Mindset180

THE OPTIC ADVANTAGE:

Asking Better Questions in the Age of AI

by Michael Callahan
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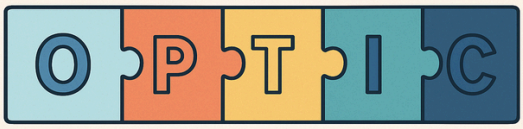
Executive Summary

Artificial intelligence is transforming how we work, make decisions, and deliver value. Yet the truth is simple: AI is not magic, it's a mirror. The quality of what you receive is a direct reflection of the clarity you bring.

Many professionals today are prompting AI tools the same way they search Google: short, vague statements with little context. That approach leaves enormous value on the table. AI is capable of amplifying your expertise and extending your capabilities, but only when guided by well-framed, intentional questions.

This white paper introduces the OPTIC Prompting Framework, a simple, repeatable structure for thinking and communicating in a way that AI understands. This framework helps professionals improve the clarity, consistency, and quality of outputs, while reinforcing the human judgment required to use AI responsibly.



It also provides a preview of AI Literacy & Prompting Fundamentals, a hands-on workshop designed to help teams strengthen their communication, decision-making, and problem-solving skills in an AI-enabled workplace.

The pages that follow offer a solid introduction, but the real transformation happens through guided practice. Think of this document as the map, and the workshop as the journey.

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Why Asking the Right Questions Matters More Than Ever

The most overlooked truth about AI is this:

AI is not replacing people. But people who understand how to use AI well will absolutely outpace those who don't.

And the difference between the two comes down to a single skill:

The ability to ask better questions.

In corporate environments, AI is often used reactively. People type something simple, "summarize this," "write an email," "analyze this data", and hope the model will figure out what they meant. But AI is not a mind reader. It does not know your goals, context, audience, constraints, or the nuances of your environment unless you tell it.

This leads to three common problems:

Vague prompts produce vague answers.

Without goals and context, AI must guess what you want, and it guesses wrong.

Inconsistent prompts produce inconsistent results.

Two people can ask the "same" question and get completely different outputs.

Over-reliance on the model produces underdeveloped thinking.

When you skip clarity upfront, you spend more time editing and fixing downstream.

Professionals today need a new competency: the ability to structure their thinking before engaging AI. This is not technical; it's cognitive. It's about clarity, intention, and communication.

This is where the **OPTIC** framework becomes your strategic advantage.

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Introducing the OPTIC Prompting Framework

Outcome

Perspective

Task

Information

Constraints

Where many prompting approaches focus on “tricks,” OPTIC focuses on thinking. It helps you articulate what you want, how you want it, and what boundaries matter, before AI ever generates a single word.

This framework is:

- Human-first. It enhances, not replaces, professional judgment.
- Tool-agnostic. Works with ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, or any future model.
- Scalable. Teams can use it for everything from simple messages to complex analysis.
- Repeatable. Produces consistent, predictable results; critical in a business environment.

The more complex the work, the more valuable OPTIC becomes.

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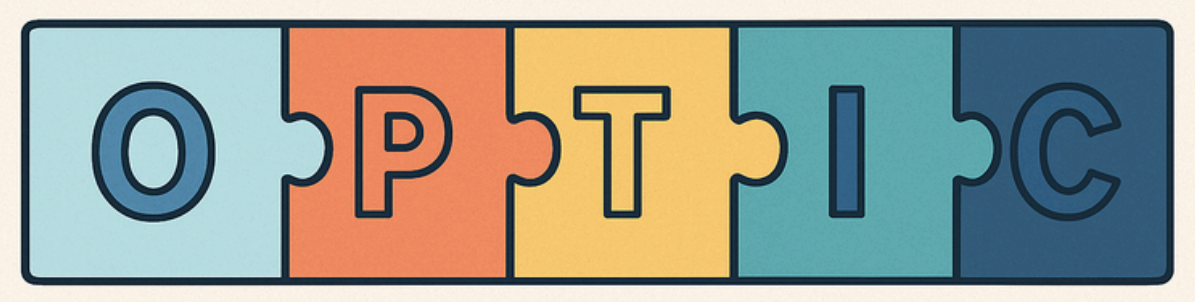
The OPTIC Framework, Explained



Below is a high-level overview of each component. In the full workshop, we break down real examples, templates, and practice exercises that make this a practical, everyday skill.

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Outcome

What are you trying to achieve?

Every strong prompt begins with clarity about the destination.

Most prompting mistakes happen before a word is typed. Without a defined outcome, the AI has no way of knowing what "good" looks like. Being explicit about the objective aligns the model to your intent and accelerates your workflow.

Examples:

- *"I want a draft email I can send to a stakeholder."*
- *"I want a risk summary highlighting the top three concerns."*
- *"I want a table comparing two strategic options."*

A clearly stated outcome sets the AI up for success and reduces the number of revisions you'll need later.

Perspective

Who is the speaker, and who is the audience?

Perspective shapes both voice and relevance. It guides the style, tone, and assumptions the AI should use.

In business, perspective is critical. The same message sounds radically different from:

- a program manager,
- a CEO,
- a technical lead, or
- a customer success representative.

Explicitly stating perspective ensures the output aligns with your role and your audience's expectations.

Examples:

- *"Speak as a senior program manager advising an executive sponsor..."*
- *"Explain this as if you're mentoring a new team lead..."*
- *"Write this for a non-technical stakeholder..."*

Perspective adds professionalism and precision to every deliverable.

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Task

What exactly do you want the AI to do?

This is your verb. The AI cannot intuit whether you want it to summarize, analyze, rewrite, evaluate, compare, brainstorm, or generate options.

Task clarity turns a general query into a precise instruction.

Vague Task:

"Help me with this document."
Result: unpredictable.

Clear Tasks:

- *"Summarize the key points in three bullets."*
- *"Analyze this for risks and opportunities."*
- *"Rewrite this in a more executive tone."*

The clearer the task, the cleaner the output.

Information

What does the AI need to know to do the job?

This is where most AI prompting fails.

AI models work best when grounded in real data. If you don't provide the necessary inputs, the model fills the gaps with assumptions, and those assumptions rarely match your world

.

Information may include:

- *emails, transcripts, or text*
- *requirements or user stories*
- *metrics or performance data*
- *role definitions or stakeholder profiles*
- *project timelines or constraints*

Providing the right information upfront makes the AI your thinking partner, not a guessing machine.

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Constraints

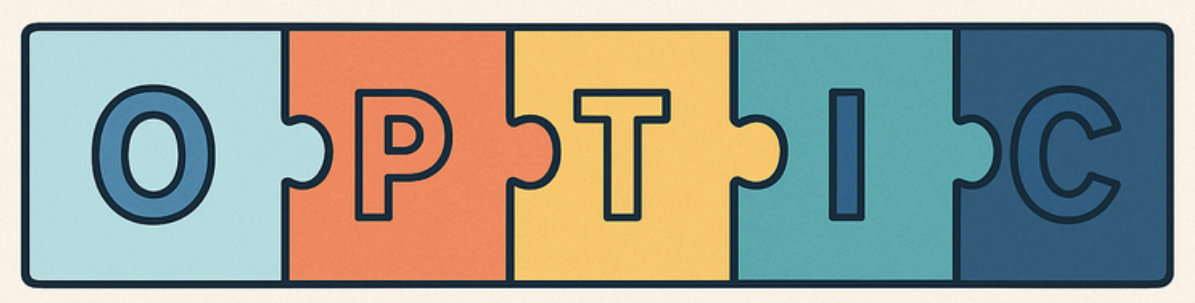
What rules, boundaries, or formatting requirements matter?

Constraints create focus. They ensure the output is ready for real-world use.

Common constraints include:

- *format (table, outline, email, 1-pager)*
- *length (150 words, 3 bullets, 1-minute script)*
- *tone (formal, friendly, concise, executive-ready)*
- *structure (problem → analysis → recommendation)*
- *level of detail (high-level vs in-depth)*

Constraints reduce revision time and improve professional consistency.



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About the Author

Michael Callahan

Michael Callahan is the Founder and CEO of Mindset180, a boutique consultancy focused on helping organizations thrive in a rapidly changing world. With over 30 years of experience across technology, program leadership, AI enablement, and large-scale transformation, Michael has coached leaders and teams in healthcare, financial services, digital entertainment, and beyond.
He is known for blending practical delivery expertise with future-ready skills, bridging the gap between human judgment and emerging technology. Michael's mission is simple: help people build the clarity, adaptability, and confidence they need to lead in the AI-enabled era.

If you're ready to build your team's AI capability and improve the quality, speed, and clarity of their work, we'd love to help.

👉 Visit: www.mindset180.com
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AI isn't replacing you.

But someone who knows how to use it well will.

Let's make sure that someone is you.

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