CHUCK FREY

AI as a Thought Amplifier

35 ways to use AI as a creative thinking partner, following a 7-step creative problem-solving process

THE CORE LOOP — You think first → AI widens and challenges → You make the call

1 Set up the partnership

1. Treat AI as a challenger, not an oracle
2. Build in friction: make it push back
3. Ground it in your own notes and sources
4. Let it interview you for context

2 Frame the challenge

5. Sharpen the problem into a "How might we..."
6. Run a question burst, then add AI personas
7. Expose and flip hidden assumptions
8. Visualize it as a mind map or systems map

3 Explore and gather

9. Borrow solutions from other fields
10. Ask how to think, not what to think
11. Mine your own archive for patterns
12. Scan the horizon, think moves ahead
13. Imagine the futures you'd dismiss

4 Generate ideas

14. Go first, then let AI extend
15. Use random triggers and category prompts
16. Summon unusual thinkers and perspectives
17. Ask how a non-human mind would do it
18. Get the average answer, then leave it
19. Force variety: regenerate, switch models
20. Stretch it to a 10x moonshot
21. Don't stop at "good enough"

5 Connect and synthesize

22. Find hidden patterns, then verify them
23. Surface related ideas from your sources
24. Combine ideas into hybrids
25. Keep the lateral leaps for yourself

6 Stress-test

26. Run a pre-mortem
27. Ask for blind spots and holes
28. Make it argue the opposite side
29. Test decisions via future journal entries
30. Check its verdict with people you trust

7 Refine and decide

31. Let AI "interns" rough it out; you refine
32. Draft first, then use AI as a reader
33. Widen options; keep the choice yours
34. You pick the seed and make the call
35. Watch for learned helplessness

RULE OF THUMB

Leave with sharper questions and ideas you can defend? You amplified your thinking. Leave with an answer you can't explain? You abdicated your thinking to your favorite AI tool.

Drawn from, and in places adapted from, the work of Ethan Mollick, Jeremy Utley, Kian Gohar, Hal Gregersen, Adam Grant, Brian Uzzi, Steven Johnson, Tiago Forte, Ross Dawson, Peter Diamandis, Kevin Kelly, Jane McGonigal, Roger Martin, Marshall Goldsmith, Dan Shipper, Rick Rubin, Robert Tucker, Amy Webb, Gary Klein, Paul Graham, Cal Newport and researchers at Wharton.

Synthesized by Chuck Frey

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Ready to stop settling for good-enough ideas?

Get the complete field guide: 35 strategy cards, 35 ready-to-use prompts, 7 stage maps and the editable Xmind mind map.

Get the full guide →

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