

Checklist for Founders

Ready to put AI to work for your brand's creative strategy? Here's a simple step-by-step checklist to help you get started. This framework can serve as a mini worksheet – feel free to jot down notes for each step as it applies to your business:

1. Define Your Brand Voice and Goals:

Before diving into AI tools, clarify what your brand stands for. What's your personality (e.g. playful, professional, compassionate)? Who is your target audience and what do you want to achieve with your campaigns (more sales, higher engagement, brand awareness)? Jot down a few key adjectives for your voice and a few concrete goals. This will guide all your AI-assisted work. Remember, AI is most effective when it knows the direction – your direction – it should go in.

2. Start Small – Pick One Task to Augment: Rather than overhauling everything at once, choose one area of your creative process to experiment with AI. It could be brainstorming ideas, writing a draft social post, or editing images. As experts advise, there's no need to revamp your entire workflow overnight; start with a single use case and see how AI performs for you. For example, decide that this week you'll use AI to generate captions for three Instagram posts, or to outline your next email newsletter. Starting small lets you learn and build confidence without overwhelming yourself or risking quality.

3. Use AI for Brainstorming and First Drafts:

Take advantage of AI's strength in idea generation and speedy drafting. If you often stare at a blank page, let AI give you a head start. Prompt your chosen tool with a specific request (e.g. "Give me 5 event promo ideas for a boutique hotel in spring" or "Draft a 200-word introduction for a blog about cybersecurity trends"). Don't worry if the output isn't perfect – it's easier to revise than to start from zero. By getting a rough draft or list of ideas from AI, you free up time to focus on the refinement and creative tweaking that only you can do.

4. Review and Refine the AI Output (Keep It Human):

Always review everything AI creates for you. This step is crucial. Check for factual accuracy, consistency with your brand voice, and overall quality. AI can produce awkward phrasing or generic clichés that need a human touch. As a rule, never copy-paste content directly without editing – read through and edit for clarity, accuracy, and tone. Make sure the content still sounds like you speaking to your customers. This is where you infuse personality or add examples only you would know. By acting as the editor, you ensure the final output is polished and authentic.

5. Integrate Brand Guidelines into AI Prompts:

When using AI, get in the habit of including a bit of your brand info in your prompts. For instance, you might prepend, “We are a fun, casual brand aimed at young moms” or “Using a confident, expert tone, write...” to your requests. Over time, also explore AI features that let you upload or save your brand guidelines. Training your AI tools to understand your voice, tone, and terminology will dramatically improve the relevancy of the output – the more detailed your input, the better the output you’ll get. Think of it as teaching your assistant: invest time in training now, reap consistently on-brand content later.

6. Create Multiple Variations and Test Them:

Don’t settle for the first idea or draft. Ask the AI for a few alternatives. Generate two or three versions of an ad copy, social post, or flyer design. Then either perform a simple internal review or run a small public test (like an A/B test in an email campaign or a social media poll) to see which version resonates best. AI makes it easy to get multiple options for the same campaign – use that to your advantage. Testing ideas in this way takes the guesswork out of your creative decisions and is now feasible even for a tiny team.

- 7. Automate the Repetitive Stuff:**
Identify repetitive tasks that eat up your time (scheduling posts, formatting reports, resizing images, etc.) and see if AI-driven tools or automations can handle them. For example, you can use AI to automatically remove backgrounds from images, format your copy for different channels, or generate weekly analytics reports. By automating the busywork, you'll free yourself to focus on strategy and big-picture creative decisions. Many platforms you already use (from social media schedulers to email marketing software) are adding AI features – explore those updates as they often integrate seamlessly into your current workflow.

- 8. Monitor Results and Learn:**
After deploying AI-assisted content or campaigns, keep an eye on how they perform. Use AI analytics if available to spot patterns (e.g. Did the AI-generated subject lines get higher open rates? Which version of the ad got more clicks?). AI can help summarize these findings – for instance, quickly telling you which keywords drove engagement. Take those insights and feed them back into your strategy. Maybe you learn that your audience prefers a more sincere tone than a humorous one, or that they engage more with certain visuals – adjust your future AI prompts and creative direction accordingly. This continuous improvement loop is where you'll see real growth.

- 9. Stay Ethical and Authentic:**
Lastly, ensure that using AI doesn't mean abandoning transparency or empathy. If you're in an industry where authenticity is paramount (pretty much everywhere these days!), make sure AI is helping you be more responsive and more personal, not less. Avoid any temptation to fully hand over, say, personal customer replies or sensitive communications to an AI without oversight. Keep your values front and center. AI is a tool to amplify your message, but the message should still come from you. As long as you use AI to support your vision and not replace it, you'll maintain the trust of your customers while scaling up your creative output.

By following this checklist, you can gradually integrate AI into your creative process in a way that feels manageable and effective. It's all about small experiments, consistent brand guidelines, and constant learning. Over time, these little AI boosts compound into a significant strategic advantage for your brand.