

CAREERCULTIVATED | FIELD GUIDE

Prompt vs. Presence

Fifteen AI prompts most job seekers never use. And the human side that gets you hired.

Root Down. Rise Up. Grow Forward.

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A take-home guide from the workshop **Prompt vs. Presence: Not Losing Yourself in an AI-Driven World**, co-presented with Behati Hart.
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Start Here

AI made writing easy. It also made everyone sound the same.

Every person applying for the job you want can use the same AI tools you can. Most of them ask the same three things. Fix my resume. Write my cover letter. Give me interview questions. The results look clean. They also look just like everyone else's.

That is the trap. When every resume sounds polished, polish stops standing out. The hiring manager is not looking for perfect words anymore. They are looking for a real person they can trust.

So the question is not whether to use AI. The question is what you use it for.

THE PROMPT	THE PRESENCE
Gets you noticed .	Gets you chosen .
Makes your materials.	Builds trust.
Saves you time.	Wins the job.
Anyone can copy it.	No one can copy it.

The One Rule

Let AI ask the questions. You give the answers. The moment AI starts writing in your place, you lose the one thing that was yours: your voice. Use AI to dig, to check your work, and to see what you cannot see. Then you do the writing. Then you show up in person.

New to AI? Read This First

A **prompt** is just the message you type into an AI tool like ChatGPT, Claude, or Copilot. That is it. You type, it answers. Here is how to use the prompts in this guide:

1. Open a free AI tool. ChatGPT, Claude, and Copilot all work.
2. Copy a prompt from Part One, word for word.
3. Fill in the parts in [BRACKETS] with your own details.
4. Paste it in and hit enter. Answer any questions it asks you.
5. Read the answer like advice from a friend, not orders from a boss. You decide what to keep.

You cannot break anything. If the answer misses the mark, just type what you meant and try again.

The Ten Prompts

Most people use AI to write things for them. These ten prompts do something different. They make AI ask you hard questions, spot your weak points, and show you what the competition looks like. Run them in order the first time.

PROMPT 01

The Practice Interviewer

Why it works. Most people ask AI to write before it knows anything about them. Weak input gives weak output. This prompt flips that. The AI learns your story first.

COPY THIS

Act like a tough hiring manager for [JOB TITLE] at [COMPANY]. Do not write anything for me yet. Interview me first. Ask me one question at a time, ten questions total. Ask about real results, not just duties. Wait for my answer before the next question. After question ten, tell me my three strongest answers and my two weakest ones.

Then do this. Save your answers. Your three strongest points go at the top of your resume and in the first minute of every interview. Your two weakest points are your homework this week.

PROMPT 02

The Honest No

Why it works. Everyone asks AI to sell them. Almost no one asks AI to turn them down. But you cannot fix a problem no one will name for you.

COPY THIS

Here is my resume and a job posting. Pretend you are the hiring manager. Give me the five most likely reasons you would say no to me. Rank them from most likely to least likely. For each one, tell me if the problem is missing proof, missing skills, unclear writing, or something else. Be honest. Do not be nice about it.

Then do this. Fix the unclear writing and missing proof this week. For the bigger gaps, plan to bring them up yourself in the interview, before they have to ask.

PROMPT 03

The Plain-English Translator

Why it works. If you come from the military, government, or another world with its own language, hiring managers may not understand your resume. You lose them in the first six seconds.

COPY THIS

Here is my work experience. I want a job in [INDUSTRY]. First, list every word, title, or short-form term a hiring manager in that field will not understand. Second, rewrite each one in plain English that field actually uses. Third, tell me which of my wins do not translate at all and need to be described as a skill instead of a job duty.

Then do this. No confusing term stays on the page. If the plain version loses some of the meaning, that is a story to tell out loud in the interview, not a bullet point.

PROMPT 04

The Job Posting Decoder

Why it works. Most people copy the job posting back into their resume. But a posting is a symptom. The job exists because something broke or someone left. Find the real problem.

COPY THIS

Here is a job posting. Look past the wording. What problem is this company trying to solve by hiring someone? Which three requirements are must-haves and which three are nice-to-haves? What probably went wrong in this department in the last year that led to this opening?

Then do this. Talk about their problem before you talk about yourself. Do it in your first message and your first interview answer. Almost no one else will.

PROMPT 05

The Proof Check

Why it works. Resumes are full of nice words with nothing behind them. Hiring managers do not buy effort. They buy proof.

COPY THIS

Here are the bullet points from my resume. Sort each one into two lists. **PROOF:** it has a number, a time frame, or a clear result. **JUST WORDS:** it describes duties or effort with no result. For every bullet in the **JUST WORDS** list, ask me one question that would turn it into proof.

Then do this. Answer the questions. Rewrite the bullets. Aim for at least 7 out of every 10 bullets to have real proof before your resume goes anywhere.

PROMPT 06

The Competition Scout

Why it works. You are not competing against the job posting. You are competing against three or four real people you have never pictured. Picture them.

COPY THIS

For [JOB TITLE] at [COMPANY], describe the three people most likely to be my competition for this job. For each one, tell me their background, their biggest strength, and their likely weak spot. Then tell me where they beat me and where I beat them. End with one sentence I can say about myself that none of them could say.

Then do this. That last sentence is gold. Put it in your resume summary, your messages, and your interview close. If anyone else could say it too, keep working on it.

PROMPT 07

The Room Map

Why it works. Most people prepare for questions. Almost no one prepares for people. Each person in the hiring process worries about something different.

COPY THIS

I am applying for [JOB TITLE] at a [SIZE] company in [INDUSTRY]. Who will probably interview me? List each person by job title. For each one, tell me what they care about most, what they are afraid of getting wrong, and the one question they will likely ask me. Then tell me who really makes the final call.

Then do this. Prepare for each person, not just each question. Then look up those same job titles at the company on LinkedIn and reach out to one of them before you apply.

PROMPT 08

The Voice Saver

Why it works. This is the bridge between prompt and presence. AI can copy a format. It cannot copy how you sound unless you give that away.

COPY THIS

Here are three things I wrote myself, with no editing. Study how I write. How long are my sentences? What words do I use a lot? What words do I never use? How do I start and end things? Turn all of that into a short list of rules called My Voice. Then rewrite the paragraph below using My Voice, and show me what you changed and why.

Then do this. Save that My Voice list. Paste it into every prompt from now on. Nothing AI writes goes out the door until it sounds like you. This is how you use the tool without losing yourself.

PROMPT 09

The First 90 Days Plan

Why it works. Most people prepare to talk about their past. Employers are buying your future. Show them what it looks like.

COPY THIS

For this job posting, write a simple plan for my first 90 days: what success looks like at day 30, day 60, and day 90. Tie each goal to the problem this company is trying to solve. Then ask me which of these goals I have already done somewhere else, and which ones would be new to me.

Then do this. Bring a one-page version to the interview. And name the part you have never done before they find it. Owning your gap out loud builds more trust than hiding it.

PROMPT 10

The Stuck Finder

Why it works. When a job search stalls, most people rewrite their resume again. The resume is usually not the problem. Find where you are actually stuck.

COPY THIS

Here are my job search numbers for the last 60 days: [number] applications, [number] phone screens, [number] interviews, [number] offers. Here is my resume and one message I send to people. Where am I getting stuck? Is it my resume, my messages, my interviews, or my follow-up? Give me one guess, one thing to try this week, and one number that will tell me if it worked.

Then do this. Stop fixing what already works. Fix the one spot where you are stuck, then check the number. Run this prompt every two weeks until you are hired.

Part Two

The Blend

These five prompts are different. They are not about the job. They are about you. You cannot show up with presence if you cannot say who you are. These prompts use AI as a mirror, so what you say in the room is already true before you walk in.

PROMPT 11

The Story Finder

Why it works. Presence starts with stories. People forget lists of skills. They remember what you did when it mattered. Most of us are too close to our own lives to spot our best stories.

COPY THIS

Ask me about my work life, one question at a time. Ask about a moment I am proud of, a hard problem I solved, a time I stood up for something, and a mistake that taught me a lesson. After my answers, pick my three best stories. For each one, tell me in one line what it shows about who I am, not just what I did.

Then do this. Write each story down in five sentences or less. These are what you tell in interviews when someone says tell me about a time. You will never scramble for an answer again.

PROMPT 12

The Values Sorter

Why it works. You cannot fake what you care about. But most people have never put it into words. When you can name your values, you stop sounding like every other applicant.

COPY THIS

Ask me two questions. First: describe a work moment when I felt proud and full of energy. Second: describe a work moment that made me angry or drained. Wait for both answers. Then tell me what I seem to value most, in three plain words. For each word, give me one sentence I could say out loud that shows the value without bragging.

Then do this. Test the three words for a week. Do they feel true when you say them? Keep the ones that do. These words belong in your intro, your profile, and your answer to why should we hire you.

PROMPT 13

The Borrowed Mirror

Why it works. Other people see strengths in you that you cannot see in yourself. Their words are proof. This prompt collects that proof in one place.

COPY THIS

Here are things people have said about me: compliments from coworkers, lines from reviews, thank-you notes, anything I can remember or paste in. Find the pattern. What strength keeps showing up that I may not notice? Say it in one plain sentence that starts with: People trust me to...

Then do this. That sentence is your quiet edge. You did not make it up. Other people handed it to you. Use it when someone asks what makes you different, because you have witnesses.

PROMPT 14

The Confidence Bank

Why it works. Nerves erase memory. In the moment, most people forget their own wins. Presence needs proof you can reach for when your hands are sweating.

COPY THIS

Interview me about my wins, big and small, one question at a time. Push past my modesty. Then build me a one-page list called My Bank: ten wins, each one line long, each with a result. Order them from the one that makes me proudest to the least.

Then do this. Print it. Read it out loud before every interview and every hard phone call. This is not bragging. It is remembering. Confidence is just memory with proof behind it.

PROMPT 15

The Out-Loud Test

Why it works. This is where the blend becomes presence. In Part Three you will write three intro sentences about yourself. Come back to this prompt once you have them, because they only count when they survive being spoken.

COPY THIS

Here are my three intro sentences: who I am, the problem I solve, and my proof. Act like a friendly stranger at an event. I will say them to you. After each try, tell me one thing that sounded stiff or fake, and ask me one follow-up question a real person would ask. Keep going until my answers sound like talking, not reading.

Then do this. Do three rounds. Then close the laptop and say your sentences to a real person: a friend, a spouse, anyone. When they respond to you instead of praising your wording, you are ready.

The Presence Playbook

Presence is what is left when you close the laptop.

Presence is not about being loud or having a big personality. Presence is the proof, built up over time, that you are a real person who pays attention and does what you say you will do. It is the one part of your job search that no tool can create for you.

Fifteen strong prompts will get your materials in the door and your story straight. They will not close the deal. Closing the deal runs on three things a machine cannot fake.

BE SPECIFIC	OWN YOUR GAPS	GET CLOSE
Say things only you could say. Real names, real numbers, real lessons learned.	Name what you do not know before they find it. Honesty about your gaps reads as strength.	Get near the people who decide, not just the website where applications pile up.

ROOT: Know Your Three Sentences

Before you talk to anyone, you need three sentences you can say without notes. In an elevator. On a surprise phone call. At a table you did not plan to sit at.

Sentence one. The work you do and who you do it for.

Sentence two. The problem you solve and what it costs when no one solves it.

Sentence three. One number. One result. One piece of proof.

Write it down. Then say it out loud twenty times until it sounds like talking, not reading. If it sounds like a resume, it is not done yet. AI can draft this for you. Only you can make it ring true when someone looks you in the eye.

RISE: Get Close to Real People

Applications go to a computer system. Job offers come from people. Most job searches die in the gap between those two facts.

The name rule. No application goes out without a real person's name attached to it. Find at least one human at the company first. If you cannot find a name, you are not ready to apply.

Five real conversations a week. Not five messages sent. Five times a real person wrote back or talked with you, and you learned something.

Show your thinking. Post twice a week about something happening in your field. Share what you think and why. People do not hire resumes. They hire people whose thinking they have already seen.

GROW: Do What You Said You Would Do

Presence grows through follow-through. This is the whole game, and it is where most people lose.

Keep a promise list. Every time you tell someone you will send something or do something, write it down. Deliver within two days. A late follow-up is worse than none, because it shows how you will act on the job.

Leave something behind. End every good conversation by putting something useful in their hands. A one-page plan. An article with two lines of your take on it. An introduction they needed. AI can draft the thing. Only you can be the person who actually sent it.

Do this for four weeks and something changes. You stop being a name they are judging and start being a person they already trust.

The Presence Test

Before anything AI touched leaves your hands, check it against these three questions.

1	Could a hundred other people send this exact same message? If yes, delete it and start over.
2	Does it include at least one thing only I would know? If no, add one.
3	Does it ask for one clear thing a real person can do this week? If no, rewrite the ending.

The 14-Day Plan

Prompts on the left. Presence on the right. Do the loop once, then do it again.

DAYS	DO THIS	YOU END UP WITH
1 to 2	Run Prompts 1, 2, and 5. Sit with the answers before you argue with them.	An honest look at yourself. A stronger list of proof.
3 to 4	Run Prompt 8 with your own unedited writing. Then run Prompts 11 to 14 from The Blend.	Your My Voice list, your best stories, your three values, and your Confidence Bank.
5	ROOT. Write your three sentences. Then run Prompt 15 and practice them out loud.	A one-minute intro that sounds like you.
6 to 7	Run Prompts 3, 4, and 9. Rebuild your resume in plain English.	A resume people understand. A one-page 90-day plan.
8	Run Prompts 6 and 7. Build your target list.	10 companies. 30 real names. Your one-of-a-kind sentence.
9 to 12	RISE. Send five messages a day. Each one must pass the Presence Test.	Five real conversations on the calendar.
13	GROW. Clear your promise list. Send something useful to everyone you talked to.	No open promises. Five people holding something of yours.
14	Run Prompt 10 with your own numbers.	One guess, one thing to try, and a fresh start on Monday.

Keep Score

A job search without numbers is just a feeling. Track these six every week. Write down your starting numbers in week one, then work on one at a time.

WHAT TO TRACK	HOW TO COUNT IT	GOAL
Applications with a name	How many applications went out with a real person's name attached	All of them
Replies	How many people wrote back, out of everyone you messaged	1 in 5 or better
Real conversations	Times each week a real person talked with you and you learned something	5 a week
Conversations to interviews	How many conversations it takes to land one interview	1 in 3
Promise speed	Hours between making a promise and keeping it	Under 48
Posts	Posts each week that show your thinking, not just your resume	2 a week

The Close

A machine can write your resume. It cannot sit across from someone and be worth believing.

Everyone in your job market now has the same tools you do. The edge is no longer in what the tools produce. It is in what you do after: who you call, what you promise, whether you deliver, and whether the person across the table remembers you or just your paperwork.

Use the prompt. Then close the laptop. Then go be present.

Your Next Step

Pick one prompt from Part One and run it before the week ends. Then pick one real person and start a conversation. That is the whole method, and it works in that order.

If the honest answers from Prompt 2 sting a little, good. That means you found the real problem. And the real problem is the fastest thing to fix with a second set of eyes on it.

CareerCultivated

Career strategy, resumes, and personal branding for professionals in transition. We specialize in guiding military members into civilian careers.

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