The AI Opportunity Filter

How to Decide What to Learn, What to Pursue, and What to Ignore

By Eric Holmlund

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Artificial intelligence technologies, tools, capabilities, pricing, policies, and business opportunities can change rapidly. Examples and observations that are accurate at the time of writing may become outdated as technologies and markets evolve.

Every person's circumstances, goals, resources, responsibilities, risk tolerance, and season of life are different. You are responsible for evaluating any technology, business opportunity, strategy, or decision in light of your own situation and, when appropriate, consulting qualified professionals.

The purpose of **The AI Opportunity Filter** is not to tell you which opportunities you should pursue. It is to provide a framework to help you think more deliberately about those decisions.

Ultimately, how you choose to invest your time, attention, money, and energy is your responsibility.

Introduction: The Age of Infinite Opportunity

For more than 20 years, I've been warning entrepreneurs about something I call **Shiny Object Syndrome**.

You probably know the feeling.

You start working on a business, project, or strategy. You invest some time into it. You learn what you need to learn. You begin making progress.

Then something new appears.

It looks exciting. Maybe even better than what you're currently doing. So you put your existing project aside and start pursuing the new opportunity instead.

Before long, another opportunity appears.

And the cycle repeats.

The danger is obvious: if we continually abandon what we're doing for the next promising opportunity, we may never stick with anything long enough to experience the success it could have produced.

Closely related to Shiny Object Syndrome are two other problems I've talked about for decades: **information overload** and **paralysis by analysis**.

When we're confronted with more information than we can reasonably process, making a decision becomes harder. We research more. We compare more options. We consume more information. We keep trying to figure out the *best* thing to do.

Sometimes we become so busy figuring out what to do that we don't actually do much of anything.

None of these problems are new.

But AI has amplified all of them.

When the Shiny Objects Are Actually Good

There's something different about the current wave of artificial intelligence.

In the past, I could often look at the latest shiny object and confidently say, "Ignore it. Stick with what you're doing."

That's harder today.

Many of the shiny objects we're encountering really are extraordinary.

AI can help one person accomplish work that once required an entire team. It can help us write, research, design, program, analyze data, produce videos, compose music, automate businesses, serve customers, learn new skills, and create things that would have been completely beyond our capabilities just a few years ago.

And the technology keeps getting better.

That's what makes our current version of Shiny Object Syndrome so difficult.

Some of these opportunities really **are** worth pursuing.

Some of these tools really **will** change industries.

Some of these skills really **are** worth learning.

Some of these developments really **will** create new businesses, careers, and fortunes.

Ignoring everything isn't wise.

But pursuing everything is impossible.

And therein lies the problem.

The Age of Infinite Opportunity

We are entering an era in which our opportunities may increasingly exceed our capacity to pursue them.

AI is removing barriers that previously limited what an individual could accomplish.

Don't know how to code? AI can help.

Can't afford a designer? AI can create images.

Don't have a research team? AI can analyze enormous amounts of information.

Don't know how to edit video, build an app, write sales copy, automate a workflow, translate a document, or create a presentation?

Increasingly, AI can help with all of those things too.

Every barrier that disappears creates new possibilities.

And every new possibility creates another decision.

Should I learn this?

Should I build this?

Should I automate this?

Should I start this business?

Should I use this new tool?

Should I change the way I'm currently doing things?

Should I abandon what I'm doing because something better just arrived?

There is always another possibility waiting.

And unlike previous technological revolutions, this one is moving incredibly quickly. You can spend weeks learning a tool or technique only to discover months later that a new generation of technology has made much of what you learned unnecessary.

So how do we live and work sustainably in an environment like this?

How do we remain curious without becoming distracted?

How do we keep learning without spending our entire lives learning?

How do we recognize genuinely important opportunities without continually abandoning the work we've already chosen?

And perhaps most importantly:

> **How do we take advantage of extraordinary technological leverage without allowing it to consume an ordinary human lifespan?**

Because underneath all of this technological abundance remains one stubborn limitation.

You are still human.

You still have 24 hours in a day.

You still need to sleep.

You still have relationships that require your presence.

You still have a body that needs to be cared for.

You still have experiences you want to have, people you want to spend time with, places you want to go, and a life outside of your work.

And regardless of how powerful our technology becomes, each day that passes is one day of our finite lives that we don't get back.

That's why I believe we need to rethink what productivity means in the age of AI.

The goal cannot simply be to accomplish as much as technologically possible.

There may no longer be a meaningful upper limit to that.

Instead, we need to become much better at deciding **what deserves our time in the first place.**

We need filters.

We need boundaries.

We need self-imposed limits.

And we need to become comfortable deliberately leaving some very good opportunities unexplored.

AI gives us an extraordinary ability to multiply our efforts.

But there is one thing it cannot multiply:

our time.

This report is about learning to make that distinction—and using one of the most powerful technologies humanity has ever created in service of our lives, rather than allowing our lives to be consumed in service of the technology.

Part I: Rethinking Productivity in the AI Age

Chapter 1: The Leverage Paradox

One of the most exciting things about artificial intelligence is the incredible amount of **leverage** it gives us.

It's also one of the most dangerous.

I've experienced this personally.

There are projects I work on today where I sometimes feel like I'm doing the work of ten people. Tasks that once would have required hiring specialists, assembling a team, or spending weeks learning new skills can suddenly be accomplished by one person working with AI.

And ten people may ultimately prove to be a very conservative comparison.

We're already seeing individuals use AI to write software, produce media, conduct research, create marketing campaigns, analyze enormous amounts of information, automate complex workflows, and operate businesses with a fraction of the human labor that would previously have been required.

As AI becomes more capable and autonomous, perhaps we'll see individuals accomplishing what once required 100 people.

Maybe 1,000.

That's an extraordinary feeling.

It's empowering.

And if you're an entrepreneur, creator, or naturally curious person, it can also become a little intoxicating.

You start thinking:

If I can do this now, what else could I do?

And that's where the paradox begins.

Increased Capability Creates Increased Possibility

You might assume that becoming ten times more productive would solve your problem of not having enough time.

Instead, something strange happens.

As your capabilities expand, so does the number of things you can realistically imagine doing.

Yesterday, you dismissed an idea because you didn't know how to build it.

Today, AI can help you build it.

Yesterday, you couldn't afford the team necessary to pursue a particular business opportunity.

Today, perhaps you don't need the team.

Yesterday, producing a certain kind of content required equipment, technical expertise, money, and people you didn't have.

Today, you might be able to create it from your laptop.

The barrier disappears.

And suddenly another possibility enters your life.

That's **The Leverage Paradox**:

> **The more AI increases our capacity to do things, the more things we discover that we could be doing.**

AI may make us ten times more productive while simultaneously presenting us with a hundred times more possibilities.

The finish line doesn't necessarily get closer.

It moves farther away.

The Productivity Trap

This creates a problem with the way many of us have traditionally thought about productivity.

For most of my career, becoming more productive was fairly straightforward.

If I could accomplish in six hours what previously took eight hours, that was an improvement.

If a new tool saved me five hours per week, that was valuable.

If I could automate a repetitive task, delegate something, or create a more efficient system, I had increased my productivity.

Those principles still apply.

But AI introduces a new question.

What happens to the time we save?

Suppose AI allows you to accomplish eight hours of work in two hours.

That's incredible.

But what do you do with the other six?

If you're anything like many entrepreneurs, you probably don't close the laptop and declare the day finished.

You discover six hours' worth of additional things to do.

Maybe you start another project.

Maybe you create more content.

Maybe you learn another AI tool.

Maybe you improve something that was already good enough.

Maybe you ask AI what else you should be doing—and it cheerfully gives you a list of 37 possibilities.

By the end of the day, you've accomplished an astonishing amount.

But you've still spent the entire day working.

This is why I think we need to distinguish between two different kinds of productivity.

Output Productivity

Output Productivity asks:

> **How much can I accomplish with my time?**

This is the productivity we've traditionally measured.

How much did I produce?

How many tasks did I complete?

How much revenue did I generate?

How many customers did I serve?

How many pieces of content did I create?

How quickly did I finish the project?

AI can dramatically improve all of these metrics.

And there is nothing wrong with that.

There are seasons of life and business when maximizing output is exactly what we should be doing. We may be building a business, launching a project, learning a profession, solving an important problem, or pursuing something we genuinely care about.

The danger comes when **increased output becomes the goal in and of itself.**

Because there's another form of productivity that matters even more.

Life Productivity

Life Productivity asks:

> **Am I spending my time on things worth spending my life on?**

That's a very different question.

You can have an incredibly productive day according to the first definition and a terrible day according to the second.

You could spend twelve hours working with AI and accomplish what would once have required 100 hours of human labor.

From an output perspective, that's phenomenal productivity.

But you still spent twelve hours of your life doing it.

Those twelve hours are gone.

AI multiplied your output.

It did not multiply your lifespan.

And this is where the extraordinary leverage of AI can distort our thinking.

When something allows us to accomplish ten times as much, it becomes very easy to justify spending time on it.

How could this possibly be a waste of time? Look how much I'm accomplishing!

But volume of accomplishment doesn't answer the more important question:

Was this worth accomplishing?

Your Ultimate Scarce Resource

We hear a lot about the resources that AI is making abundant.

Intelligence is becoming cheaper.

Content can be generated almost instantly.

Software can be created faster.

Images, video, music, research, analysis, and ideas can increasingly be produced on demand.

But for the individual human being, one resource remains stubbornly scarce:

time.

You still get one Tuesday.

You still get one summer.

Your children are only a particular age once.

You only have so many evenings with your spouse, conversations with your parents, fishing trips with your friends, walks outside, family dinners, vacations, sunsets, and ordinary afternoons.

That doesn't mean work is somehow separate from a meaningful life. Work can be deeply meaningful. Building something can be exhilarating. Creating, serving, teaching, solving problems, earning money, and pursuing ambitious goals can all be excellent uses of our limited time.

The point isn't to work less simply for the sake of working less.

The point is to **choose deliberately.**

AI makes it increasingly possible to spend our entire lives doing things that are productive.

That doesn't mean we should.

The Question Above the Question

When a new AI capability appears, our instinct is often to ask:

What could I do with this?

That's a useful question.

But I believe we now need another question above it:

> **Is this something worth spending part of my life doing?**

That question changes the calculation.

A project can be profitable and still receive a "no."

A skill can be useful and still not deserve 20 hours of your life.

A technology can be revolutionary without requiring you to master it.

An opportunity can be legitimate without being right for you.

And something can be incredibly productive without actually moving you toward the life you want.

This is the fundamental challenge of living and working in an age of extraordinary technological leverage.

We don't merely need better tools for doing things.

We need better filters for deciding **which things deserve to be done.**

Because the question that will increasingly matter isn't:

Can AI help me do this?

It almost certainly can.

The better question is:

> **Just because AI enables me to do something, does that make it worth doing?**

Chapter 2: There Is No Finish Line Anymore

There was a time when work had more natural stopping points.

You ran out of daylight.

The office closed.

The store closed.

The people you needed went home.

The library wasn't open.

The mail wouldn't arrive until tomorrow.

You needed a specialist you couldn't afford to hire.

A project couldn't move forward until someone else finished their part.

Even our technology imposed limits. Computers needed time to process things. Videos needed hours to render. Research required finding and reading the information ourselves. Creating something complicated often required acquiring skills that took months or years to develop.

Those limitations could be frustrating.

But they also did something useful.

They forced us to stop.

AI is removing many of those constraints.

And while that's incredibly empowering, it creates a problem we're only beginning to understand.

There Is Always Something Else You Could Be Doing

Imagine you've finished your work for the day.

Or have you?

There's a new AI tool you've been meaning to try.

There's a new model everyone says is better than the one you're using.

There's a skill you've been meaning to learn.

There's a repetitive process in your business that could probably be automated.

There's an idea for another business you could launch.

There's another piece of content you could create.

There's another platform where you could be building an audience.

There's an opportunity you bookmarked three weeks ago and haven't investigated yet.

And even if you somehow finished all of those things, tomorrow there would be more.

That's one of the fundamental differences between today's technological environment and the one most of us grew up with.

There is no finish line anymore.

Of course, technically there never was. An ambitious person could always find something else to do.

But the number of realistic possibilities available to one individual was constrained by time, money, knowledge, skills, people, and access.

AI is rapidly lowering many of those barriers.

That's mostly a good thing.

But every barrier that disappears also removes one of the things that previously helped us say:

"I can't do that right now."

And sometimes *I can't* was a blessing in disguise.

When Everything Becomes Possible

For an entrepreneur, one of the most seductive things about AI is how often *I can't do that* is becoming *I could probably figure that out.*

Can't code?

Maybe AI can help.

Can't design?

Maybe AI can help.

Can't afford another employee?

Maybe an AI agent can handle part of the job.

Don't have time to create content for another platform?

Maybe AI can multiply what you're already creating.

Have a business idea you would have dismissed five years ago because you lacked the technical expertise?

Maybe you could build it this weekend.

This expansion of possibility is exciting.

But there's an important consequence:

> **The fewer things we're prevented from doing, the more responsibility we have for deciding what not to do.**

That's a skill many of us haven't developed very well.

We didn't need to.

The world made many of those decisions for us.

Now we're increasingly going to have to make them ourselves.

The Machine Will Never Tell You You're Done

One of the strangest things about working with AI is that it is always ready to continue.

Ask it for ten ideas, and it can give you ten more.

Finish a project, and it can suggest improvements.

Create a marketing plan, and it can identify additional channels.

Write an article, and it can turn it into social posts, emails, videos, presentations, podcasts, lead magnets, and a dozen other things.

Ask what you're overlooking, and it will happily tell you.

Ask what else you could be doing, and you'll rarely hear:

"Nothing. You're good. Close the computer and go fishing."

AI doesn't know when you've done enough.

That's not its job.

It's a tool designed to respond to our requests and expand our capabilities.

Which means the responsibility for deciding when enough is enough remains with us.

We Have to Create the Limits

This leads to one of the most important principles in this report:

> **As technology removes external limits, we must become better at creating internal ones.**

If the work itself no longer provides a stopping point, we need to create one.

If there are unlimited things we could learn, we need to decide how much learning is enough.

If there are unlimited opportunities we could investigate, we need to decide how much exploration is enough.

If we can create unlimited content, we need to decide how much content is enough.

If we can continually improve something, we need to decide when it is good enough.

If AI allows us to work at almost any hour, we need to decide when the workday ends.

These aren't technological decisions.

They're human decisions.

And they're going to become increasingly important as the technology improves.

Define "Enough" Before You Reach It

There's a practical principle hidden here that we'll return to throughout this report:

Whenever possible, define "enough" in advance.

If you wait until you *feel* finished, you may never finish.

Decide beforehand:

I'm going to spend two hours exploring this technology.

I'm going to test this tool on one real project.

I'm going to publish three times per week on this platform.

I'm going to pursue these two major business priorities this quarter.

I'm going to spend 30 minutes catching up on AI developments and then get back to my actual work.

I'm going to work until 5:00 today.

When the predetermined boundary arrives, stop—or at least require yourself to make a conscious decision before crossing it.

This sounds simple.

It isn't.

Especially when what you're doing is exciting, productive, profitable, or genuinely important.

But that's exactly why boundaries matter.

We tend to think boundaries are primarily necessary for things that are bad for us.

Increasingly, we may need boundaries around things that are **good**.

Learning is good.

Creating is good.

Building a business is good.

Making money is good.

Developing new skills is good.

Using powerful technology to accomplish meaningful things is good.

But a finite human life cannot contain an infinite number of good things.

Choosing one good thing inevitably means leaving another good thing undone.

The Discipline of Leaving Things Undone

That may become one of the defining skills of the AI age.

We need to become comfortable with unfinished possibilities.

There will be tools we never try.

Books and articles we never read.

AI models we never test.

Skills we never master.

Platforms we never join.

Businesses we never start.

Content we never create.

Automations we never build.

Good ideas we never pursue.

Some of those opportunities might have worked.

That's okay.

The objective isn't to reach the end of your life having extracted every possible ounce of productivity from it.

The objective is to have spent your time on the things you decided mattered.

That requires something more sophisticated than simply telling ourselves to "focus."

We need a way to evaluate the opportunities constantly competing for our attention.

We need to distinguish between something that's merely possible, something that's genuinely valuable, and something that actually deserves a place in our lives **right now**.

In other words, we need a filter.

Because when there is no longer a natural finish line, **we have to decide where to draw one.**

Part II: The Opportunity Filter

Chapter 3: Not Every Opportunity Deserves Your Attention

By this point, you might be tempted to solve the problem by simply tuning everything out.

Stop reading AI news.

Stop experimenting with new tools.

Ignore the latest models.

Stick with what you're already doing and refuse to be distracted.

For some people, that might actually be an improvement.

But I don't think it's the right long-term answer.

We are living through a period of extraordinary technological change. Some of the opportunities appearing today genuinely are important. Some new technologies will dramatically change how businesses operate. Some will eliminate tasks that currently consume hours of your week. Some will create entirely new industries and business models.

Being completely closed-minded about those developments could be just as costly as chasing every one of them.

The goal isn't to stop looking for opportunities.

The goal is to become much better at deciding which opportunities deserve your attention.

And that starts with understanding three very different things:

Possibility → Opportunity → Priority

They may sound similar.

They're not.

Possibility

AI is creating possibilities at an astonishing rate.

You *could* write a book.

You *could* start a YouTube channel.

You *could* build an app.

You *could* automate part of your business.

You *could* create an AI agent.

You *could* launch another product.

You *could* learn to generate videos.

You *could* start selling a new service.

You *could* expand onto another social platform.

You *could* build an entirely new business around something that barely existed a year ago.

But the fact that something has become possible doesn't mean you should do it.

This sounds obvious when written on a page.

It's much harder to remember when you discover something exciting and suddenly realize:

"Wait a minute. I could actually do this!"

That feeling of possibility is powerful.

But **possibility is not opportunity.**

Opportunity

An opportunity is a possibility that has meaningful potential value.

Perhaps it could generate revenue.

Perhaps it could save significant time.

Perhaps it could improve your existing business.

Perhaps it could help you reach more people, reduce costs, solve a problem, develop a valuable skill, or create something personally meaningful.

Now we're getting somewhere.

This isn't merely something you *could* do.

There is a legitimate reason you *might want* to do it.

But we still haven't reached the most important level.

Because:

> **Something can be a genuine opportunity and still not deserve your time.**

That's where **priority** enters the picture.

Priority

A priority is an opportunity that deserves your attention **in light of everything else competing for your finite time and resources.**

That's a much higher standard.

Imagine you discover an AI-related business opportunity that you reasonably believe could make money.

It's a real opportunity.

But you're already building another business that's gaining momentum.

Should you pursue the new one?

Maybe.

But the fact that the new opportunity is legitimate doesn't answer the question.

You have to compare it against what you're already doing.

What would you stop doing?

What momentum might you lose?

What other commitment would receive less attention?

What would happen if you simply put this opportunity aside for six months?

And perhaps most importantly:

Does this opportunity move you toward the life and goals you've already chosen?

That's the difference between evaluating something in isolation and evaluating it as part of your life.

Good Opportunities Are Part of the Problem

This is why traditional advice about Shiny Object Syndrome can feel inadequate in the AI age.

It's relatively easy to say no to bad ideas.

The difficult decisions involve **good ideas**.

A new tool really could save you time.

A new platform really could grow your audience.

A new business really could make money.

A new AI skill really could become valuable.

A new technology really could change your industry.

And you still may need to say:

No.

Or perhaps:

Not now.

That's one of the hardest disciplines for an opportunity-seeking entrepreneur to develop.

We tend to think that recognizing a good opportunity creates an obligation to pursue it.

It doesn't.

You are allowed to recognize that something is valuable without making it part of your life.

In fact, as the number of opportunities increases, that ability becomes essential.

Attention Is an Investment

One reason this matters is that opportunities begin costing us long before we fully pursue them.

They cost **attention**.

You hear about a new AI tool.

You watch a demonstration.

Then you read a comparison.

Then you create an account.

Then you experiment with it.

Then you watch a tutorial.

Then you start thinking about ways you could use it.

Maybe you never actually implement anything.

But the opportunity has already consumed two or three hours—and perhaps occupied part of your mental attention for several days.

Multiply that by dozens of new technologies, strategies, platforms, and opportunities every year, and the cost becomes significant.

That's why our filter needs to begin **before** we commit substantial time to an opportunity.

The question isn't merely:

> **Should I do this?**

We need to ask:

> **How much of my attention does this deserve?**

Sometimes the answer will be significant.

Sometimes the answer will be a little.

Sometimes the answer will be none.

From Possibility to Priority

So when the next exciting thing appears, begin by separating these three levels.

Is it possible?

Interesting—but that's not enough.

Is it a genuine opportunity?

Better—but still not enough.

Does it deserve to become one of my priorities?

Now we're asking the right question.

Because your objective isn't to find every worthwhile opportunity.

There are already more worthwhile opportunities than you could pursue in a lifetime.

Your objective is to identify the relatively small number that deserve a piece of **your** life.

And to do that consistently, we need something better than excitement, fear of missing out, or intuition in the heat of the moment.

We need a repeatable way to decide.

We need an Opportunity Filter.

Chapter 4: The Opportunity Filter

We've established that there are more legitimate opportunities available to us than we could possibly pursue.

So how do we choose?

That's what the **Opportunity Filter** is designed to help you do.

Whenever you encounter a new AI tool, technology, skill, business idea, strategy, platform, or other opportunity that seems worthy of your attention, run it through the seven questions in this chapter.

This isn't intended to be a rigid scoring system where an opportunity needs five out of seven points to qualify.

Life isn't that simple.

Instead, think of these questions as a way to slow down the decision long enough to see what excitement can sometimes hide.

The seven questions are:

> **LIFE → GOALS → VALUE → LEVERAGE → DURABILITY → OPPORTUNITY COST → TIMING**

Let's walk through each one.

1. LIFE — Does This Contribute to the Life I Actually Want?

Start at the highest level.

Not with the technology.

Not with the money.

Not with what everyone else seems to be doing.

Start with your life.

Ask:

> **If this opportunity succeeds, will it move me toward the life I actually want—or simply give me more work?**

That's an important distinction.

Imagine discovering an AI-enabled business model that could realistically generate another $50,000 per year.

Sounds attractive.

But suppose pursuing it would require managing another business, serving another group of customers, creating another stream of content, and spending another ten hours per week at your computer.

Is that a good opportunity?

Possibly.

But the answer depends upon what you're trying to accomplish with your life.

If you're in a season of aggressively building wealth, perhaps the tradeoff makes sense.

If you're trying to reduce your workload and spend more time with your family, perhaps you've just discovered a very profitable way to move in the wrong direction.

Money isn't the only form of value, and more isn't automatically better.

Before asking what an opportunity could give you, ask what kind of life it would create if it worked.

Success in the wrong direction is still the wrong direction.

2. GOALS — Does This Advance Something I've Already Decided Matters?

Next, compare the opportunity against your existing goals.

Ask:

> **Does this help me accomplish something I've already decided is important?**

This question is particularly useful for catching Shiny Object Syndrome.

Suppose you've decided that your primary business objective this year is to grow your existing company.

Then you discover an exciting AI tool that makes it dramatically easier to create mobile apps.

Suddenly you're thinking about becoming an app developer.

Notice what happened.

The tool didn't help you accomplish your goal.

The tool gave you a new goal.

That's a warning sign.

It doesn't automatically mean the opportunity is bad. Occasionally, something significant enough comes along that we should reconsider our goals.

But that should be the exception rather than our default response to every exciting technological development.

A much stronger opportunity is one that connects naturally to something you've already decided matters.

You're already trying to increase sales, and AI can help.

You're already creating videos, and AI can reduce your production time.

You're already serving customers, and AI can improve your support.

You're already building software, and a new model can accelerate development.

You're already pursuing the destination.

AI simply gives you a better vehicle for getting there.

That's very different from allowing every new vehicle to determine where you're going.

3. VALUE — What Tangible Result Could This Produce?

Now we become more practical.

Ask:

> **If I spend time, money, and attention on this, what am I actually hoping to get back?**

Try to make the answer concrete.

Perhaps it's:

- increased revenue
- reduced expenses
- hours saved
- better quality
- more customers
- audience growth
- a valuable new skill

- improved service
- reduced stress
- creative fulfillment
- meaningful personal enjoyment

Not everything needs to produce money.

Personal value is still value.

But you should be able to identify **why this deserves a piece of your finite resources.**

This question helps expose opportunities we're pursuing primarily because they're interesting.

There's nothing wrong with curiosity or experimentation. In fact, we'll deliberately make room for both later in this report.

But we should be honest about them.

If you're spending five hours playing with a new AI model because you find it fascinating, that's fine.

Call it exploration.

Call it education.

Call it recreation.

But don't automatically call it a business investment unless you can identify the business value you're pursuing.

4. LEVERAGE — Does AI Materially Improve the Economics of Doing This?

Next ask:

> **Does AI create meaningful leverage here?**

In other words, does the technology change the equation enough to make this opportunity substantially more attractive?

Perhaps AI allows you to accomplish in one hour what previously took ten.

Perhaps it allows one person to perform work that previously required a team.

Perhaps it makes something affordable that was previously too expensive.

Perhaps it gives you access to a capability you simply didn't have.

That's real leverage.

But there's another possibility.

Maybe you're pursuing something primarily because the technology itself is fascinating.

Entrepreneurs can easily fall into the trap of solving problems they didn't have simply because AI has created an interesting way to solve them.

We can spend three hours automating a task that takes five minutes per month.

We can build elaborate AI systems for businesses that don't yet have customers.

We can generate enormous amounts of content without asking whether anyone wants it.

We can create things simply because creating them has suddenly become easy.

AI's ability to make something easier doesn't automatically make that thing valuable.

The question isn't merely:

Can AI do this?

Ask:

Does AI improve the economics of something that is already worth doing?

5. DURABILITY — What Survives If the Technology Changes?

This question has become increasingly important because of the speed at which AI is evolving.

Ask:

> **If this particular tool, model, or technique becomes obsolete six months from now, what will I still have?**

Perhaps you'll have:

- a finished asset
- a functioning system
- customers
- revenue
- an audience
- intellectual property
- better judgment
- a transferable skill
- a deeper understanding of an important field

- a workflow that can be adapted to different technology

Those things have durable value.

On the other hand, perhaps you're considering spending 30 hours mastering the quirks of a particular interface that may look completely different six months from now.

That doesn't automatically mean you shouldn't learn it.

Sometimes mastering a current tool is necessary to accomplish something important today.

But recognize what you're investing in.

Generally, the faster technology changes, the more valuable it becomes to understand the **capability underneath the tool.**

Don't just learn a particular image generator. Learn visual communication and art direction.

Don't just memorize prompting tricks. Learn how to communicate intent clearly.

Don't just learn one automation platform. Learn how to recognize and design efficient workflows.

Don't just learn how today's AI agent works. Learn what should be delegated, what requires human judgment, and how to supervise automated work.

Tools will change.

The underlying capabilities often have much longer lives.

6. OPPORTUNITY COST — What Won't I Do Because I'm Doing This?

This may be the most uncomfortable question in the entire filter.

Ask:

> **What am I giving up in order to pursue this?**

Every yes contains a hidden no.

If you spend ten hours learning a new AI platform, those ten hours cannot also be spent improving your existing product.

If you launch another business, some portion of your attention will no longer be available to your current business.

If you add another social platform, you have created another place requiring content and attention.

If you spend Saturday building an AI agent, you don't also get that Saturday back.

And opportunity cost extends beyond business.

The thing you're giving up might be sleep.

Exercise.

Time outside.

A hobby.

A conversation.

An evening with your spouse.

An afternoon with your children.

Or simply the mental space that comes from not having another unfinished project hanging over your head.

This doesn't mean those things should always win.

Sometimes the right choice really is to work late, make a sacrifice, or invest heavily in an opportunity.

But the sacrifice should appear somewhere in the calculation.

One of the reasons Shiny Object Syndrome is so powerful is that the new opportunity arrives advertising its benefits while quietly hiding its costs.

Your job is to make the hidden cost visible.

7. TIMING — Does This Actually Require Action Now?

Finally, ask:

> **Does this opportunity require my attention right now?**

This question can save enormous amounts of time.

We often behave as though recognizing an important development creates an immediate obligation to act on it.

It doesn't.

A technology can be important without being important today.

A skill can be worth learning without being worth learning this month.

A business idea can be excellent without needing to become your next business.

A tool can be useful without requiring you to create an account this afternoon.

This gives us one of the most useful answers in the entire Opportunity Filter:

> **Not now.**

"Not now" is different from "no."

It allows you to acknowledge an opportunity without allowing it to hijack your current priorities.

Capture it somewhere.

Put it on a watch list.

Add it to a future-project list.

Schedule a date to reconsider it if necessary.

Then give yourself permission to stop thinking about it.

You don't need to make every good opportunity part of your present.

Now Make a Decision

After running an opportunity through these seven questions, don't leave it floating around in your mind.

Assign it an action.

There are seven useful possibilities:

IGNORE

This doesn't deserve further attention.

Delete it. Unsubscribe. Close the tab. Stop thinking about it.

Ignoring something intentionally is very different from failing to notice it.

WATCH

This may become important, but no action is required yet.

Keep an eye on it without investing significant time.

Let other people be the early adopters.

Sometimes waiting six months allows the market to tell you which technologies actually mattered.

UNDERSTAND

You need to know what this is and what it could mean without becoming proficient at using it.

This is an underappreciated category.

An entrepreneur may need to understand what AI coding agents can do without becoming an AI developer.

A business owner may need to understand a new marketing technology without personally learning how to operate it.

Awareness does not require mastery.

TEST

The opportunity looks promising, but you don't have enough information yet.

Run a bounded experiment.

Give yourself an hour.

An afternoon.

One project.

A small budget.

One measurable test.

Then evaluate the result.

The key word is **bounded**.

Don't let "testing" quietly become a three-week detour.

USE

The opportunity has passed the filter and solves a real problem.

Implement it.

You don't necessarily need to become an expert. You simply need enough proficiency to obtain the result.

Many technologies belong here.

MASTER

Occasionally, something deserves a much larger investment.

Perhaps it's central to your career.

Perhaps it creates a major competitive advantage.

Perhaps it's a durable capability that will compound over many years.

Perhaps it is directly connected to the work you most want to do.

Those are the things worth studying deeply.

The important point is that **very few things should reach this category.**

If you're trying to master everything, you're mastering nothing.

DELEGATE

Finally, an opportunity may be valuable without requiring **you** to become the person who executes it.

This distinction becomes increasingly important as technology expands what businesses can do.

Perhaps your company should use a particular AI workflow.

That doesn't mean you need to spend 20 hours learning how to build it.

An employee, contractor, specialist, or AI agent may be better suited to the task.

Sometimes the correct response to an important opportunity isn't:

"I need to learn this."

It's:

"I need to make sure this gets done."

Those are very different commitments.

The Opportunity Filter at a Glance

When something new catches your attention, run through these questions:

LIFE
Does this contribute to the life I actually want?

GOALS
Does this advance something I've already decided matters?

VALUE
What tangible result could this produce?

LEVERAGE
Does AI materially improve the economics of doing it?

DURABILITY
What survives if the technology changes?

OPPORTUNITY COST
What won't I do because I'm doing this?

TIMING
Does this actually require action now?

Then choose:

> **IGNORE → WATCH → UNDERSTAND → TEST → USE → MASTER → DELEGATE**

And once you've made the decision, move on.

That's important.

The purpose of the Opportunity Filter isn't to give you another complicated system to obsess over.

It isn't supposed to turn a five-minute decision into an hour of analysis.

Remember, we're also trying to escape **paralysis by analysis**.

For smaller decisions, you may run through the entire filter mentally in 30 seconds.

For something that could consume six months of your life or fundamentally change your business, you might sit down and work through every question carefully.

Use the amount of analysis appropriate to the size of the decision.

But get in the habit of filtering opportunities **before they become commitments.**

The world is going to keep presenting you with possibilities.

AI will keep creating new ones.

You don't need to stop being curious.

You don't need to stop exploring.

And you certainly don't need to stop taking advantage of new technology.

You simply need a better mechanism for deciding how much of **your life** each opportunity deserves.

Because the objective isn't to pursue every good opportunity.

It's to choose the right ones—and then give yourself permission to leave the others behind.

Part III: Building Your Personal AI Operating System

Chapter 5: Explore Without Getting Lost

One of the conclusions you could draw from everything we've discussed so far is that you should stop experimenting with AI.

That would be a mistake.

We need exploration.

The technology is changing too quickly to simply learn one set of tools and then ignore everything else for the next five years.

New capabilities will emerge that genuinely deserve our attention. Some will save us enormous amounts of time. Some will improve our businesses. Some will create opportunities we couldn't reasonably have anticipated.

And sometimes the only way to understand what's possible is to play with the technology yourself.

So the answer isn't to eliminate exploration.

The answer is to **put boundaries around it.**

I find it helpful to think about our work in two different operating modes.

Exploration Mode

Exploration Mode includes:

- learning
- experimenting
- investigating
- testing
- playing
- researching
- discovering what's possible

There's nothing wrong with any of those activities.

In fact, they may be essential to remaining competitive in an AI-driven economy.

The problem is that Exploration Mode can feel almost exactly like productive work.

You're sitting at your computer.

You're learning.

You're solving problems.

You're creating things.

You're discovering capabilities.

You may even be producing impressive results.

It feels productive because, in one sense, it is.

But there's an important difference between **exploring what could be done** and **finishing what you've already decided needs to be done.**

That's where Execution Mode comes in.

Execution Mode

Execution Mode includes:

- building
- selling
- publishing
- serving
- implementing
- delivering
- finishing

This is where ideas become outcomes.

If you're an entrepreneur, this is where the product gets launched, the customer gets served, the marketing campaign goes live, the sales call gets made, the book gets published, the system gets implemented, and the invoice gets paid.

Exploration creates possibilities.

Execution creates results.

We need both.

But they shouldn't be allowed to compete for our attention without boundaries.

When Exploration Masquerades as Execution

This is particularly dangerous with AI because exploration can easily disguise itself as execution.

Suppose you're supposed to spend the morning creating a marketing campaign.

While working on it, you discover a new AI tool that might help.

You watch a demonstration.

Then you create an account.

Then you test it.

Then you realize there's another tool people say is even better.

You compare them.

You watch a tutorial.

You experiment with some prompts.

Three hours later, you've learned quite a bit.

You may even feel like you've had a productive morning.

There's just one problem.

The marketing campaign still isn't finished.

This is the modern version of paralysis by analysis.

Instead of endlessly researching what we should do, we can now endlessly experiment with new ways of doing it.

The solution isn't more willpower.

It's structure.

Create an AI Exploration Budget

One of the simplest boundaries you can create is an **AI exploration budget**.

Decide in advance how much time you're willing to spend exploring new technology.

Maybe it's two hours per week.

Maybe it's Friday afternoon.

Maybe it's 30 minutes each morning.

Maybe your business currently depends heavily on emerging AI technology, so you intentionally devote considerably more time to it.

There's no universally correct number.

The important thing is that the amount is **chosen rather than accidental.**

Without a budget, exploration expands to fill whatever time you give it.

With a budget, you can explore without feeling guilty because you've already decided that this is a legitimate use of your time.

And when the exploration period ends, return to execution.

Schedule Experimentation Instead of Constantly Interrupting Yourself

Related to the exploration budget is the idea of **scheduled experimentation**.

Not everything interesting needs to be investigated the moment you discover it.

When you hear about an exciting new model while you're working, resist the urge to immediately open another browser tab.

Capture it.

Then return to what you were doing.

Your exploration period is when you investigate it.

This simple change can dramatically reduce context switching.

Instead of bouncing continuously between execution and exploration, you give each activity its own space.

Keep a "Not Now" List

This is one of the most useful tools for anyone prone to Shiny Object Syndrome.

Create a place to capture interesting things that don't deserve your attention right now.

Call it your:

Not Now List.

New business idea?

Put it there.

Interesting AI platform?

Put it there.

Skill you'd like to learn?

Put it there.

Potential automation?

Put it there.

Content strategy you'd like to investigate?

Put it there.

The purpose isn't merely organizational.

It's psychological.

Part of what makes it difficult to ignore an opportunity is the fear that we'll lose it.

"If I don't investigate this now, I'll forget about it."

The Not Now List gives your brain permission to release the idea.

You've captured it.

You can come back to it.

You don't need to carry it around mentally for the rest of the day.

And here's the important part:

Most things on your Not Now List do not need to eventually become Now.

Some ideas will become irrelevant.

Some tools will disappear.

Some opportunities will be superseded by better ones.

Some things that seemed urgent today will look surprisingly unimportant three months from now.

Time itself becomes part of your filter.

Limit Simultaneous Projects

AI makes starting projects dramatically easier.

Unfortunately, it doesn't make having 17 unfinished projects psychologically pleasant.

Consider establishing a limit on how many significant projects you're willing to have in active development at once.

Maybe it's one.

Maybe it's three.

The exact number matters less than having a number.

When you've reached your limit, a new project doesn't automatically get added.

Something else has to finish, be paused, be delegated, or be abandoned first.

This creates a useful rule:

> **A new project must compete with an existing project, not with empty space on a to-do list.**

That forces you to confront opportunity cost before adding another commitment.

Run Short, Bounded Experiments

Sometimes an opportunity passes enough of the Opportunity Filter that you genuinely need more information.

That's when you **TEST**.

But put boundaries around the test.

Instead of:

"I'm going to learn this new AI video platform."

Try:

"I'm going to spend 90 minutes using this platform to create one video."

Instead of:

"I'm going to investigate whether AI agents could help my business."

Try:

"I'm going to test whether an agent can successfully handle this one repetitive task."

A bounded experiment should ideally have:

a specific question, a time limit, and a stopping point.

Then evaluate what you learned.

Don't allow a test to quietly become a new hobby, project, or business without another conscious decision.

Review Technology Periodically, Not Continuously

There is another habit worth reconsidering: continuously monitoring everything happening in AI.

For most entrepreneurs, that's impossible now.

There are too many announcements, model releases, benchmarks, tools, updates, demonstrations, newsletters, videos, podcasts, social posts, and predictions.

Trying to stay completely current can become a full-time job.

And unless covering AI news actually *is* your job, that probably isn't the best use of your time.

Instead, consider reviewing developments periodically.

Maybe you have a weekly technology review.

Maybe it's monthly.

Maybe you rely on a small number of trusted sources to summarize what actually mattered.

This creates an additional benefit:

you allow some of the noise to disappear before you spend time evaluating it.

The tool everyone is talking about on Tuesday may be forgotten by next month.

Not every technological development needs to enter your consciousness in real time.

Controlled Curiosity

None of these boundaries are designed to make you less curious.

Curiosity is enormously valuable.

It helps entrepreneurs discover opportunities.

It helps creators make new connections.

It helps us understand changing markets.

And in an era of rapid technological change, curiosity may be more valuable than ever.

But curiosity needs a container.

The goal isn't **zero distraction**.

It's **controlled curiosity.**

Give yourself permission to explore.

Play with new technology.

Follow interesting ideas.

Experiment.

Learn.

Be amazed by what these tools can do.

But decide when you're exploring and when you're executing.

Decide how much time exploration deserves.

Capture opportunities that don't deserve attention yet.

Put boundaries around your experiments.

And remember that learning about work is not always the same thing as doing the work.

AI will continue giving us new things to explore.

Our job is to make sure exploration remains a tool for improving our lives and our work—not an endless destination from which we never return.

Chapter 6: Learn What Lasts

One of the most stressful questions in the AI age is:

What should I be learning right now?

It's a reasonable question.

When technology is advancing this quickly, nobody wants to be left behind.

But there's a problem with trying to stay ahead by learning everything.

You can't.

There are too many tools, too many models, too many capabilities, and too many changes happening simultaneously.

Worse, some of the things you spend considerable time learning today may become significantly less important a year from now.

Perhaps even a few months from now.

That doesn't mean we should stop learning.

It means we need to become more strategic about **what level we're learning at.**

Temporary Skills and Durable Capabilities

I find it useful to distinguish between two categories of learning.

The first is what we might call **temporary skills**.

These include things like:

- particular software interfaces
- prompt tricks
- specific workflows
- individual model quirks
- workarounds for current limitations
- techniques that exist because today's technology can't yet do something automatically

These skills can be extremely useful.

Sometimes they're necessary.

If a particular AI tool is central to something you're doing today, it makes perfect sense to learn how to use it effectively.

The mistake is assuming that today's technical proficiency will necessarily retain the same value tomorrow.

Think about how quickly AI interfaces are changing.

A complicated process requiring ten carefully constructed prompts today may become a single button six months from now.

A workaround you spent hours mastering may disappear when the next model solves the underlying problem.

A specialized workflow may become unnecessary when the capability gets built directly into the software.

A tool you become highly proficient with may be overtaken by something substantially better.

This is simply part of working with rapidly evolving technology.

So we need another category.

Durable capabilities.

These include things like:

- communication
- critical thinking
- strategy
- storytelling
- art direction
- sales
- understanding customers
- workflow design
- judgment
- delegation
- leadership

These capabilities don't depend upon one particular version of one particular tool.

In many cases, AI actually makes them **more valuable**.

Learn the Capability Underneath the Tool

Suppose you spend time learning AI image generation.

You could focus entirely on memorizing which prompts produce particular results in today's leading image model.

Some of that knowledge may be useful.

But underneath that technical skill is something much more durable:

visual communication.

What makes an image effective?

How does composition affect the viewer?

How do you communicate mood?

How do you maintain a consistent visual identity?

How do you recognize when an image is almost right but something still feels wrong?

How do you direct the technology toward the result you actually want?

Those abilities survive a model update.

The same principle applies elsewhere.

Don't just learn prompting.

Learn how to communicate your intentions clearly.

Don't just learn an AI writing tool.

Learn persuasion, storytelling, editing, and how to recognize good writing.

Don't just learn an automation platform.

Learn how to examine a workflow, identify bottlenecks, and decide which tasks should be automated.

Don't just learn an AI coding tool.

Learn enough about software, systems, and logical thinking to understand what you're building and evaluate whether it works.

Don't just learn how to operate an AI agent.

Learn delegation.

Learn how to define outcomes, establish boundaries, provide context, evaluate performance, and recognize when human judgment is required.

The tools will change.

The capability underneath the tool is much more likely to remain useful.

AI May Increase the Value of Human Judgment

There's another interesting consequence of increasingly capable AI.

As execution becomes easier, **judgment may become more important.**

If anyone can generate 100 logos, the advantage isn't necessarily being able to generate logos.

It's knowing which one is good.

If anyone can generate 50 business ideas, the advantage isn't generating ideas.

It's knowing which idea is worth pursuing.

If AI can write ten versions of a sales message in seconds, the advantage increasingly becomes understanding the customer well enough to recognize which message is most likely to resonate.

If AI can build several versions of a product, the advantage becomes knowing what should be built.

AI can dramatically increase the number of options available to us.

That makes the ability to **choose well** increasingly valuable.

This is one reason I don't believe the answer to AI advancement is simply trying to become faster than the machines.

That's a race we're unlikely to win.

Instead, develop the human capabilities that help you **direct, evaluate, combine, and apply** what the machines can produce.

Learn Tools as Deeply as Necessary

This leads to a rule I think is particularly useful:

> **Learn tools as deeply as necessary. Learn durable capabilities as deeply as possible.**

Notice that this doesn't say:

Don't learn tools.

If a tool is central to your work, learn it.

If deeper proficiency creates meaningful leverage, invest the time.

If mastering a particular technology gives you an important advantage right now, that may be an excellent use of your time.

But don't automatically turn every useful tool into a subject you need to master.

Sometimes basic proficiency is enough.

Sometimes you need intermediate proficiency.

Sometimes you genuinely should become an expert.

And sometimes you don't need to know how to use the tool at all.

You simply need to know that it exists.

"I Need to Know This Exists"

This distinction can save you an enormous amount of time.

There is a major difference between:

> **I need to know this exists.**

and:

> **I need to know how to do this.**

Imagine you're a business owner and discover that AI can now automate a particular administrative process.

You may need to understand that capability.

You need to know what's possible.

You may need to understand the approximate cost, benefits, limitations, and risks.

But do you personally need to spend 15 hours learning how to build the automation?

Maybe.

Maybe not.

Perhaps an employee should learn it.

Perhaps you should hire someone.

Perhaps an AI agent can help build it.

Perhaps the technology will soon become simple enough that there's little advantage to learning the complicated implementation today.

Being informed doesn't require being proficient.

And being responsible for an outcome doesn't require personally knowing how to perform every task involved.

This is particularly important for entrepreneurs.

Your job isn't necessarily to become the best operator of every technology your business could use.

Your job is to understand enough to make good decisions about **which technologies matter, where they should be applied, and who—or what—should implement them.**

Build a Learning Portfolio

You might think of your learning time as a portfolio.

Some of it can go toward today's tools.

You need practical skills that help you accomplish things right now.

Some can go toward emerging technologies.

You need enough exploration to recognize important changes.

But a significant portion should go toward capabilities with much longer shelf lives.

Learn your customers.

Learn your industry.

Learn communication.

Learn strategy.

Learn persuasion.

Learn storytelling.

Learn how systems work.

Learn how to think critically.

Learn how to lead people.

Learn how to make good decisions when the answer isn't obvious.

And perhaps most importantly, develop your judgment.

Those investments can compound across many different generations of technology.

You Don't Have to Keep Up With Everything

Finally, give yourself permission to not know everything that's happening in AI.

You will miss things.

You will hear about important tools months after other people started using them.

Someone on social media will always know more about the newest model than you do.

Someone will always have tested a feature you haven't tried.

That's okay.

The goal isn't to win a contest for being the most current person in the room.

The goal is to remain current **enough** to recognize developments that matter to your life and work.

Then go deep where depth actually matters.

The technology will continue changing.

Interfaces will change.

Models will change.

Techniques will change.

Today's best practices will become tomorrow's outdated advice.

So learn what you need from the tools of the moment.

But invest most deeply in the capabilities that help you use **whatever tools come next.**

Chapter 7: Decide Where the Saved Time Goes

One of the biggest promises of artificial intelligence is that it will save us time.

And it can.

A task that once took four hours might take one.

Something that required an entire afternoon might be finished before breakfast.

A repetitive process that consumed several hours every week might be automated almost entirely.

That's real progress.

But there's a question we don't ask often enough:

> **What happens to the time we save?**

Suppose AI saves you four hours this week.

Where did those four hours go?

If you're an entrepreneur, there's a good chance you already know the answer.

You worked on something else.

You created more content.

You improved the product.

You investigated another opportunity.

You learned another tool.

You started another project.

You found another problem to solve.

In other words, AI saved you four hours of work—and you immediately converted those four hours into **four additional hours of work.**

Your output increased.

Your free time didn't.

Saving Time Is Not the Same as Reclaiming Time

This distinction is easy to miss.

We often say that a technology "saves time" when what we really mean is that it **reduces the amount of time required to accomplish a particular task.**

What happens to the saved time afterward is a completely separate decision.

If a two-hour task becomes a 15-minute task, technology has created an opportunity to reclaim an hour and 45 minutes.

It hasn't actually reclaimed it for you.

You decide what happens next.

And without an intentional decision, work has a remarkable ability to absorb every minute we give back to it.

This is especially true for entrepreneurs because there's almost always something else that could improve the business.

There's another email to write.

Another campaign to create.

Another product to improve.

Another customer to serve.

Another system to build.

Another opportunity to investigate.

Another idea waiting.

AI makes it possible to move through that list faster.

But as we've already established, **there is no finish line anymore.**

So if you're waiting until everything is finished before enjoying the time AI saves you, you may be waiting forever.

Decide in Advance Where Your Productivity Gains Will Go

That's why I suggest making this decision deliberately:

> **Decide in advance where your productivity gains will go.**

Not every hour saved needs to become another productive hour.

Some certainly can.

Perhaps you're in an intense building season and you've intentionally decided to use AI to accelerate your progress.

Great.

If AI saves you ten hours, maybe you deliberately reinvest all ten into building the business.

There's nothing wrong with that.

The important word is **deliberately**.

In another season, perhaps your decision looks completely different.

If AI saves you five hours this week, maybe two hours go toward additional output.

One goes toward learning.

And two go back to your life.

You close the computer.

You spend time with your family.

You exercise.

You go outside.

You pursue a hobby.

You call a friend.

You read something that has nothing to do with your business.

You go fishing.

You rest.

Or you do absolutely nothing productive at all.

Those hours aren't wasted.

They're part of what the productivity gain was for.

Productivity Should Occasionally Result in Less Work

This sounds almost obvious.

But much of our culture around productivity points in the opposite direction.

We learn how to do something faster so we can do more.

We automate tasks so we can take on additional tasks.

We become more efficient so we can increase output.

We use AI to accomplish the work of several people—and then start looking for even more work worthy of our newly expanded capabilities.

Eventually, productivity becomes a treadmill.

The faster we become, the faster we expect ourselves to run.

There's another possibility.

What if one measure of successful productivity is that eventually you **don't have to work as much?**

What if automation doesn't merely increase the capacity of your business?

What if it decreases the amount of your life the business requires?

What if AI doesn't just help you produce more content, but allows you to spend less time producing content?

What if it doesn't merely allow you to manage more customers, but allows you to serve your existing customers well with fewer hours of your personal involvement?

What if it doesn't merely help you launch another business, but helps your current business operate without you being involved in every detail?

Those are productivity gains too.

Perhaps they're some of the most valuable ones.

Do More—or Need to Do Less?

This gives us another question worth remembering:

> **Am I using AI to do more—or to need to do less?**

Both answers can be good.

Sometimes we want more.

More output.

More customers.

More revenue.

More reach.

More creative possibilities.

More impact.

More opportunities.

AI can provide extraordinary leverage toward those goals.

But there are other things we may want more of too.

More time.

More freedom.

More sleep.

More health.

More presence with the people we love.

More experiences away from screens.

More room to think.

More margin in our schedules.

More life outside of work.

AI can potentially provide leverage toward those goals as well.

But only if we allow it to.

Don't Let Your Ambition Automatically Claim the Savings

There's a subtle trap here for ambitious people.

When we become more efficient, our ambition often claims the savings before the rest of our life gets a chance.

Save five hours?

Great. Now I can finally start that other project.

Automate something?

Great. Now I can add another marketing channel.

Create content twice as fast?

Great. Now I can publish twice as much.

Sometimes that's exactly the right choice.

But make yourself answer the question rather than allowing ambition to answer automatically.

Ask:

What does my business need right now?

But also ask:

What does my life need right now?

Perhaps your business needs those five hours.

Perhaps your health needs them.

Perhaps your marriage needs them.

Perhaps your children need them.

Perhaps you need them.

The Opportunity Filter applies here too.

Time itself is an opportunity.

Create a Productivity Dividend

One practical approach is to think of reclaimed time as a **productivity dividend**.

When an investment produces a financial return, you don't necessarily reinvest every dollar.

You might reinvest some and take some of the return for another purpose.

You can do the same thing with time.

When AI or automation creates a measurable efficiency gain, intentionally decide how much of that gain gets reinvested into additional productivity and how much gets distributed back into your life.

There doesn't need to be a complicated formula.

You don't need a spreadsheet tracking every 15 minutes AI saves you.

The principle is more important than the accounting.

Simply develop the habit of noticing when technology has given you time back—and resist automatically filling all of it.

The Ultimate Measure of Leverage

Earlier, we discussed the intoxicating feeling of being able to accomplish the work of ten people.

Perhaps someday that becomes 100.

Or 1,000.

But here's the question that matters:

What do you want that leverage to accomplish?

If the answer is simply "more," there will never be enough.

There will always be another level of output available.

Another project.

Another goal.

Another opportunity.

Another thing you could build.

But if your definition of productivity includes the life you're trying to create, the equation changes.

Maybe AI helps you build something extraordinary.

Maybe it helps you earn more.

Maybe it helps you reach millions of people.

Maybe it helps you create things that previously existed only in your imagination.

And maybe one afternoon it simply allows you to finish your work three hours early and walk away from the computer.

That counts too.

In fact, that may be one of the most important promises of this technology.

AI can help us **do more**.

But if we use it wisely, it can also help us **need to do less.**

The difference isn't determined by the technology.

It's determined by what we choose to do with the time it gives us back.

Part IV: Choosing What Season You're In

Chapter 8: Build, Leverage, or Harvest?

So far, we've talked about evaluating individual opportunities.

But there's another factor that should influence almost every decision you make:

What season are you in?

The right way to use AI isn't necessarily the same for everyone.

Someone building their first career or business may appropriately invest hundreds of hours developing new capabilities.

Someone who has spent decades building businesses, relationships, expertise, and assets may receive a much greater return from applying AI to what they already have.

Someone else may have reached a point where the most valuable thing AI can provide isn't additional output at all.

It's freedom.

These differences aren't simply about age.

They're about **life and business seasons.**

I find it useful to think about three broad seasons:

BUILD → LEVERAGE → HARVEST

These aren't rigid categories. You may move between them multiple times throughout your life.

You may even occupy different seasons simultaneously.

But understanding which season you're in can dramatically change how you evaluate the opportunities AI puts in front of you.

The Building Season

A building season is exactly what it sounds like.

You're accumulating.

You're building:

- skills
- experience
- expertise
- relationships
- businesses
- audiences
- intellectual property
- financial assets
- reputation
- career capital

This is often associated with younger people because many of us naturally spend our early adult years establishing careers and businesses.

But age doesn't define it.

A 55-year-old starting an entirely new career may be in a building season.

A 68-year-old finally launching the business they've dreamed about for decades may be in a building season.

And a 30-year-old who has already achieved financial independence may not be.

What matters is the objective.

During a building season, it may make sense to invest more aggressively in learning.

You might deliberately spend significant time mastering an emerging technology because you believe the capability will become central to your career.

You may experiment more broadly.

You may take greater risks.

You may work longer hours for a period of time because you're intentionally creating something you expect to benefit from for years or decades.

You may choose to reinvest most of your AI productivity gains into additional output.

That's not necessarily unhealthy.

It's a tradeoff.

And if you've chosen it deliberately, it may be exactly the right one.

The danger is remaining in permanent building mode simply because there's always something else you *could* build.

The Leveraging Season

Eventually, many of us reach a different position.

We've accumulated things.

We have experience.

Skills.

Knowledge.

Relationships.

Perhaps we have customers, an audience, products, intellectual property, businesses, capital, or a professional reputation.

This creates an extraordinary opportunity in the AI age.

Instead of asking:

What entirely new thing can I learn to do?

we can increasingly ask:

What can AI help me do with everything I've already spent years building?

This is the **leveraging season**.

And for experienced entrepreneurs and professionals, it may be one of the most exciting aspects of the current AI revolution.

Think about the difference between giving a powerful AI system to someone with no business experience and giving the same system to someone who has spent 20 years understanding customers, creating products, making sales, leading teams, and learning an industry.

They have access to the same technology.

But they're not necessarily starting with the same raw material.

Experience itself can become leverage.

The things you've learned over decades can suddenly be applied faster.

Ideas that once required a team may become achievable with fewer people.

Intellectual property can be repurposed.

Knowledge can be organized.

Systems can be automated.

Creative ideas that previously seemed too expensive or technically difficult can become practical.

Businesses can potentially operate with less personal involvement.

This can be an enormously productive season.

But it also contains a unique danger.

Because suddenly you may discover that you can build all the things you didn't have the time, money, team, or technical ability to build before.

That can make you feel like a beginner again—but now with decades of ideas waiting to be unleashed.

The temptation is to turn leverage into **more of everything**.

More businesses.

More projects.

More products.

More content.

More commitments.

More complexity.

The better question may be:

> **Which of the things I've accumulated deserve to be amplified?**

Leverage is most powerful when it's applied selectively.

The Harvesting and Legacy Season

There may also come a season when the objective begins to change.

Instead of primarily asking:

What can I build?

or:

What can I amplify?

you begin asking:

What do I want to preserve, enjoy, simplify, share, or leave behind?

This is the **harvesting and legacy season**.

Again, it isn't defined by a particular birthday.

And harvesting doesn't mean becoming unproductive.

It can be an incredibly creative and meaningful season.

AI might help you organize decades of accumulated knowledge.

Write the book you've always wanted to write.

Document your experiences.

Teach what you've learned.

Mentor others.

Preserve stories for your family.

Create art.

Build something meaningful without needing it to become another business.

Simplify existing companies.

Automate burdensome responsibilities.

Reduce administrative work.

Transfer knowledge to the next generation.

Or simply reclaim more of your time.

In this season, the question may increasingly shift from:

How can AI help me accomplish more?

to:

How can AI help me make the best use of the time I have?

That's a very different objective.

And it can produce very different decisions when an opportunity enters your filter.

The Same Opportunity, Three Different Answers

Imagine three people encounter the same emerging AI technology.

For the person in a building season, the answer might be:

MASTER

"This capability could become foundational to the career I'm building. I'm willing to invest 100 hours learning it."

For someone in a leveraging season:

USE

"This could dramatically improve something I'm already doing. I need enough proficiency to apply it effectively, but I don't need to become an expert."

For someone focused on harvesting:

DELEGATE

"This technology could simplify my business and give me time back. I don't need to learn it. I need someone—or something—to implement it."

Same technology.

Same opportunity.

Three perfectly reasonable decisions.

The difference is the objective.

That's why generic advice about what everyone "needs to learn" in the AI age is often misguided.

The right investment depends upon what you're trying to accomplish with this particular season of your life.

You Can Be in More Than One Season

These categories don't need to describe your entire life.

You might be harvesting in one area while building in another.

Perhaps you're simplifying a mature business while aggressively developing a new creative pursuit.

Perhaps you're leveraging decades of professional experience while building an entirely new skill.

Perhaps you're financially secure but deeply interested in creating something ambitious that has nothing to do with money.

That's fine.

The purpose of these categories isn't to put you into a box.

It's to make your tradeoffs more visible.

You might even intentionally define the season for a specific period:

For the next year, I'm building.

Or:

I've spent the last five years building this business. Now I'm entering a season of leverage and simplification.

Or:

I don't want another business. I want to use this technology to create, teach, serve, and reclaim time.

Knowing your season gives the Opportunity Filter context.

Seasons Should Change

There's one final danger worth recognizing.

Sometimes we continue living according to the rules of a previous season long after our circumstances have changed.

Someone who spent decades building may have developed habits around constant growth, learning, output, and expansion.

Those habits may have been exactly what created their success.

But eventually, the same habits can prevent them from enjoying what they built.

Likewise, someone who has spent years maintaining an established career may suddenly find themselves in a genuine building season again.

Perhaps AI has created an opportunity they deeply want to pursue.

There's nothing wrong with changing seasons.

The mistake is doing it unconsciously.

Periodically ask yourself:

What season am I actually in—and does the way I'm using AI reflect it?

Maybe this is a season to learn aggressively.

Maybe it's a season to build.

Maybe it's a season to take everything you've learned and multiply it.

Maybe it's a season to simplify.

Maybe it's a season to teach.

Maybe it's a season to create something you've always wanted to create.

Maybe it's a season to reclaim time.

And maybe it's some combination of those things.

There is no universally correct answer.

That's precisely the point.

AI gives all of us access to an expanding universe of possibilities.

But technology can't tell you which season of your life you're in.

It can't decide what this chapter of your life should be about.

And it can't determine what deserves the time you have left.

That's still your decision.

Conclusion: The Courage to Leave Opportunities Behind

We are living through an extraordinary moment.

Artificial intelligence is giving ordinary individuals access to capabilities that would have seemed almost unimaginable not long ago.

We can create faster.

Learn faster.

Build faster.

Automate more.

Reach more people.

Solve problems that once required teams, specialized expertise, significant money, or enormous amounts of time.

And the technology is still developing.

There will be more opportunities next year than there are today.

Probably more next month.

Maybe more next week.

That's exciting.

But it also means we need to let go of an idea that was never realistic in the first place:

We're not going to keep up with everything.

We're not going to learn every important AI tool.

We're not going to understand every new model.

We're not going to pursue every promising business opportunity.

We're not going to master every valuable skill.

We're not going to implement every useful automation.

We're not going to create everything we're capable of creating.

And that's okay.

The Goal Is Not Maximum Productivity

If there's one idea I hope you take away from this report, it's that the goal isn't to squeeze the maximum possible amount of output from your life.

AI may eventually make the amount you *could* accomplish almost incomprehensible.

But your life remains finite.

You still have today.

You still have this year.

You still have this particular season of your life.

And when it's gone, no amount of increased productivity can give it back.

So the objective isn't maximum output.

It's **intentional output**.

It's deciding what matters and using extraordinary technological leverage to help you accomplish it.

It's allowing AI to accelerate the work you've chosen without allowing the technology to continually choose new work for you.

It's recognizing the difference between something that's possible, something that's valuable, and something that deserves to become one of your priorities.

And sometimes it's allowing AI to help you finish your work sooner—and then actually being finished.

You Will Leave Good Opportunities Behind

This may be the hardest part.

Some of the things you choose not to pursue will be genuinely good opportunities.

Some might have made money.

Some might have grown your business.

Some might have become valuable skills.

Some might even turn into enormous successes for the people who pursue them.

You still don't have to pursue them.

That's the discipline required when opportunity becomes abundant.

Saying no to a bad opportunity is easy.

Saying no to a good opportunity because you've chosen something better takes courage.

The people who thrive in the AI age may not be those who discover the most opportunities.

They may be the people who become exceptionally good at **ignoring good opportunities in order to finish great ones.**

Use the Technology. Don't Serve It.

Stay curious.

Explore.

Learn.

Experiment.

Build.

Take risks when they're worth taking.

Use AI to multiply your abilities.

Use it to create things that previously existed only in your imagination.

Use it to build businesses, solve problems, serve people, make money, express ideas, and pursue meaningful work.

But also use it to automate things you don't want to spend your life doing.

Use it to eliminate unnecessary work.

Use it to simplify.

Use it to create margin.

Use it to reclaim time.

And when you've accomplished what you intended to accomplish, allow yourself to stop.

There will always be another tool.

Another model.

Another opportunity.

Another thing you could learn.

Another thing you could build.

Another thing you could improve.

Another thing you could do.

You don't have to do it.

Because ultimately, the great skill of the AI age may not be learning how to do more.

It may be learning how to choose what deserves to be done.

AI can multiply your output.

It can multiply your capabilities.

It can multiply your opportunities.

But it cannot multiply your time.

Spend it accordingly.

MY AI OPPORTUNITY FILTER

Before you chase the next tool, skill, strategy, or opportunity, run it through this filter.

1. LIFE

Does this support the life I actually want?

If this succeeds, will it move me toward the life I want—or simply give me more work?

My answer: _____

↓

2. GOALS

Does this advance an existing priority?

Does this help me accomplish something I've already decided matters—or am I creating a new goal to justify an exciting opportunity?

My answer: _____

↓

3. VALUE

What tangible value could this create?

Revenue? Time saved? Reduced costs? Better quality? Audience growth? A valuable skill? Creative or personal value?

Expected value: _____

↓

4. LEVERAGE

Does AI provide meaningful leverage?

Does AI substantially improve the time, cost, quality, or feasibility of something worth doing—or am I interested primarily because the technology is fascinating?

The leverage: _____

↓

5. DURABILITY

What survives if the technology changes?

Am I creating a durable asset, result, relationship, audience, or capability—or mostly mastering today's tool, interface, or workaround?

What survives: _____

↓

6. OPPORTUNITY COST

What am I giving up to pursue this?

What project, goal, relationship, activity, or portion of my limited time will receive less attention if I say yes?

The real cost: _____

↓

7. TIMING

Does this actually require action now?

Could this still be valuable next month, next quarter, or next year?

NOW / LATER / NEVER

MAKE THE DECISION

Don't leave the opportunity floating around in your head. Give it a destination.

IGNORE — It doesn't deserve further attention.

WATCH — It may matter later. Keep an eye on it without investing significant time.

UNDERSTAND — Learn enough to know what it is and why it matters. Proficiency isn't necessary.

TEST — Run one small, bounded experiment with a defined stopping point.

USE — Implement it to accomplish a specific result. Mastery isn't required.

MASTER — Invest deeply because this capability is important enough to justify the commitment.

DELEGATE — It should be done, but it doesn't need to be done—or learned—by me.

MY DECISION:

IGNORE | WATCH | UNDERSTAND | TEST | USE | MASTER | DELEGATE

IF I'M MOVING FORWARD:

What is the smallest useful next action?

Avoid turning a promising opportunity into a massive commitment before you've proven its value.

IF THE ANSWER IS "NOT NOW":

Where will I capture this so I can stop thinking about it?

Put it on your **Not Now List**, schedule a future review if necessary, and return your attention to what you've already decided matters.

> **A good opportunity does not automatically deserve your time.**

AI can multiply your output. It cannot multiply your time. Spend it accordingly.

Recommended resources:

AI Children's Book Maker – https://gptdash.com/childrens-book-maker-2500/

AiBizEngine - https://d4u.us/aibizengine

AiGrampa - https://d4u.us/aigrampa

GPTDash - https://gptdash.com/live/

ViralRevenueAi - https://viralrevenueai.com/

AiProductEngine - https://aiproductengine.com/

CourseMateAi - https://getcoursemateai.com/

Inner Profit Circle - https://realwebproperty.com/thrive/