

WINNING LIFESTYLES ONLINE

THE AI LIGHTKEEPER

OCTOBER 2026

Prepared, sent or replied?

What to ask now that AI can act for you.

I lead. AI supports.

Clarity. Confidence. Capability. Choice.



Where this started for me

A story I have not told you before.

In January 2023, I joined the big annual Zoom call held by an online company I was involved with. That year, the programs we had worked hard to bring on stream were shelved. Back to the drawing board.

That was the month I started learning AI. I did not know it then, but it changed my life.

Here is the funny part. I hold a degree in French and Linguistics. On paper, I am qualified to teach languages. But I learned them from professors and textbooks, never from living and speaking in those countries. I have the credentials without the experience.

AI was the opposite. I learned it the real and hard way: courses and webinars, yes, and a great deal of building, getting stuck and asking AI to help me get unstuck.



That is why I teach AI and not French.

AI changed more than lives

Businesses pivoted. New jobs appeared. It is happening again.

That company, by the way, moved heavily into AI and is doing fantastically. AI did not only change people's lives. Whole businesses pivoted when it arrived in their world. In fact, I believe businesses that are not embracing AI will most likely get left behind.

Sometimes this feels like other times in history when people were unsure, even scared, that a new technology was dangerous and not for them: the Industrial Revolution, the arrival of computers, the dotcom days. I was alive for one of them. People complained that there would be job losses, and there were. What they did not see were the new jobs being created. Just like today.

I watch the AI news, and the new startups are mind-boggling. Some days I shake my head too. I would not like you to be bamboozled by all the new tech and gadgets. For me, simply being able to use AI in my own world is an amazing luxury.

Which brings me to this month. For those of us working closely with AI, the world is moving toward agents. That is where my own interest lies.

WHAT IS AN AGENT?

An AI assistant that does not stop at the answer. With your permission, it can take the next steps too.

For most people, I think this will feel like a natural move. You already ask AI to write the email. The next step is asking it to check your inbox and have the replies ready for you to read.

Whether you are still deciding what AI is for, or you already have it working beside you every day, this issue is about that next step, and the one question that keeps you in charge of it.

Your assistant is becoming an agent

What I promise you, and the biggest change I am seeing.

CLARITY
Understand what is changing and what can safely be ignored.

CONFIDENCE
Learn enough to move forward without pretending to know everything.

CAPABILITY
Develop practical skills that make AI useful in real life and work.

CHOICE
Make wiser decisions about tools, permissions, money and time.

The biggest change I am seeing is not one new tool. It is that the assistants many of us already use are learning to act. With your permission, some can now read your email, look at your calendar, keep an eye on something for you and come back when it changes.

Having an AI at my fingertips is what I consider a luxury.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU
The question is changing from “Can you explain this?” to “Can you take care of this and show me before it goes out?”

What changed in my world

An assistant I would once have hired.

In September, I upgraded to higher plans with both OpenAI and Anthropic. With OpenAI, I was using Codex for lots of work, including research, and it makes posting ads so much easier. When I used up my plan's allowance, I went over to Claude and was amazed at the work done there. When I tell it my standards, no tracking and no telemetry, it sticks to my wishes.

What has changed most for me is having AI go to other websites and assist me there. In a regular business, I would have hired an assistant for these jobs. I am short of time and juggling many things, so having an AI at my fingertips makes my work life much more manageable.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

You may not have my needs. But handing an agent a few of the chores that take you away from the parts of your personal or business life you care about is what AI is gifting us.

Five jobs you can hand over

Everyday help that keeps you in the loop.

These are the jobs I think most people will hand to an agent first. None of them needs a technical background. Each one needs you to be clear about what the agent may do on its own and what it must bring back to you.

1

Check my email and get the replies ready

The agent reads what has come in, sorts what needs you, and drafts replies for you to read, edit and send yourself.

TRY SAYING THIS

“Check my inbox for anything that needs a reply today. Draft the replies, but do not send anything. I will read and edit them first.”

2

Remind me

Reminders are a big one. Not only appointments, but the things that never make it onto a calendar: call back, renew, follow up.

TRY SAYING THIS

“Remind me on Thursday morning to follow up on the quote I asked for.”

3

Connect to my calendar

Once it can see your calendar, it can warn you about a clash, help you prepare for what is coming and remind you of something the calendar does not know about.

TRY SAYING THIS

“Look at my week. Tell me where I am overbooked and what I should prepare for before Wednesday.”

Watch it for me, look it up for me

Two more jobs, and how I use all five.

4

Tell me when the price drops

Pick one item you have been waiting to buy. The agent keeps checking and lets you know when the price comes down. You still make the purchase.

TRY SAYING THIS

“Keep an eye on the price of [item]. Tell me if it drops below [amount]. Do not buy anything.”

5

Research the things I care about

Give it a topic that matters to you and ask it to come back with what it found, and where it found it.

TRY SAYING THIS

“Find what has changed this month on [topic]. Give me five short points and the source for each one.”

How I use them

I use all five, whenever I need them. I am known as the Typo Queen. My mind goes faster than my fingers, and going back to reread just takes more time. So I give AI my points, it puts good copy into my email, and sometimes it even sends it.

My AIs check my schedule and give me reminders. Sometimes I ask one to remind me to work on something I might forget or have put on the back burner. I have used AI to research products I am considering, and to critique my work, including a website of mine that is still being built.

The list is long. Whatever you would use an assistant for, an AI agent is ready to help.

START WITH ONE

Choose the job that would give you back the most time this week. Try it for a week before adding another.

Prepared, sent or replied?

When AI can act, these three words matter.

Every job on the last two pages has one thing in common. At some point, the agent will tell you it has taken care of something. I want to know which of these it means:

Prepared

The message or form is ready for me to look at. Nothing has gone out.

Sent

It has gone out. It cannot be taken back.

Replied

Someone on the other end has answered or confirmed.

Those are three very different places to be. A cancellation is not finished because AI says it is. It is finished when the provider's confirmation lands in your inbox.

My most-used question

Sometimes I ask something and get an answer that makes a lot of sense to an AI. But I am not a techie, and I need explanations in Louella terms. So I go back and ask, "What exactly does that mean?" and I get a nice, simple answer. I have instructed the AIs I work with to give me simple, easy-to-understand answers. Even with technical people doing the work on a website, I like to know what is happening at each stage.

TRY SAYING THIS

"When you finish, tell me exactly what you did: what you prepared, what you sent, and whether anyone has replied."

AND THIS

"What exactly does that mean? Please explain it in plain language."

Tell AI what you have in mind

Speak or type. Start with what you want help with.

You do not need a special vocabulary to talk with AI. Begin with what you want help with, then give it a little background.

You would not ask a print shop to make an invitation and give them only the date. They need to know who it is for, the occasion and what you want it to say. AI needs that direction too.

For example: “Invite old friends to lunch after several years apart. Make it warm and relaxed, with no guilt about losing touch. Leave spaces for the date and location.”

One question I use often: “What do you need to know from me before we begin?” It helps when you know what you want but are having trouble explaining it.

The first answer does not have to be the final one. If it sounds stiff, say so. If it wanders off track, simply say, “Let's come back to what I asked for.”



TRY SAYING THIS

“Help me write this for [the reader]. I want to explain [the purpose]. Keep it [the tone]. Ask me about anything you need to know first.”

Look beyond the first impression

Sometimes a useful answer is: this can wait.

Recently, I used AI to research a proposed change to a business system. At first glance, the move looked possible and appealing. But being able to make a change is only part of deciding whether it is worthwhile.

The research brought more into view: the code that would need changing, the work and cost involved, where the data would be hosted and whether this was the right time. Once those details were considered, the decision was to stay with the current setup for now.

What amazed me was the speed. I have always been an avid researcher, and gathering and comparing that information myself could have taken days. With AI's help, I had a clearer picture in a short time and better questions to ask before a decision was made.

Sometimes the most useful outcome is deciding that a change can wait.



The speed is remarkable. The decision is still mine.

Pick up where you left off

A simple handoff can save a lot of repetition.

Working with AI brings useful results and the odd detour. Ask for help planning a relaxed weekend away and you may get back a beautifully organized itinerary... with enough activities to need another holiday! A longer piece of work can also be interrupted: a tool stops responding, or you simply run out of time.

So when I want to continue later, I ask for a handoff. It brings together what we have done, the decisions we have made and what comes next.

I check that it reflects the work accurately and save it with the project. When I return, I have a clear starting point to bring back to the AI, without piecing everything together again.

ONE THING PEOPLE MISS

Keep the documents and images with the handoff. If you begin a new conversation, provide the handoff and the files. Mentioning a filename does not give the AI access to that file.

TRY SAYING THIS

“Please prepare a handoff so I can continue this later. Include what we have completed, what we have agreed on and the next steps.”

Try it with work you already have

You do not need a new project to practise.

Take a few notes you have already written. They might be ideas for a gathering, a short guide or a project around the house. Choose something you understand well enough to check.

Ask AI to turn the notes into a short plan. Tell it which decisions you have already made and which ideas you are still considering. That helps it avoid turning a possibility into a commitment.

Then read it as the person who knows the job. Has AI added a date, a cost or a promise that was not in your notes? Ask for one correction: “Keep the optional ideas separate. I have not chosen a date yet.”



TRY SAYING THIS

“Use these notes to make a short plan. Keep confirmed decisions separate from ideas. Ask me about missing details rather than filling them in.”

Begin. Build. Lead.

One idea for wherever you are.



BEGIN
Pick something you already understand, like a message you need to write. Ask AI for help, then ask, “What do you need to know from me before we begin?” Notice how much better the answer gets.



BUILD
If your group, family or business has useful information scattered across notes and emails, ask AI to help turn it into a short handbook. Work one section at a time and check the details as you go.



LEAD
Choose one chore you repeat every week, such as gathering updates from a folder into a summary. Tell the agent what it may use, what the summary should contain and when it must stop and ask you. Check the first few runs closely, then decide whether it has earned more.

One screen for everything

My North Star, and why it waits.

I already use a lot of AI in my business. But there is one thing I am not ready for yet.

A year ago, I designed my dream desktop: every part of my businesses on one screen, with each system showing green, yellow or red, so I can see the health of everything at a glance.

That is my North Star. It is not for here yet. Connecting everything at once takes more setup than the job is worth to me right now, and I want to understand exactly what I am connecting and what information I am sharing before I do.



That is my North Star. It is not for here yet.

WHAT WOULD CHANGE MY MIND

When I can set up one green, yellow or red light for one part of my business in an afternoon, and understand what it is watching without a technical education, I will start building toward the rest.

On the horizon

Moved, not forgotten, and something new I am watching.

AI video: moved, not forgotten

In September I said I would look at CapCut and Higgsfield this month. I have taken classes on CapCut, but to give you a true opinion I need to really work with these tools, and I have not had the time to do that properly yet. I would rather tell you that than write about tools I have only half used. I will come back to them when I can report what I actually found.

Notetakers that feed your agents

I am starting to see meeting notetakers that capture what was said and pass it straight to your AI agents, without a bot joining the call. I have not tried one. Before I do, I want to know how the people on the other side of the call are told they are being recorded, and where those notes are kept.



Keep your light on

Take one idea with you.

Before you close this issue, choose one thing to try this month. Hand an agent one small job. Ask it whether that job was prepared, sent or replied. Or save a handoff before you stop for the day.

If there is something you would like me to look into, send me a note at info@winninglifestylesonline.com. I will tell you what I honestly think.

Until next month, keep your light on.

*Your Lightkeeper,
Louella.*

This October issue reflects information and experiences gathered during September. Features, prices and availability change, so check the latest details before trying or buying. Illustrations created with AI. Examples are for learning and are not customer results.

IF AI STILL FEELS LIKE A LOT

Start with my free guide, **AI Made Simple: The Gentle Start**. It is made for exactly where you are, and it costs nothing.

winninglifestylesonline.com/free-guide

IF YOU ARE ALREADY ON YOUR WAY

Ready to turn something you know into something you can share or sell online? My free guide, **What Could You Create?**, helps you find one idea.

winninglifestylesonline.com/what-could-you-create

When you are ready to build it, that is what **Your Knowledge, Online** is for.

winninglifestylesonline.com/ai-business-builder



THE AI LIGHTKEEPER

*Until next month...
keep your light on.*

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Clarity. Confidence. Capability. Choice.