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SMART AI · THE FOUNDATIONS

You're the *Leader*

Diligence, ownership, and good judgement — the habits that turn a powerful tool into trustworthy work you'd put your name to.

Plan with intention. Execute with precision.

"The AI wrote it" *is never a defence*

Of everything in the SMART AI suite, this is the page that matters most. AI is capable, fast, and genuinely useful — but it cannot be held accountable for anything. You can. And the moment you use, send, or publish what it produced, it stops being the AI's work and becomes yours.

Picture being questioned on something later — by a client, a colleague, a regulator, or just your own conscience. "The AI wrote it" will not hold. It can't apologise, can't stand behind a claim, can't carry the consequence. **The name on the work is yours, and so is the responsibility for it.**

This isn't a flaw in AI — it's simply the nature of a tool. A calculator can be wrong if you key in the wrong number; nobody blames the calculator. AI is the same, only far more convincing when it errs. Which is exactly why your judgement at the end isn't optional. It's the whole point.

THE LINE TO REMEMBER

AI can help you do the work. It cannot **own** the work. Ownership stays with the human who decided to use it — every time, without exception.

You lead. *AI assists.*

The simplest way to hold all of this in your head is to picture a working relationship you already understand: a leader and a capable colleague. It tells you, instantly, who does what — and who answers for it.

YOU · THE LEADER

Direct & own

- Set the goal and the brief
- Bring the judgement and the context
- Decide what's good enough
- Sign it off — and own the result

AI · THE COLLEAGUE

Fact-find & draft

- Researches and gathers
- Drafts, suggests, and tries
- Works tirelessly and fast
- Hands it back for your call

A brilliant colleague is a gift — quick, willing, endlessly patient. But you wouldn't let even your best colleague send a client proposal under your name without reading it. Not because you distrust them, but because **leadership means owning what goes out the door**. AI is that colleague: invaluable, and still working under your direction.

WHY THIS FRAMING HELPS

It puts you in the right posture from the start. Not a passive user hoping the tool gets it right — but a **leader directing capable help**, and keeping final say. That mindset alone improves everything you make with AI.

It rarely lands *first time*

Here's something worth being honest about: the best work with AI almost never arrives perfect on the first try. It's a back-and-forth. And that isn't the tool failing — it's the process working exactly as it should.

This very suite of guides is the proof. None of it appeared fully formed. It took a leader directing the work: reviewing each draft, catching what was off, asking for changes, and steering until it was right. A few real moments from the making of it —

Caught

A page said "six certifications" when the true number was eleven. **The leader spotted it; the colleague fixed it.**

Refined

A photo sat too large and unexplained. It took review, a resize, and a caption to land it right.

Repaired

Links pointed to pages that didn't exist yet. Noticed, flagged, turned to "coming soon."

Requested

This very guide exists because the leader said: we haven't covered diligence deeply enough. And here it is.

Tweaks, reviews, questions, changes. That loop *is* the work — and every pass came from a human steering, not the tool deciding. **The desired result is earned through direction, not delivered by default.**

Good work isn't the first answer. It's the tenth, shaped by you.

Does it hit *the brief*?

AI is fluent, which makes its work *sound* right even when it isn't. Plausible is not the same as correct, and confident is not the same as on-brief. Before anything goes out, hold it up against what you actually asked for.

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- ☐ **Did it do what I asked** — all of it, not just the easy part?
 - ☐ **Are the facts and figures right?** Anything checkable, check — especially names, numbers, and claims.
 - ☐ **Has it added anything I didn't ask for,** or quietly dropped something I needed?
 - ☐ **Would this stand up** if someone questioned it tomorrow?

THE TRAP TO KNOW

The better AI gets, the more convincing its mistakes become. A wrong answer in beautiful prose is still wrong — and harder to spot precisely because it reads so well. **Confidence is not evidence.** Your job is to check the substance, not be charmed by the surface.

Does it sound *like you*?

A result can be accurate and still wrong — because it doesn't sound like you. Tone, personality, and length are part of the brief, not extras. Your voice is yours; AI should fit it, not flatten it.

☐ **Tone** — warm or formal, bold or careful: is it pitched the way you'd actually say it?

☐ **Personality** — does it carry your character, or does it read like anyone, anywhere?

☐ **Length** — is it as long as it needs to be, and no longer? Trim the padding.

☐ **Words** — has it used phrases you never would? Swap them for yours.

If something reads as generic, that's your signal to direct again: "make this warmer," "cut it by half," "this isn't how I'd put it — try again." Each pass pulls it closer to your voice. **The reader should hear you, not the machine.**

AI supplies the words. You supply the voice.

Care with *what you share*

This part isn't about output — it's about input. What you put *into* an AI matters just as much as what you take out, especially in business. Not rules to memorise; just the awareness a careful leader brings.

When you type something into most AI tools, it leaves your hands. So before you paste, it's worth a thought: is this mine to share? Personal data about real people, client confidences, commercially sensitive details, anything covered by **GDPR or your own duty of care** — these deserve a pause, not a reflex.

"Would I be comfortable sending this to my manager or my team?"

If yes, it's almost certainly fine for AI. If you hesitate, that hesitation is your answer — pause, and use your judgement rather than habit. A simple test you can run in a second, every time.

And if you're using AI for work, the most important reference isn't this guide — **it's your own organisation's policies**. Many companies have clear guidance on what may and may not go into AI tools. Knowing yours, and working within it, is part of using AI like a professional. Where shared chats or projects are involved, keep the contents respectful and appropriate, as you would any shared workspace.

THE PRINCIPLE, NOT A LECTURE

This isn't about fear — it's about **governance you'd expect of yourself anyway**. Sensible care with information is simply leadership extended to a new tool. You already know how to be trusted with things; this is the same instinct, pointed at AI.

Diligence *is leadership*

Everything on these pages comes down to one idea: using AI well is an act of leadership, not a shortcut around it. You direct, you judge, you own. That's not a burden — it's what keeps the work yours.

<i>Own it</i>	The moment you use it, it's yours. "The AI wrote it" is never a defence.
<i>Lead it</i>	You're the leader; AI is the colleague. Direct the work, keep final say.
<i>Check it</i>	Against the brief, against the facts, against your own voice.
<i>Guard it</i>	Mind what you share; work within your policies; lead with care.
<i>Stand by it</i>	Be honest about AI's role where it matters, and put your name on it proudly.

Do these, and AI becomes exactly what it should be: a remarkable colleague that makes you faster and braver — while you remain, unmistakably, the leader whose work this is. That's the whole of diligence, and it's the habit that makes all the others safe to use.

This guide is original SMART content. Its framing of Diligence — taking responsibility for what we do with AI and how we do it — draws on the AI Fluency Framework by Rick Dakan, Joseph Feller, and Anthropic, released under the Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 licence, used here with attribution and gratitude. This guide offers general awareness, not legal advice; for your obligations, consult your own policies and a qualified professional.

GO FURTHER

Where the fluency gets applied

These guides build the judgement — the 4Ds you can carry into any AI tool, on any task. The natural next step is applying that judgement to the work that carries a number.

The SMART Business range puts it to work: five practical planners for commercial leaders — Key Account Director, the SaaS Commercial Playbook, Managing Change, Continuous Improvement and Emotional Intelligence. Every one now includes a built-in "Working with AI" section: ready-made prompts, each constructed on the 4Ds you've just learned, with a note explaining why it's shaped that way.

So the loop closes both ways — the guides teach you to direct AI well, and the planners hand you the exact prompts for account risk, root-cause analysis, difficult conversations, change resistance and honest deal qualification.

EXPLORE THE RANGE

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