

HUMAN API.

TEXTBOOK EDITION · 2026

HUMAN-FIRST APPLIED AI

The Human API Workshop.

A course in putting AI to work without handing over your judgment. Eighteen lessons, a workbook you fill in as you read, and team activities for the board.

See · Sort · Choose · Apply For individuals and teams Brandon White

The Human API Workshop. Textbook edition, October 2026.

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About the cases. The running case (a consulting practice preparing for a 2 PM client call), the Ask B! letters and every person named in the examples are fictional and composite. Any resemblance to a real client, reader or very tired founder is the point of the exercise, and a coincidence.

About AI in this book. Tools change faster than textbooks. The book teaches the reasoning that outlasts any one product: what job AI is doing, how far AI may act, who checks the result and who decides. Where a lesson names Microsoft Excel or Miro, the steps work the same in comparable tools.

Companion materials. The printable companion (32 pages), the Working Companion workbook (Excel, ten sheets), the Miro board with mats M01–M09 and system maps S01–S09, and the card deck (56 cards, sets A–W).

Design. Set in Archivo and Newsreader, with Caveat for the handwriting. US Letter, 8.5 × 11 inches. Each text page carries a ruled notes column on the outer edge; use it.

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Four parts, eighteen lessons.

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PART 1 · SEE LESSON 1 OF 18

01

Start with the person.

Before you choose a tool, decide whose life the work is meant to support and what better would look like on an ordinary Tuesday.

IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL

1. Explain what “human-first applied AI” means, word by word.
2. State the three beliefs the Workshop is built on.
3. Name one recurring situation, the priority it competes with, and a result you would notice.
4. Write a baseline for the work as it runs today.

YOUR KIT

WHEN	Session 1 · 0:00–0:20 · Welcome and the idea
WORKBOOK	Printable companion pp. 1, 24
BOARD	Mat M01 · Map S01
EXCEL	Start C6:C9
CARDS	W · One situation

YOU LEAVE WITH A named situation and a baseline.

Builds on — · **Used again in** Lesson 6, Lesson 9, Lesson 10

Every system lands on a person. A shared calendar lands on the person who has to defend the calendar. An automation lands on the person who fixes the automation when it breaks at 2 AM. A new AI tool lands on the person who reads, checks and corrects everything the tool produces.

So this course does not start with a tool. The course starts with a person: their responsibilities, their priorities, the relationships they carry and the life the work is supposed to support. Only after that do we ask what should change, and only after that do we ask whether AI belongs in the change.

This first lesson sets up everything that follows. You will learn what the words "human-first applied AI" mean, the three beliefs the method rests on, and the rule that governs the whole Workshop. Then you will name the situation you will carry through the book and write down how the work runs today, before anything changes.

1.1

Human-first applied AI, word by word

The phrase is a category, and each word does a job.

Human-first means the starting point is the person, not a tool in search of a reason to be used. Before choosing anything, we ask what the person is responsible for, what they care about and what they want more room for. Their priorities set the direction.

Applied means put to work in real situations: preparing for a client conversation, organizing information, making a decision, reducing repeated work. Not a demonstration, not a prompt trick, not a pilot nobody uses after the first week.

AI is a central part of the work, and not the answer to everything. Sometimes the right move is automation. Sometimes the right move is a clearer agreement with a client, a decision someone has been avoiding, or simply saying no more often. The method treats all of those as legitimate answers.

The same thinking applies in two places. At work, the subject is how you prepare, advise and guide decisions with other people. At home, the subject is how you run your household, your time and your attention. The book moves between both on purpose, because the same person lives in both.

KEY TERM

Human-first applied AI

Putting AI to work in real situations, starting from a person's responsibilities and priorities rather than from a tool.

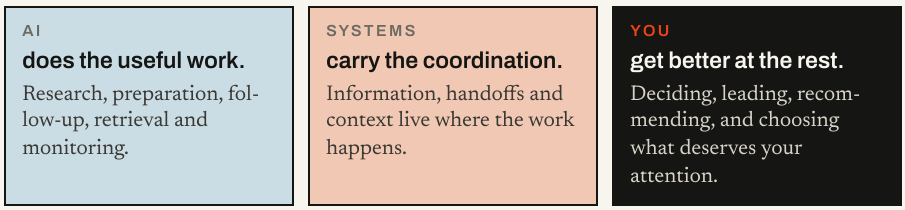


FIGURE 1.1 What Human API teaches. Three layers, each with its own job. Hold the vocabulary loosely for now; each layer gets its own lesson in Part 2.

The last line in that figure is the point of the whole course. The goal is not more work out of you. The goal is more capability, without making your whole life available to everyone else.

FACILITATOR'S QUESTION

Who here came for the AI, who came for the life, and who came for the people? Ask for hands. Most rooms split three ways, and most people raise a hand twice.

1.2

Three beliefs

Everything in this book applies three beliefs. When a later lesson feels like a rule, trace the rule back to one of these and the rule will make sense.

1. **Human-first applied AI.** The person's priorities set the direction. A change that makes a dashboard greener and a person more tired has failed.
2. **Systems should return capacity.** If a system creates more work than it removes, the system is failing, however impressive it looks.
3. **Automate after you understand.** We do not optimize a problem before deciding whether the problem should exist at all.

The third belief deserves its own section, because breaking it is the most common and most expensive mistake people make with AI.

1.3

Clarity before automation

Most of us have, at least once, taken a messy process and made it run faster. The process now produces the same confusion in half the time, with an integration nobody remembers configuring. Congratulations: you automated the mess.

Clarity before automation. Otherwise you are only faster at the wrong work.

The rule for the whole Workshop.

Clarity means you can say what the work is for, who owns the result, what good looks like, and what happens when the normal answer stops working. If you cannot answer those four questions, automation will not supply them. Automation will hide their absence for a while, and then the absence will reappear as an exception that lands on you.

This is why the book spends all of Part 1 on seeing the situation and most of Part 2 on sorting the work before a single AI job is written. The slowness is deliberate. The speed comes later, and lasts longer.

FACILITATOR'S QUESTION

Who here has automated a process they later wished they had simply stopped? What did the automation cost to keep running?

1.4

Who this is for, and who it is not

The method suits a particular kind of problem, and naming the fit early saves everybody time.

THIS IS FOR YOU IF	THIS IS NOT FOR YOU IF YOU WANT
• You already use AI, and too much of the work still starts and ends with you. • You have people, software or automations, and you are still where everything lands. • You carry real responsibility, and you have some say in how you work. • You care how the business runs, not just which tool is new. • You want more capacity, not just more output.	• A tool tutorial only. • Immediate lead generation. • Someone to build and run all of it for you. • A guaranteed financial result. • Prompt tricks that leave the way the work moves untouched.

The honest version. The Workshop gives you capability, tools and a decided first move. The Workshop is not the full infrastructure. If you need the infrastructure built, that is a different engagement, and a fine one.

1.5

Not faster. More capable.

Most AI measurement counts output: more drafts, faster replies, tasks automated, hours of labor removed. Those numbers are easy to collect and easy to celebrate. They also miss the result most people actually wanted.

NOTES

Name _____

ALLOCATION CHECKLIST.

First ask whether the work should exist. Then use these questions to split the task; one task can contain several destinations.

TASK A _____ TASK B _____ TASK C _____

		A	B	C	
1	Does it recur?	☐	☐	☐	check its value first
2	Does it carry identity, ethics, meaning or a consequential relationship?	☐	☐	☐	KEEP
3	Does it need your judgment, or only your memory, approval or presence?	☐	☐	☐	KEEP THE CALL, MOVE THE PREP
4	Is the standard written down?	☐	☐	☐	WRITE IT FIRST
5	Can a person own it, with context and authority?	☐	☐	☐	DELEGATE
6	Will it run the same way, in one place, every time?	☐	☐	☐	SYSTEMATIZE
7	Can AI prepare it, with a human check?	☐	☐	☐	PARTNER WITH AI
8	If none of these: should it exist at all?	☐	☐	☐	RETIRE

THEN NAME

Owner _____ Return trigger _____ Review date _____

HUMAN API · Workshop workbook · ALLOCATION CHECKLIST. · Letter 8.5 x 11 in · 0.125 in bleed · live area 0.5 in · page 11 of 32