject line and preview text
5. A short blog post introduction (200 words)

Keep the tone friendly and emphasize practical skills people will learn. Include a clear call to action.

Watch as AI creates customized content for each platform, all from one prompt.

## Visual Content Planning

While we won't generate images in this class, AI can help plan visual content.

### Activity 6.2: Photo and Video Planning

I need to create 5 social media posts featuring our products. For each post, describe: - What the photo should show - What angle or lighting would work best - What caption would pair well with it - Which platform it's best suited for

Our products are [describe]. Our brand voice is [describe].

## Email Marketing Made Easy

AI can help create email campaigns that feel personal and professional.

### Activity 6.3: Email Campaign Creation (Demonstration)

#### **Newsletter creation:**

Create a monthly newsletter for a plant nursery. Include: - A friendly greeting - Seasonal gardening tip (it's October in Arizona) - Featured plant of the month with care instructions - Upcoming workshop announcement - Special offer (15% off drought-tolerant plants) - Friendly closing

Keep it under 400 words, scannable, and warm in tone.

#### **Personalized emails:**

Create a personalized version of this newsletter for a customer named Maria who recently purchased succulents. Reference her purchase and suggest complementary products she might like.

#### **Subject line testing:**

Create 5 different subject lines for this newsletter. Include one that uses urgency, one that uses curiosity, one that's straightforward, one with a question, and one with personalization. Rank them by which is likely to get the highest open rate and explain why.

## Website Content

Your website is often a customer's first impression. AI can help make it shine.

### Activity 6.4: Website Copy Creation

#### **Homepage:**

Write homepage copy for [business name], a [type of business] in [location]. Include: - A compelling headline (10 words or less) - A welcoming introduction (2-3 sentences) - Three main benefits customers get from us - A clear call to action

Use an inviting, professional tone. Include these keywords naturally: [list 3-5 keywords].

#### **About page:**

Write our About Us page. We started because [founder story]. We specialize in [services/products]. What makes us different is [unique aspects]. Our values are [list values]. Keep it warm and personal, about 300 words.

**Service descriptions:**

We offer [service]. Write a description that: - Explains what's included - Lists 3-4 specific benefits - Addresses common customer concerns - Includes a pricing range or "starting at" price - Ends with a call to action to book/inquire

**Blog Posts and Articles**

Regular content helps with SEO and establishes expertise.

**Activity 6.5: Blog Post Creation****Informational post:**

Write a 600-word blog post titled "5 [Topic] Tips for [Your Area]." Structure it with: - Brief introduction explaining why this matters - 5 tips, each with a descriptive subheading - Practical, specific advice for each tip - Conclusion with call to action

Write for homeowners with no expertise. Use a helpful, friendly tone.

**How-to post:**

Create a step-by-step guide for [task]. Include: - What readers will accomplish - Time required and difficulty level - Tools or materials needed - 7-10 numbered steps with clear instructions - Common mistakes to avoid - What success looks like

**Module 7: Making Sense of Your Numbers**

AI can help you understand financial data and make better decisions, even if you're not a numbers person.

## Financial Statement Analysis

Upload financial statements and get insights in plain English.

### Activity 7.1: Financial Analysis (Demonstration)

#### Overall health check:

I've uploaded our income statement, balance sheet, and cash flow statement. Give me an overall financial health assessment. What are our three biggest strengths? What are our three biggest concerns? Explain everything in terms a non-accountant can understand.

#### Profitability focus:

Analyze our profit margins. Which products or services are most profitable? Which are barely breaking even? Should we increase prices on anything? Should we discontinue anything?

#### Cash flow planning:

Based on this cash flow statement, predict our cash position for the next 3 months. What potential shortfalls do you see? What should I do now to prevent cash flow problems?

## Pricing Strategy

AI can help you think through pricing decisions systematically.

### Activity 7.2: Pricing Analysis

Here's our current pricing for [products/services].  
Consider: - Our costs (materials, labor, overhead) -  
Competitor pricing [provide data if available] - Customer perception of value

Should we adjust any prices? If so, how much and why?  
What's the risk of raising prices? What's the risk of not raising them?

## Investment Decisions

Use AI to think through major purchases or investments.

### Activity 7.3: Investment Analysis

I'm considering [investment like new equipment, vehicle, expansion]. It costs [amount]. I estimate it will [describe expected benefit]. Help me analyze: - Payback period - ROI over 3 years - Alternative uses for this money - Risks I might not be considering - Your recommendation with reasoning

## Module 8: Getting Better Results from AI

The difference between mediocre and excellent AI results often comes down to how you ask questions.

### The Anatomy of a Good Prompt

Good prompts have several key elements:

1. **Context:** Who are you and what's your situation?
2. **Task:** What do you want AI to do?
3. **Format:** How should the output be structured?
4. **Constraints:** Any limitations or requirements?
5. **Tone:** What voice or style should it use?

#### Weak prompt:

Write a social media post about our sale.

#### Strong prompt:

I own a plant nursery in Sierra Vista, Arizona specializing in native desert plants. Write a Facebook post announcing our fall sale (25% off all drought-tolerant plants, this weekend only). Use an enthusiastic but professional tone. Include practical benefits of buying now (perfect planting season) and a clear call to action. Keep it under 150 words.

## Follow-Up Questions

Don't accept the first response if it's not quite right. AI gets better with feedback.

### Useful follow-ups:

- "Make it more [specific quality like casual, professional, urgent]"
- "Shorten this to half the length"
- "Explain number 3 in more detail"
- "Give me 3 different versions of this"
- "What did I not ask about that I should have?"

## The "Expert Persona" Technique

Tell AI to respond as an expert in a specific field.

### Activity 8.1: Expert Persona Examples

You are an experienced small business consultant who has helped dozens of retail businesses in rural areas succeed. I'm facing [challenge]. Give me practical advice based on what's worked for similar businesses.

You are a marketing expert specializing in social media for small businesses with limited budgets. My goal is [goal] but I only have [constraints]. What's the most effective approach?

You are a customer service trainer. Review this draft response to a customer complaint and suggest improvements. The response should be empathetic, professional, and solve the problem.

## Chain of Thought Prompting

For complex problems, ask AI to think step-by-step.

### Activity 8.2: Step-by-Step Problem Solving

I need to decide whether to [decision]. Don't give me your recommendation yet. Instead:

1. Ask me clarifying questions to understand my situation

better 2. List all the factors I should consider 3. Walk through the pros and cons of each option 4. Consider what could go wrong with each option 5. Finally, give your recommendation with reasoning

Take this step by step and wait for my input at each stage.

## Module 9: Putting It All Together: AI Workflows

The real power comes from integrating AI into your regular business routines.

### Morning Routine

Start your day with AI-powered insights.

#### Daily check-in workflow:

1. Review yesterday's sales data
2. Ask AI: "Analyze this sales data. What stands out? What should I pay attention to today?"
3. Check new customer reviews
4. Ask AI: "Summarize these reviews. Any urgent issues? Draft responses to negative reviews."
5. Voice conversation: "Here are my priorities for today. Help me sequence them effectively."

### Weekly Tasks

Regular AI-assisted reviews keep you ahead of problems.

#### Monday morning planning:

Here's what happened last week [paste key data/events]. Here's what's coming this week [paste schedule/goals]. What should I prioritize? What potential problems do you see? Create a focused to-do list for this week.

#### Friday afternoon review:

Review this week's performance [paste sales, customer interactions, significant events]. What went well? What needs improvement? What lessons should I apply next week?

## Monthly Strategic Check

Use AI for bigger-picture thinking.

### Monthly analysis:

Here's this month's financial summary, customer feedback, and sales by category. Provide a strategic analysis: - What trends are emerging? - What should I do more of? - What should I stop doing? - What opportunities am I missing? - What's one strategic initiative I should consider for next month?

## Customer Interaction Workflow

Speed up customer service while maintaining quality.

### Inquiry response process:

1. Receive customer inquiry
2. Paste inquiry into AI with context about your business
3. Ask: "Draft a helpful response. Be warm and professional. Answer their question and anticipate one follow-up question they might have."
4. Review and personalize the draft
5. Send to customer

## Content Creation Workflow

Maintain consistent marketing with less effort.

### Monthly content planning:

1. Voice conversation: Brainstorm content themes for the month
2. Ask AI to create a content calendar
3. Each week, generate that week's content
4. Use AI to repurpose long content into multiple short pieces
5. Schedule and post

## Module 10: When to Be Cautious with AI

AI is powerful, but it's not perfect. Here's what you need to know to use it safely and effectively.

## What AI Gets Wrong

**Hallucinations:** AI sometimes generates information that sounds correct but isn't. It's like a confident person who's actually mistaken.

### When this matters most:

- Legal advice or requirements
- Tax and accounting guidance
- Medical or safety information
- Specific statistics or data
- Historical facts or dates

### How to protect yourself:

- Verify important facts independently
- Use AI for drafts and ideas, not final authority
- Check sources when AI provides them
- Consult professionals for legal, tax, or medical matters

## Privacy and Data Security

### What you should NOT put into AI tools:

- Customer credit card numbers or financial information
- Social Security numbers or sensitive personal data
- Employee personal information
- Confidential business secrets or proprietary formulas
- Passwords or security codes

### What's generally safe:

- Anonymized data (sales numbers without names)
- General business descriptions
- Public information
- Your own creative content
- Marketing materials

### Important Privacy Note

Most free AI tools use your conversations to improve their models. Paid versions often offer better privacy protections. Read the privacy policy of any AI tool you use regularly.

## The Human Touch Still Matters

Some situations require human judgment and empathy that AI can't replicate.

### Where humans are irreplaceable:

- Handling upset or emotional customers
- Making ethical decisions
- Building genuine relationships
- Reading subtle social cues
- Understanding your community's unique culture
- Showing authentic care and compassion

**Best practice:** Use AI to draft, research, and analyze. Use human judgment to review, finalize, and deliver.

## AI Detection

Customers can often tell when content is purely AI-generated. It tends to be:

- A bit too perfect
- Generic rather than specific
- Missing local flavor or personality
- Lacking authentic stories or examples

### How to keep it authentic:

- Always add personal details and examples
- Include local references
- Use your own stories
- Edit to match your natural voice
- Add humor or personality where appropriate

## Module 11: Your Next Steps

You've seen what AI can do. Now let's create a plan for putting it to work in your business.

### Week 1: Getting Started

#### Choose your primary tool:

- Start with ChatGPT (most versatile) or Gemini (good for research)
- Create a free account at home
- Spend 30 minutes just exploring

**Pick one task to automate:** Choose something you do regularly that takes time:

- Responding to customer inquiries
- Creating social media posts
- Writing product descriptions
- Drafting emails
- Planning your schedule

**Try three prompts:** Use prompts from this handout or create your own. Save the ones that work well.

### Week 2-4: Building Habits

#### Daily practice:

- Use AI for at least one task each day
- Keep notes on what works well
- Try a new prompt style each week

#### Track your time savings:

- Note how long tasks took before AI
- Note how long they take with AI assistance
- Calculate your monthly time savings

#### Expand gradually:

- Week 2: Add a second regular use case
- Week 3: Try a different AI tool
- Week 4: Create your own prompt templates

## Month 2: Going Deeper

### Explore advanced features:

- Try voice conversations if available
- Upload documents for analysis
- Create a standard workflow for recurring tasks
- Consider a paid plan if you're using AI daily

### Measure results:

- Are customers responding better to AI-helped content?
- Are you saving time?
- Are you making better decisions?
- What's still not working well?

## Building Your Prompt Library

Create a document with your go-to prompts, organized by task.

### Suggested categories:

- Customer service responses
- Social media content
- Email campaigns
- Business analysis
- Planning and strategy
- Content creation

### For each prompt, include:

- The prompt itself
- Notes on when to use it
- Variables you need to customize (in [brackets])
- Which AI tool works best for this task

## Appendix A: Quick-Start Prompt Templates

Copy these templates and customize them for your business. Replace anything in [brackets] with your specific information.

### Customer Service

#### Responding to inquiries:

I own [business type] in [location]. A customer asked: "[paste their question]"

Draft a helpful, friendly response that: - Answers their question completely - Anticipates one likely follow-up question - Includes relevant details about [our hours/policies/offerings] - Ends with a welcoming call to action Keep it under 150 words and warm in tone.

#### Handling complaints:

A customer complained about: "[paste complaint]"

Write a response that: - Acknowledges their frustration without being defensive - Takes appropriate responsibility - Offers a specific solution - Rebuilds trust Be empathetic and professional. Keep it under 100 words.

### Social Media

#### Multi-platform announcement:

We want to announce [event/sale/news]. Create posts for: 1. Facebook (engaging, 2-3 paragraphs) 2. Instagram (brief with hashtags) 3. Twitter/X (under 280 characters)

Our business is [description]. Our tone is [casual/professional/enthusiastic]. Include [specific details] and emphasize [key benefit].

#### Weekly content ideas:

I need 5 social media post ideas for this week. My business is [description]. Topics that interest our customers include [list topics]. Give me diverse post types: one tip, one question, one behind-the-scenes, one product highlight, and one inspirational. Include a suggested image description for each.

### Email Marketing

#### Newsletter creation:

Create a [frequency] newsletter for [business name]. Include: - Friendly greeting - [Seasonal/timely content relevant to what's happening] - Featured [product/service/tip] - [Current promotion or announcement] - Call to action: [specific action you want readers to take]

Write for [audience description]. Keep it under 400 words, scannable with clear sections. Tone should be [describe desired tone].

### **Subject line testing:**

Create 5 subject lines for an email about [topic]. Include: - One using urgency - One using curiosity - One asking a question - One using personalization - One straightforward

Rank them by likely open rate for [audience type].

## **Content Creation**

### **Blog post outline:**

Create an outline for a blog post titled "[title]" for [audience]. Include: - Introduction that hooks readers (what's in it for them) - 5-7 main points, each with a descriptive subheading - What to cover under each point - Conclusion with clear call to action

Target length: [word count]. Tone: [describe tone].

### **Product descriptions:**

Write a product description for [product name]. Key details: - [Features/specifications] - [Main benefits] - [What problems it solves] - Price: [price]

Write for [customer type]. Include what makes this special compared to [competitor or alternative]. Keep it under 150 words. End with a clear call to action.

## **Analysis and Planning**

### **Data analysis:**

Analyze this [sales/customer/inventory] data. Identify: - The top 3 patterns or trends - Any concerning issues - Opportunities I should act on - 2-3 specific recommendations

Explain everything in plain language a non-expert can understand.

### **Decision making:**

I'm trying to decide whether to [decision]. Here's my situation: [describe]. Walk me through: 1. What factors I should consider 2. Pros and cons of each option 3. What could go wrong 4. Your recommendation with reasoning Ask clarifying questions if you need more information.

## Appendix B: AI Tool Comparison Guide

### Detailed Tool Breakdown

#### ChatGPT (OpenAI)

*Best for:* General writing, brainstorming, conversational AI

*Free version includes:*

- GPT-4o mini model
- Voice conversations (limited)
- Image understanding
- Web browsing
- Message limits (refreshes periodically)

*Paid version (\$20/month) adds:*

- Full GPT-4o access
- Unlimited messages
- Advanced Voice Mode
- Custom GPTs
- DALL-E image generation

*Best practices:*

- Start conversations with clear context
- Use Voice Mode for brainstorming
- Upload documents for analysis (paid only)
- Create custom GPTs for repeated tasks (paid only)

#### Claude (Anthropic)

*Best for:* Long document analysis, detailed writing, careful reasoning

*Free version includes:*

- Claude 3.5 Sonnet
- Longer context window (great for long documents)
- Strong writing abilities
- More conservative responses (less hallucination)

*Paid version (\$20/month) adds:*

- 5x more usage

- Priority access during high traffic
- Early access to new features

*Best practices:*

- Use for detailed analysis and long-form writing
- Great for reviewing contracts or policies
- Excellent at maintaining context across long conversations
- More reliable for factual information

### **Google Gemini**

*Best for:* Research, current information, Google Workspace integration

*Free version includes:*

- Gemini 2.0 Flash
- Real-time web search
- Google Workspace integration
- Image understanding
- Good free tier usage limits

*Paid version (Gemini Advanced, \$20/month) adds:*

- Gemini 2.0 Flash Thinking (more reasoning)
- Deep Research mode
- Integration with Gmail, Docs, Drive
- Priority access to new features

*Best practices:*

- Use for current events and research
- Great for fact-checking
- Integrates well with Google tools
- Can search your Gmail and Drive (with permission)

### **Perplexity**

*Best for:* Research, fact-finding, cited sources

*Free version includes:*

- Basic searches with citations
- Multiple source comparison

- Clear source attribution
- Limited advanced searches per day

*Paid version (\$20/month) adds:*

- Unlimited Pro searches
- Choice of AI model
- Deeper research capabilities
- Image analysis

*Best practices:*

- Use for competitive research
- Excellent for verifying facts
- Great for industry trends
- Always check the sources provided

### **Pi (Inflection AI)**

*Best for:* Friendly conversation, quick questions, no login needed

*Features:*

- Completely free
- No account required
- Very conversational and friendly
- Voice-enabled on mobile
- Good for beginners

*Best practices:*

- Use for quick questions
- Great for brainstorming
- Good starting point for AI exploration
- Less capable for complex analysis than others

## **Choosing Your Tool**

- **If you can only use one:** Start with ChatGPT or Gemini (both have strong free versions)
- **If you need current information:** Use Perplexity or Gemini
- **If you're analyzing long documents:** Use Claude

- **If you want to practice without commitment:** Use Pi.ai
- **If you use Google Workspace:** Consider Gemini
- **If you want the most features:** ChatGPT paid version has the most tools

## Appendix C: Common Problems and Solutions

### Problem: AI responses are too generic

**Solution:** Provide more specific context and details in your prompt.

#### Instead of:

Write a social media post about our sale.

#### Try:

I own a plant nursery in Sierra Vista specializing in native desert plants. Write a Facebook post about our weekend sale (25% off succulents). Mention it's perfect planting season and we have varieties that attract hummingbirds. Use an enthusiastic but knowledgeable tone. Our customers are homeowners aged 45-70 who care about water conservation.

### Problem: AI gives wrong information

**Solution:** Use tools with web search for current facts, and always verify important information.

#### Good approach:

Search for current information about [topic]. Provide sources so I can verify.

Or use Perplexity, which automatically cites sources.

### Problem: Response is too long or too short

**Solution:** Specify the desired length in your prompt.

Write this in exactly 100 words.

Keep this under 3 sentences.

Expand this to about 500 words.

**Problem: Tone doesn't match my brand**

**Solution:** Describe your brand voice clearly, or provide examples.

Our brand voice is warm and approachable, like talking to a knowledgeable friend. We avoid corporate jargon and use everyday language. We're enthusiastic but not pushy. Here's an example of our writing: [paste example]

**Problem: AI doesn't understand my industry**

**Solution:** Provide background information and use the expert persona technique.

You are an expert in [your industry] with 20 years of experience. You understand [specific aspects of your business]. Now help me with [task].

**Problem: I hit message limits**

**Solution:** Rotate between free AI tools, or consider a paid plan if you use AI heavily.

**Free rotation strategy:**

- Morning: Use ChatGPT
- Afternoon: Switch to Claude
- Evening: Use Gemini or Perplexity
- Throughout day: Pi.ai for quick questions

**Appendix D: Resources for Continued Learning****Free Online Resources****Official Documentation:**

- OpenAI Help Center: [help.openai.com](https://help.openai.com)
- Anthropic Claude Guides: [docs.anthropic.com](https://docs.anthropic.com)
- Google Gemini Help: [support.google.com/gemini](https://support.google.com/gemini)

**Learning Platforms:**

- Prompt Engineering Guide: [promptingguide.ai](https://promptingguide.ai) (free, comprehensive)
- Learn Prompting: [learnprompting.org](https://learnprompting.org) (free courses)
- OpenAI Cookbook: [cookbook.openai.com](https://cookbook.openai.com) (examples and tutorials)

**Community Forums:**

- Reddit r/ChatGPT (active community, tips and tricks)

- Reddit r/ClaudeAI (Claude-specific discussions)
- OpenAI Community Forum: [community.openai.com](https://community.openai.com)

### **YouTube Channels:**

- AI Explained (technical but accessible)
- Matt Wolfe (practical AI tools and tips)
- The AI Advantage (business applications)

### **Staying Current**

AI tools update frequently. Here's how to stay informed:

- Follow AI company blogs (OpenAI, Anthropic, Google AI)
- Check the "What's New" section in your AI tool regularly
- Join email newsletters from AI education sites
- Experiment with new features as they're released

### **Local Resources**

#### **Arizona Small Business Resources:**

- Arizona Small Business Association (ASBA)
- Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) in Arizona
- SCORE mentoring (free business advice)
- Local chambers of commerce

Many of these organizations are beginning to offer AI-related workshops and resources.

## **Appendix E: Final Thoughts**

### **The Journey Ahead**

You're joining the AI revolution at an exciting time. These tools are becoming more powerful, more accessible, and more affordable every month. What seemed impossible a year ago is routine today, and what seems impossible today will be routine next year.

But remember: AI is a tool, not a replacement for your expertise, judgment, and human touch. Think of it like a very capable assistant who never gets tired, never takes a break, and is always ready to help. However, this assistant needs your guidance, your knowledge of your customers, and your understanding of your community.

## Start Small, Think Big

Don't try to transform your entire business with AI overnight. Pick one task, get good at it, then add another. Build your skills gradually. Save the prompts that work. Learn from what doesn't.

Most importantly, stay curious. Try new things. Ask "what if?" Play with the tools. Some experiments will fail, but that's how you discover what works for your unique situation.

## The Human Element

As you integrate AI into your business, never forget what brought your customers to you in the first place: your expertise, your personal touch, your understanding of their needs, and the relationships you've built.

AI should amplify these strengths, not replace them. Use it to free up time for the work only you can do—the work that requires genuine human connection, empathy, and judgment.

## Stay in Touch

Learning AI is an ongoing journey, not a destination. Consider:

- Joining online communities where business owners share AI tips
- Attending follow-up workshops as new tools emerge
- Sharing what you learn with other business owners
- Teaching others—it's the best way to deepen your own understanding

## A Closing Thought

In the desert Southwest where we live, plants adapt to survive and thrive in challenging conditions. They find ways to conserve water, withstand heat, and bloom beautifully despite the harsh environment. Your business is similar—it adapts, survives, and thrives by finding new tools and strategies.

AI is one of those tools. It won't solve every problem, but it can make your work easier, your decisions better informed, and your business more competitive. And in today's fast-changing business landscape, that adaptive advantage matters more than ever.

Welcome to the future of small business. It's going to be an interesting ride.

*Questions? Need help? Contact:  
George Self  
contact@georgeteaches.com  
<https://georgeteaches.com>*

*Class resources, updated prompts, and additional materials available on the USB drive provided or at the website listed above.*