



The AI Operator Method

A step-by-step workflow for getting reliable, on-brand work

Most people meet their AI tool the way you meet a new intern on day one. You hand over a vague task, walk away, and come back to something confident, polished, and wrong. Then you spend an hour fixing it and decide AI is overrated.

The Operator Method is the fix. You stay at the wheel through four phases and let the tool do the one thing it does well: filling in the middle once you have given it enough to work with.

The whole method rests on one habit. **Give AI the first frame and the last frame.** The first frame is every piece of context a sharp colleague would need to start. The last frame is a finished example of what good looks like. Hand over both and the work in between gets reliable. Skip them and you get slop.

BEFORE YOU START: PICK THE RIGHT FIRST TASK

- It is **repetitive and a little boring**. A recurring report, a proposal, an update you make on a schedule.
- You are **already the expert**. You can judge good from bad on sight. Do not outsource work you cannot evaluate.
- **Good examples already exist**. A finished version that landed well, a template, a process you have written down.
- It is **mostly text or structured output**, and it goes to an internal audience first, not straight to the board or a customer.

THE FOUR PHASES

1 GATHER

You become a curator of context.

WHAT Collect and curate the right files into one project folder before you write a single prompt.

WHY The method is only as good as the Gather step. AI tools infer the middle from what you give it. More signal in, better work out.

ALWAYS ATTACH THESE THREE (build once, reuse in every project)

Writing style guide so output reads like you and skips the usual AI tells. **Branding guide** for colors, fonts, and visual standards. **Business dossier** covering who you are, what you sell, your market, and your voice. Build each one once by having AI interview you, then drop it into every folder.

CRITICAL **Add a deep research report.** Run a deep research pass on the company, market, topic, or the people involved, and save the report into the folder. This is one of the highest-leverage inputs you can give. It is the difference between AI guessing and AI knowing.

THEN GATHER WHAT THIS SPECIFIC DELIVERABLE NEEDS

The Shape

Template in the exact format you want filled. **Reference example**, one or two finished pieces that worked. e.g. last month's deck, the proposal that closed.

The Substance

Source data that changes each cycle, plus the deep research report. **Stakeholder asks**, specific requests from named people. e.g. CRM export, the follow-ups owed since last time.

The Voice

Style and brand guides from above. **Decision cheat sheet** on what your audience cares about and how you prioritize. e.g. what your reviewers always push on.

The Guardrails

Hard constraints on length, count, and format. **Process notes** on how you did this before and what you learned. e.g. exactly five slides, no jargon.

2 BRAINSTORM

In chat. Cheap. Where your judgment lives.

WHAT Talk through what should go in the deliverable before anything gets built. Stay in conversation, not in a file.

WHY This is where your taste and intuition matter most, and it costs almost nothing in tokens. Cheap thrash now saves expensive thrash later.

HOW

- Tell AI to act as a **strategy partner who pushes back**. It should surface blind spots, poke holes, and challenge your thinking.
- Point it at your transcripts, cheat sheet, and research so its pushback is grounded in your real situation.
- Decide the right scope together before it drafts. Combat the sycophancy that makes it agree with everything.

3 DRAFT

Text only. Approve before you build.

WHAT Have AI draft the content as plain text in chat. The core story and key points, section by section.

WHY A text draft costs a couple hundred tokens. Building the real file costs thousands, and editing a built file is slow and painful. Get the words right first.

HOW

- Tell it to output **only the narrative**, in markdown, and to **wait for your approval** before building anything.
- This is your room to debate, cut, and redirect. Do it here, while it is fast and free.
- If a structural rule is missing, do not fix it in the file later. Fix the instructions so the next build gets it right.

4 BUILD

Only after you approve the draft.

WHAT Once the narrative is approved, AI builds the finished file from your template and follows the brand voice.

WHY By now AI is filling a known structure with approved content. That is the Mad Libs job it is reliable at, so the first build usually lands.

HOW

- Build from the **template**, not from scratch. The finished file inherits the structure you handed over.
- Work in editable formats so a human can take back control at any stage and change a number, a chart, or a line.
- If the output drifts, **start a fresh chat** rather than fighting a tired context window that has lost the plot.

THE PROMPT THAT WRITES YOUR INSTRUCTIONS

You do not write project instructions yourself. You have AI write them. Paste this as the first message in a new project once your folder is gathered. Swap the bracketed parts for your own deliverable.

You're helping me build the project instructions for this AI Project.[recurring deliverable] accurately and on brand, every single time.

Start by looking around this project. I've gathered the inputs you'll need: a template to match, my writing style and branding guides, a business dossier, a deep research report, and this cycle's source data.

Before you write a single line of instructions, interview me with a series of smart multiple choice questions, one at a time, A through D, so we land on the same page about what these instructions need to cover.

When you write the instructions, set up a four phase workflow:

GATHER: confirm I've collected every input before moving on. Handle paste-ins. Flag anything missing or inconsistent.

BRAINSTORM: be a strategy partner, not a yes-man. Use my research and cheat sheet. Surface blind spots and push back.

DRAFT: output only the narrative as plain text in chat. Wait for my approval before you build anything.

BUILD: once I approve, build from the template and follow the brand voice.

Ask your multiple choice questions now.

Tip. The multiple-choice format makes AI spend its intelligence on the questions that matter instead of dumping ten questions at once. Answer one and it often skips the next three.

LOCK IT IN, THEN AUTOMATE

1. AI writes the instructions as a markdown file. **Paste them into the project's instructions field** and save.
2. Run the workflow a few times. When it consistently delivers, the hard part is done once and reused forever.
3. Have AI write a **handoff document** capturing what worked, so you can return later and codify it.
4. When it proves itself, ask AI to **run its skill-maker skill** and turn the build phase into a reusable skill you invoke with a slash command.