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MESSAGE

from the
EDITOR



Iqbal Singh

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the August 2026 issue of the ForceNet E-Zine.

There is a comfortable myth that the professionals pulling ahead in the AI era are simply the ones who have memorized the cleverest prompts or bought the trendiest tools. However, the reality explored in this issue is far more profound: Artificial Intelligence is not replacing professionals; it is redefining what makes them valuable.

This month, our theme is "The AI-Powered Professional." Across the insightful articles contributed by our community, a unified message emerges: the tool is new, but the skills required to master it are not. As military veterans, we have spent decades practicing structured thinking, issuing clear directives, and making decisions under uncertainty. In his compelling piece, Col Vikrant Tyagi argues that the era of simply "operating" AI is over; today's professionals must become "orchestrators". He reminds us to stop prompting and start commanding, applying the same disciplines of Intent, Delegation, Verification, and Ownership that we would use with a tireless, literal-minded subordinate.

Building on this operational mindset, Brig Raja Bhattacharjee shares a highly practical framework from his own desk. He demonstrates how utilizing "Project Folders" with clear standing orders—acting as SOPs—transforms AI from a novelty chatbot into a disciplined project workspace. He wisely notes that while the machine delivers velocity, the human commander must still apply the final judgment and sign the order.

Furthermore, Sreya Das highlights that knowledge alone is no longer the key differentiator. AI compresses the time between information and action, allowing professionals to redirect their energy toward the distinctly human responsibilities of leadership, strategic judgment, and integrity. As Lt Col Omkar Kulkarni beautifully summarizes, AI clears the fog, but it does not replace your compass.

We are also proud to feature Col Hardeep Singh Ghuman as our Author of the Month. His consistent contributions to our Network remind us that while the landscape of the corporate world shifts, the foundational pillars of military discipline, adaptability, and mission focus remain our greatest assets.

The transition into the corporate sector asks you to bring your leadership into a new setting. By treating AI as a powerful force multiplier, you are not outsourcing your judgment; you are amplifying it.

I encourage you to experiment with the frameworks inside this issue and learn to confidently lead the team that never sleeps.

Happy reading.

Regards
Iqbal Singh
Editor, ForceNet E-Zine

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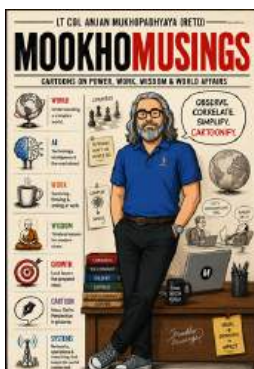
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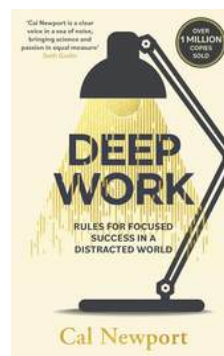
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ForceNet E-Zine Humour



The AI Powered Professional



Theme Section

Stop Prompting. Start Commanding

*The AI-powered professional isn't the one with the best tools.
It's the one who has learned to lead a team that never sleeps.*

By

Col Vikrant Tyagi, SM

B.Tech (Electrical Engineering) ·

MBA (Financial Management) ·

M.Sc. Data Science



The Booming Defence Sector Has Been Invigorated by the Recent Global Events

There is a comfortable myth doing the rounds: that the professionals pulling ahead in the AI era are the ones who have memorised the cleverest prompts or subscribed to the trendiest tools. It's a comfortable idea because it turns the whole thing into a shopping problem buy the right apps, learn a few incantations, and you're transformed.

The truth is less flattering and far more useful. The dividing line in 2026 is not between the tech-savvy and the technophobic. It is between operators and orchestrators — between people who use AI to type faster, and people who have learned to command it.

The Shift Nobody Announced

For two years, Generative AI was essentially a very fast intern with an enormous vocabulary. You asked; it answered. You still did the thinking, the sequencing, the stitching together. That era is closing. Through 2026 the frontier has moved from tools that say things to systems that do things software that can take

an objective, break it into steps, reach for other tools, check its own work, and come back with something finished. The industry calls this Agentic AI, but the label matters less than the shift underneath it: from assistant to agent, from copilot to colleague, from generating output to completing outcomes.

Here is what that means for you, whatever your trade: you are no longer operating a tool. You are running a team. A team that is tireless, absurdly well-read, and instant and also literal-minded, occasionally overconfident, and entirely without judgement of its own.

Sound familiar? Anyone who has ever led people knows exactly what to do with a subordinate like that. You give clear intent. You delegate bounded tasks. You check the work. You sign your name to the result. The scarce skill was never technical. It was command.

Command The Loop, Not The Keyboard



A Convergence of Defence and Commercial Technology

If there is one framework worth carrying into every AI-assisted task, it is four disciplines any good staff officer would recognise: Intent, Delegate, Verify & Own.

Intent. The single biggest predictor of a good output is not the model it's the clarity of the mission you hand it. Vague in, vague out. Before you type a word, get sharp about what "good" actually looks like: the audience, the constraints, the format, the standard you would accept. A muddled request produces confident, beautifully formatted nonsense and nothing is more dangerous than fluent wrongness.

Delegate. Don't hand the machine your whole job; hand it a task with edges. "Improve my business" is not a mission. "Draft three cold-email variants for this client, each under 120 words, no jargon, and tell me which one to A/B test first" is. Break large ambitions into steps small enough that you can tell, at a glance, whether each one was done right.

Verify. This is the discipline that separates

professionals from casualties. AI states its guesses in exactly the same confident tone it uses for facts. It can invent a statistic, a citation, a legal clause, or a software function that does not exist — and present all of them flawlessly. Treat every output the way you would treat a document drafted by a brilliant but junior chief of staff: you would never sign it without reading it. Check the numbers against a primary source. Check the claims against reality. The name on the deliverable is yours, not the model's.

Own. Accountability does not delegate. If the analysis is wrong, "the AI said so" is not a defence anyone respects. The professionals who thrive are the ones who use AI to do more, faster — and then stand fully behind the result as their own work, precisely because they earned the right to by checking it.

What This Looks Like On a Tuesday

Strip away the theory and it becomes quietly practical. Instead of staring at a blank page,



The Command Loop : Intent • Delegate • Verify • Own

you brief the machine and edit its draft turning two hours of writing into twenty minutes of directing. Instead of manually wrestling a messy spreadsheet into shape, you describe the mess and the shape you want, and let the tool do the grind while you audit the logic. Instead of guessing at a decision, you make the AI stress-test it: "argue the strongest case against this plan," "find the three assumptions I'm not questioning." You are not asking it to decide. You are using it to think harder than you could alone and then deciding yourself.

The compounding move, and the one most people skip, is to stop treating every task as a one-off and start building small, repeatable systems. The report you produce every month, the client update, the recurring data check: each is a workflow you can define once and rerun forever. That is where "saves me a few minutes" quietly becomes "gives me back a day." You no longer need to write code to do this. You need to think like someone designing a process rather than performing one.

The Paradox at the Centre Of All This

The convenient promise is that AI is the great equaliser that it flattens the gap between the technical and everyone else. That is half right. AI equalises capability. It hands everyone the same tireless staff. But it does not equalise judgement and, if anything, it magnifies it. Give a clear thinker a force multiplier and you get extraordinary leverage. Give a muddled one the same tool and you get mistakes at scale: produced faster, and dressed better.

So the rising, scarce skill is not knowing more tools than the next person. As the machines get better and better at generating, the human premium shifts decisively towards the things they cannot do: asking the right question, exercising taste, carrying accountability, and above all verifying what is true.

The pattern is already visible at the organisational level analysts spent 2026 warning that a large share of ambitious AI initiatives will be abandoned, not because the models failed, but because the unglamorous disciplines of governance, judgement and verification were skipped. That lesson scales down to the individual perfectly.

The AI-powered professional, then, is not the one who trusts the machine most. It is the one who commands it best clear in intent, disciplined in delegation, relentless in verification, and fully willing to own the outcome.

The tools will keep changing every few months. That posture will not. Learn to lead the team that never sleeps, and you will stay ahead of whatever it becomes.

About the Author

Col Vikrant Tyagi, SM is a serving Colonel in the Indian Army with over 27 years of distinguished service. He is currently posted at Mathura Cantt. An alumnus with B.Tech in Electrical Engineering, MBA in Financial Management, and M.Sc in Data Science, he brings a unique blend of operational leadership, strategic thinking, and technological insight to his work.

He writes regularly on leadership in the age of AI, military strategy, governance, and national issues. His work reflects a deep commitment to integrity, self-mastery, and the responsible use of emerging technologies for professional and organisational excellence.

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Col Vikrant Tyagi, SM

The Non-Technical Manager's Guide to AI-Assisted Decision Making

By
Lt Col Omkar Kulkarni (Retd)



A decision lands on your desk. Two options, a deadline, and no time to think it through properly. You go with your gut, the way you always have. It's not that your gut is wrong, it's that you now have a way to check it before you commit, and most managers still don't know it's sitting right in front of them....its AI

You don't need to know how to code to make better decisions with AI. You just need to know how to ask better questions. That's really the whole secret, and once you see it, you can't unsee it.

Most managers still think of AI as something for the tech team, the people who build the software, train the models, write the

algorithms. But using AI to think through a decision is a completely different skill from building AI. It's closer to having a very well-read, very patient colleague who never gets tired of your questions and never judges you for asking something twice. You don't need to understand what's happening under the hood any more than you need to understand an engine to drive a car well.

Let me walk you through a simple framework, one you can use starting today, on your very next decision.

Lay Out the Real Options

Before you touch AI, most decisions get made with two or three options in your head,

and usually the same two or three you always default to. The first thing AI is genuinely good at is widening that list.

Instead of deciding between Option A and Option B, ask AI to help you list five or six ways to approach the problem, including ones you hadn't thought of. You are not asking it to decide for you. You are asking it to stop you from missing something obvious because you were too close to the problem.

A simple prompt to try: "Here is a decision I'm facing: [describe it in plain language]. What are all the reasonable options, including ones I might not have considered?"

Build the Pros and Cons, Properly

Everyone does pros and cons lists. Almost nobody does them well, because we're biased toward the option we already like. AI has no emotional stake in your decision, which makes it a genuinely useful second opinion.

Ask it to build out the pros and cons for each option, and push it to be specific, not "saves time" but "saves roughly how much time, under what conditions." Vague pros and cons don't help you decide anything. Specific ones do.

A simple prompt to try: "For each of these options, give me specific pros and cons, not generic ones. Include what could go wrong and under what conditions each option works best."

A Quick Word on How You Ask...How to Engineer Your Prompt

None of this works as well if the question you ask is lazy. This is really what "prompt

engineering" means, stripped of the jargon, it's just the difference between asking a vague question and asking a clear one. "Help me decide" gets you a vague answer.

"Here's my situation, here are my constraints, here's what I've already ruled out and why, now help me stress-test what's left" gets you something you can actually use. You don't need a course in it.

You need the same habit good officers already have: give context before you give the question, be specific about what "good" looks like, and don't be afraid to follow up with "explain that differently" or "you're missing something, think again."

Treat it the way you'd brief a new staff officer: the more precisely you set the problem, the more useful the response you get back.

Run the Scenarios

This is where AI earns its keep. Before you commit to a decision, you can ask it to walk through "what if" scenarios, what happens if the budget gets cut, if the timeline shrinks, if a key person leaves, if the market shifts. You're essentially stress-testing your decision before reality does it for you.

This isn't about predicting the future. It's about not being caught flat-footed when things don't go exactly to plan, which they never do.

A simple prompt to try: "If I go with Option B, what are three realistic scenarios that could unfold over the next six months, one good, one average, one difficult? What would I need to do differently in each?"

Make the Call.....It's Still Yours

Here's the part people sometimes get wrong: AI doesn't make the decision. You do. It organizes the information, challenges your blind spots, and shows you the shape of the problem more clearly. But the judgment call, weighing what matters most to your team, your and your organization's Vision-Mission-Value, is still entirely yours. That's not a limitation. That's the whole point.

AI clears the fog; it doesn't replace your compass.

Why This Matters Especially for Military Professionals in Transition

If you've spent years in uniform and are now moving into security, risk, or project management roles in the corporate world, this framework should feel familiar, because you've been doing a version of it your whole career. Military planning is built on scenario thinking, course of action analysis, contingency planning, weighing risk

against mission objectives. You already know how to think this way. AI simply gives you a faster, lighter-weight tool to do it in a corporate context, without needing to learn a new technical skill from scratch.

For someone moving into risk management, this framework helps you quickly model different risk scenarios and their downstream impact, the same way you once war-gamed operational contingencies. For someone in project management, it helps you compare delivery options, stress-test timelines, and prepare for what could go wrong, the same discipline that once went into mission planning. And for someone in security, it helps you weigh trade-offs between different protective postures, resource allocations, and threat scenarios, structuring judgment you already have into a language your new organization understands.

The core skill was never really technical. It was disciplined thinking under uncertainty. AI doesn't ask you to abandon that. It asks you to bring it along into a new setting.



The One Habit That Matters More Than Any Tool

"The managers who benefit most from AI aren't the ones who master one tool perfectly, they are the ones who stay curious, keep experimenting, and treat learning as an ongoing habit."

If there's one thing worth remembering above everything else here, it's this: the tools will keep changing, and quickly. What works today will look basic in a year. The managers who benefit most from AI aren't the ones who master one tool perfectly, they're the ones who stay curious, keep experimenting, and treat learning as an ongoing habit rather than a one-time course.

You don't need to become a technologist. You need to stay a student. Ask questions of the tool the same way you'd ask questions of a new team member, with curiosity, a bit of scepticism, and a willingness to be surprised. That mindset, more than any specific prompt or framework, is what will keep you sharp as AI keeps evolving.

Good decisions have never really been about having all the answers. They've been about asking better questions, weighing your options honestly, and staying humble enough to keep learning. AI hasn't changed that. It's just given you a faster way to do it.

About the Author

Lt Col Omkar Kulkarni was commissioned into the Regiment of Artillery in 2005 and had over two decades of distinguished service. He served with elite formations including Parachute and Missile units, developing deep expertise in leadership and high-risk operations. Despite a non-technical background, he cultivated strong capabilities in technology and digital systems, leading multiple tech-driven initiatives.



Lt Col Omkar Kulkarni (Retd)

His experience is a strong blend of tactical and technical expertise. After 20 years of service, he opted for PMR to transition into the corporate sector. He holds a Risk Management certification from RIMS, USA, and is currently pursuing an Executive PG Programme in Advanced Project Management and Business Analytics at IIM Mumbai.

One Professional, Ten Times More Productive

By
Col PK Shrivastava

My AI Workflow from Morning to Night

I retired from the Indian Army in 2010 after 22 years as an EME officer. I have since led a real estate project as Vice President, headed Supply Chain Management at Apollo Tyres Ltd, and now run an independent consulting and wellness coaching practice. Three very different careers. One constant challenge: there are never enough hours in the day. That changed in 2024, when I began systematically integrating AI tools into every part of my working day. This is not a technology article. It is a productivity case study — told through a single working day.

The numbers tell the story first. Before AI, a full productive day required approximately 7 hours and 25 minutes of cognitive work across planning, communication, documentation, analysis, and learning. With AI, the same output now takes 1 hour and 33 minutes. The remaining 5 hours and 52 minutes every single day — I redirect into higher-value work, deeper thinking, client relationships, and the wellness practice that is my current passion. That is not a marginal improvement. That is a structural transformation of how I work.

Here is exactly how that day looks.

THE NUMBERS — A DAY IN COMPARATIVE PRODUCTIVITY

TASK	TIME WITHOUT AI	TIME WITH AI	SAVING	TOOL
Morning Planning & Briefing	45 minutes	8 minutes	37 minutes	Claude + Perplexity
Email Drafting (10 emails)	60 minutes	12 minutes	48 minutes	Claude + Copilot
Pre-Meeting Research	30 minutes	5 minutes	25 minutes	Perplexity
Meeting Notes & Action Items	20 minutes	3 minutes	17 minutes	Copilot / Tactiq
Report / Documentation	90 minutes	20 minutes	70 minutes	Claude
Data Analysis & Presentation	120 minutes	25 minutes	95 minutes	Claude + Copilot
Industry Learning & Research	60 minutes	15 minutes	45 minutes	Perplexity + Claude
Personal Planning & Wellness	20 minutes	5 minutes	15 minutes	Claude
TOTAL	445 minutes (7 hrs 25 min)	93 minutes (1 hr 33 min)	352 minutes (5 hrs 52 min)	

Based on author's own measured workflow | June 2026 | Tools: Claude, ChatGPT, Copilot, Perplexity, Gemini, Grammarly

0530 HOURS — THE MORNING BRIEF

 0530-0600	Morning Planning & Strategic Brief AI Tools: Claude (claude.ai) + Perplexity (perplexity.ai)
WHAT I DO	I wake at 0530 — a habit from three decades of military service that has proven to be one of my greatest civilian assets. Before AI, my morning routine involved scanning multiple news sources, checking emails, reviewing my calendar, and mentally constructing my day's priorities. This typically consumed 40–45 minutes before I was operationally ready.
AI DOES	Today, I open Claude and paste a single prompt I have refined over months: "I am an independent consultant and wellness coach. Give me: (1) Top 5 defence and supply chain news items from the last 24 hours relevant to my consulting practice, (2) My day's three priority tasks based on [context I provide], (3) One insight I should carry into today's client interactions." I use Perplexity to verify any news items with live sources and citations. Total time: 8 minutes. I receive a crisp, contextualised brief that would have taken a junior analyst 45 minutes to compile.
TIME SAVED	37 minutes saved daily = 160+ hours per year = effectively 20 additional working days

"The military taught me the value of the morning brief — situational awareness before action. AI has given every professional access to their own intelligence officer. The advantage is extraordinary if you know how to use it."

0600-0730 HOURS — EMAIL COMMAND

 0600-0730	Email Drafting & Communication AI Tools: Claude + Microsoft Copilot (Outlook integration)
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WHAT I DO	Email is the single largest consumer of professional time in civilian life. In my military career, we were trained to communicate with precision — bottom line up front, clear action required, no ambiguity. Civilian email culture is the opposite: verbose, indirect, and chronically unclear. Before AI, drafting 8–10 professional emails — to clients, prospective engagements, supply chain contacts, wellness programme participants — consumed 55–60 minutes of careful writing time.
AI DOES	Now I dictate or bullet-point the key points I want to convey, paste them into Claude with the instruction: "Draft a professional email for [recipient type and context], concise, clear, warm but authoritative. Maximum 150 words." Claude drafts. I review, adjust tone where needed, and send. For routine responses, Microsoft Copilot in Outlook drafts directly from context. My quality has actually improved — the drafts are consistently more precise than my unassisted writing because the prompt forces me to clarify my own thinking before I write.
TIME SAVED	48 minutes saved daily = 208 hours per year — the equivalent of 26 working days

0900–1200 HOURS — THE MEETING THEATRE

 0900–1200	Pre-Meeting Research & Post-Meeting Action AI Tools: Perplexity + Microsoft Copilot (Teams) + Claude
WHAT I DO	Meetings are where professional reputations are built or eroded. A consultant who walks into a client meeting without current, specific knowledge of the client's sector, recent developments, and competitive landscape is at a structural disadvantage. Before AI, pre-meeting research took 25–30 minutes per meeting. Post-meeting, capturing notes and drafting action items took another 20 minutes.

AI DOES	Pre-meeting: I run a Perplexity search — "Give me the 5 most significant developments in [client's sector] in the last 30 days, with sources." Five minutes. I enter the meeting with intelligence. Post-meeting: I paste my rough notes into Claude: "Convert these notes into: (1) Structured meeting summary, (2) Action items with responsible persons and deadlines, (3) Follow-up email to participants." Three minutes. Copilot in Teams can now do this automatically from a live meeting transcript. The output quality exceeds what I produced manually after 20 minutes of effort.
TIME SAVED	TIME SAVED

1200–1400 HOURS — DOCUMENTATION & REPORTS

 1200–1400	Consulting Reports & Documentation AI Tools: Claude (long-form analysis) + Grammarly (inline editing)
WHAT I DO	Consulting is, at its core, a documentation business. The quality of a consultant's written output directly determines the perceived value of their advice. Before AI, drafting a consulting report — structured argument, data integration, recommendations, executive summary — consumed 90 minutes to 2 hours for a standard deliverable. For a senior officer trained to write Operations Orders and Staff Papers, the discipline was there; the time was not.
AI DOES	Now I structure my thinking with bullet points — the key findings, the logical flow, the recommendations — and instruct Claude: "Using these bullet points as the analytical framework, write a professional consulting report of approximately 800 words. Tone: authoritative but accessible. Audience: senior corporate leadership." The draft arrives in 90 seconds. I spend 15–20 minutes refining, adding proprietary insights, and adjusting to my voice. Grammarly catches any tone or clarity issues inline. The final document is superior to what I produced alone in 90 minutes.

TIME SAVED	70 minutes saved per report = across 20 monthly reports, that is 23 hours per month
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"An Operations Order is a structured analytical document with a clear objective, enumerated tasks, and contingency planning. Every consulting report follows the same architecture. AI does the formatting. I provide the judgment."

1400–1600 HOURS — ANALYSIS & PRESENTATIONS

 1400–1600	Data Analysis & Presentation Building AI Tools: Claude (data interpretation) + Copilot in Excel & PowerPoint
WHAT I DO	Analysis and presentations are the two activities where AI delivers its most dramatic return in consulting work. Before AI, taking raw data — supply chain metrics, market figures, client performance data — and converting it into a coherent analytical narrative with a polished presentation consumed 2 hours at minimum. This was the work that most delayed client deliverables.
AI DOES	Now: I paste data into Claude with the instruction: "Analyse this data. Identify the three most significant trends, flag any anomalies, and suggest what a senior supply chain leader should do about each." Claude's analytical output in 60 seconds matches the quality of a 30-minute manual analysis. For presentations, Copilot in PowerPoint converts a Word document outline into a formatted slide deck in under 3 minutes. I refine the messaging and design. The client receives a cleaner, more consistent deck — faster. This alone has changed the economics of my consulting practice.
TIME SAVED	95 minutes saved per analysis-presentation cycle — this is where AI delivers its highest hourly return

1700–1800 HOURS — CONTINUOUS LEARNING

 1700–1800	Industry Learning & Professional Development AI Tools: Perplexity + Claude (summarisation & synthesis)
WHAT I DO	One of the hardest disciplines for any professional is maintaining current knowledge across multiple domains simultaneously. As a consultant spanning supply chain, defence, and wellness, I need to stay current across three sectors — each of which produces enormous volumes of content daily. Before AI, this required 60 minutes of reading, most of which produced marginal return because I could not process it at the pace required.
AI DOES	Now I use Perplexity to pull the week's significant developments across my three domains with cited sources — 5 minutes. I paste the key articles into Claude: "Summarise this in 5 bullet points. Then tell me: what does a supply chain consultant / wellness coach / defence sector advisor need to do differently based on this?" I get synthesised, actionable intelligence in 10 minutes. What used to take 60 minutes of reading now takes 15 minutes and produces better retention because Claude forces synthesis, not just consumption.
TIME SAVED	45 minutes saved daily — this compounds into genuine expertise advantage over peers who read without synthesis

1900–2000 HOURS — PERSONAL LIFE & WELLNESS

 1900–2000	Personal Planning, Wellness Coaching & Family AI Tools: Claude (wellness programme planning + personal scheduling)
WHAT I DO	The final and most personally meaningful application of AI in my day is in my wellness coaching practice and personal life. Designing individual wellness programmes — incorporating physical, mental, and nutritional elements tailored to a specific client's profile, goals, and constraints — previously required 20–25 minutes of structured thinking per client per week. Multiply that across my client base and the time demand was significant.
AI DOES	Now I describe the client's profile, goals, current state, and constraints to Claude, and ask it to draft a weekly wellness framework. I review, apply my professional judgment and personal coaching relationship knowledge, and refine. The output is consistently well-structured and I spend my time on the human elements — motivation, accountability, empathy — rather than programme architecture. For personal planning, Claude helps me batch weekly priorities, draft family communication, and even plan photography outings. AI handles the structure. I bring the life.
TIME SAVED	15 minutes saved daily — but the quality improvement in client outcomes is the real return here

THE AI TOOLKIT — WHAT I ACTUALLY USE AND WHY

Your Starter Kit: Six Tools, One Transformed Day

The question I receive most often from fellow veterans and consulting colleagues is: "Where do I start?" The answer is not to adopt every tool simultaneously. It is to start with one, master it, and add the next. Here is my current stack, with honest assessments:

AI TOOL	ACCESS	BEST FOR	COST (APPROX)	RATING
Claude	claude.ai	Long documents, analysis, writing, strategy, complex reasoning	₹1,700/month (Pro)	★★★★★
ChatGPT	chat.openai.com	Versatile tasks, content creation, brainstorming, image generation	₹1,700/month (Plus)	★★★★☆
Microsoft Copilot	microsoft.com/copilot	Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Teams — Office automation	₹2,500/month (M365)	★★★★★
Google Gemini	gemini.google.com	Research, Gmail, Docs, Sheets — Google Workspace integration	₹1,700/month (Advanced)	★★★★☆
Perplexity	perplexity.ai	Real-time research with cited sources, fact-checking, news	₹1,700/month (Pro)	★★★★★
Grammarly	grammarly.com	Email and document editing, tone, clarity — works inline	₹1,000/month (Pro)	★★★★☆

THE AI TOOLKIT — WHAT I ACTUALLY USE AND WHY

Your Starter Kit: Six Tools, One Transformed Day

The question I receive most often from fellow veterans and consulting colleagues is: "Where do I start?" The answer is not to adopt every tool simultaneously. It is to start with one, master it, and add the next. Here is my current stack, with honest assessments:

AI TOOL	ACCESS	BEST FOR	COST (APPROX)	RATING
Claude	claude.ai	Long documents, analysis, writing, strategy, complex reasoning	₹1,700/month (Pro)	★★★★★
ChatGPT	chat.openai.com	Versatile tasks, content creation, brainstorming, image generation	₹1,700/month (Plus)	★★★★☆
Microsoft Copilot	microsoft.com/copilot	Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Teams — Office automation	₹2,500/month (M365)	★★★★★
Google Gemini	gemini.google.com	Research, Gmail, Docs, Sheets — Google Workspace integration	₹1,700/month (Advanced)	★★★★☆
Perplexity	perplexity.ai	Real-time research with cited sources, fact-checking, news	₹1,700/month (Pro)	★★★★★
Grammarly	grammarly.com	Email and document editing, tone, clarity — works inline	₹1,000/month (Pro)	★★★★☆

Prices approximate as of June 2026. Most tools offer free tiers — start there before committing to paid plans.

THE VETERAN ADVANTAGE

Why Military Training Makes You a Superior AI User

Here is the insight that most productivity articles about AI miss entirely: the quality of AI output is directly proportional to the quality of the prompt you provide. And prompt quality is, at its core, a function of analytical clarity — the ability to define a problem precisely, specify the constraints, and state the desired output unambiguously.

This is exactly what military training produces. Writing an Operations Order, a Staff Paper, or an intelligence assessment requires precision of thought, clarity of expression, and disciplined structure. Every officer who has written a Five Paragraph Order has learned the foundational skill of effective AI prompting: define the situation, state the mission, enumerate the tasks, identify constraints, and specify the desired end state.

The result is that veterans who engage with AI tools seriously become disproportionately effective with them — faster than most civilian professionals — because the cognitive discipline is already there. What remains is simply learning which tool to use for which task, and building the habit of reaching for the AI before reaching for the keyboard.

"The Army trained me to think before I write — to know exactly what I need before I ask for it. That is precisely the skill that unlocks the full power of AI. Veterans are not behind on this. With the right introduction, they are ahead."

FOR THE VETERAN JUST STARTING

Your 30-Day AI Adoption Battle Plan

Week 1 — Start with Email

Open a free Claude account at claude.ai. For one week, before writing any email, paste your bullet points into Claude and ask it to draft. Review. Send. Notice the time saved and the quality improvement. Nothing else. Just emails.

Week 2 — Add Morning Intelligence

Add a daily Perplexity search. Every morning: "What are the top 5 developments in [your sector] in the last 24 hours?" Five minutes. You will arrive at every conversation better informed than your peers.

Week 3 — Documentation

Paste your next report's bullet points into Claude. Ask for a structured draft. Spend 20 minutes refining instead of 90 minutes writing. Measure the time. Feel the difference.

Week 4 — Meeting Intelligence

Before your next important meeting, run a Perplexity research prompt on the topic. After the

meeting, paste your notes into Claude for a structured summary. You have now adopted the four highest-return AI habits in professional life.

The question I hear most from fellow veterans is: "Is AI going to replace professionals like us?" The answer is no. AI is going to replace professionals who do not use AI — and turbocharge those who do. In the Army, we always sought to multiply force. A well-placed artillery battery does not replace infantry — it multiplies their effectiveness by an order of magnitude. AI is the most powerful force multiplier ever made available to a civilian professional. And unlike most force multipliers, it is affordable, immediately accessible, and requires no procurement committee approval.

I am one professional. I now operate with the output of ten. That is not the future of work. That is the present — for those willing to learn the new weapon system.

The mission, as always, is yours. AI is simply your most capable new subordinate.

One Professional. Ten Times More Productive. The AI advantage is available right now — to every veteran willing to issue themselves new orders.

About the Author

Col Pranav Kumar Shrivastava (Retd) is a former Indian Army EME officer from the 65 Technical Course, commissioned in June 1988. A gun-qualified officer, he earned his ME (Mechanical) from IAT Girinagar, standing first in order of merit at Pune University in October 1998.

Post-retirement, he worked in Supply Chain Management at Apollo Tyres Ltd. He now works as an Independent Consultant and Wellness Coach, and actively uses AI tools to multiply his professional output.

He is an avid photographer and writes on defence, leadership, veteran transition, and the future of work.



Col Pranav Kumar Shrivastava (Rtd)

Project Folders, Not Prompt Tricks

A Field Note on Building AI Context

By
Brig Raja Bhattacharjee

In a world overflowing with AI hacks, another list of tools would be pointless. What may be more useful is a field note from one working professional's desk. In that spirit, I will focus on one simple framework that has worked for me: creating long-term context in my interaction with AI.

I mention ChatGPT in this piece, but the same approach can apply to Claude, Gemini, or even open-source models.

Project Folders

Two years ago, I used ChatGPT like an intelligent clerk. I would ask a question. It would give an answer. Sometimes the answer was useful. Sometimes it was confident nonsense. Often it was impressive for five minutes and unusable after ten. That is probably how many professionals first experience AI. It feels clever, but not yet dependable.

The change in my own work did not come from discovering a magical prompt. It came from a quieter shift. I stopped using ChatGPT as a one-off chatbot and started using it as a project workspace.

A chatbot answers the question in front of it. A project workspace slowly accumulates context, files, corrections, preferences, and working discipline. In my case, the most useful AI productivity tool has not been an exotic agent, a local model, or an automation

framework. It has been the humble project folder.

That may sound basic. It is not. Most productivity gains are not hiding in advanced tools. They are hiding in better habits.

The Folder Is Not the Point

A project folder is useful because it keeps related work together. One folder may be for writing. Another for consulting work. Another for technical exploration. A fourth for investing. But the folder itself is only a container.

The real value begins when the folder starts carrying memory: old drafts, earlier discussions, uploaded documents, decisions already taken, preferred formats, mistakes already corrected, and standards already explained.

Before project folders, every serious AI conversation felt like an exhausting morning guard mount. You had to brief the assistant from scratch every single time: the background, the target audience, the tone, the constraints, and the specific pitfalls to avoid. It was like briefing a brand-new staff officer every single morning.

A project folder reduces that friction. It does not make the AI wise. It does not remove the need for supervision. But it helps the conversation begin from a higher level. For

me, that has been the real productivity gain.

The Folder Needs Standing Orders

A folder becomes genuinely useful only when it has instructions. In military terms, the instruction set is the folder's SOP.

- For my writing folder, the instructions are editorial. I tell the AI to challenge weak framing, avoid decorative prose, preserve my voice, look for the central argument before drafting, and not end with a motivational flourish.
- For a consulting folder, the instructions are different: Separate facts from assumptions. Do not invent data. Flag missing information. Identify stakeholder impact. Keep the tone professional. Do not make a weak argument sound stronger than it is.
- For a technical-learning folder, the instructions change again: Explain steps clearly. Mark uncertainty. Distinguish tested conclusions from speculation. Give commands only when necessary. Warn where errors may occur.
- For an investing folder, the instruction set is even stricter: Treat capital as hard-

earned money; separate data, thesis, valuation, risk, and emotion; show downside before upside; compare every action with the option of doing nothing; challenge confirmation bias when I already own the asset; and never convert hope into a recommendation.

- For a health folder, the instruction set must be careful: Treat reports as longitudinal data, not isolated events; extract every measurable marker; preserve one-off findings; compare only like with like; flag trends and outliers; do not diagnose; and separate facts, interpretations, and questions for the doctor.

This is where the folder begins to acquire character. It is no longer merely storing chats. It is carrying doctrine.

The useful trick is that AI can help create the doctrine itself. I may begin with a rough instruction: "This project is for writing essays. Challenge me. Preserve my voice. Do not draft too early. Help me find the central argument." Then I ask ChatGPT to convert that into a clean instruction set.



1: Indicative Project Folders



2: Folder-level Instructions

The first version is never final. After a few weeks, I notice where the assistant is still going wrong. Then I update the instructions:

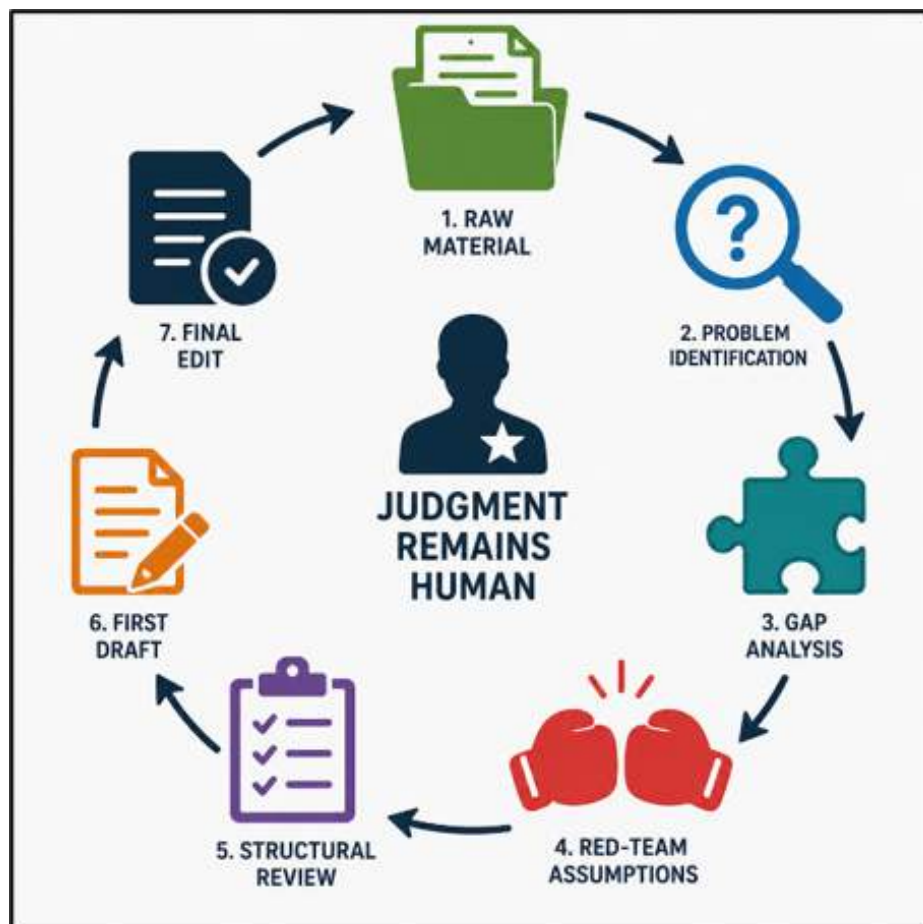
- “Do not add a second theme unless it strengthens the main argument.”
- “Do not produce a full draft before testing the structure.”
- “When reviewing my work, be direct. Mark where the piece is structurally weak.”

This is familiar territory. SOPs also improve after contact with reality.

My Actual Workflow

For serious work, I rarely order a draft immediately—that almost always guarantees average, uninspired output. Instead, the loop looks like this:

1. **Raw Material:** Lay out the raw, unedited notes, documents, constraints, and scattered thoughts.
2. **Problem Identification:** Task the AI to isolate the core issue or primary friction point.
3. **Gap Analysis:** Ask what critical context, data, or perspective is currently missing.
4. **Red-Teaming Assumptions:** Force the model to challenge my baseline arguments.
5. **Structural Review:** Develop and iterate on the outline until the spine of the piece is stable.
6. **The First Draft:** Only now do I request a draft, treated strictly as a "first note on the file."
7. **Final Edit:** The machine handles the heavy lifting of initial structure; the human applies the final judgment and signature.



3: Suggested workflow

This loop has changed my work more than any single prompt. It helps when I am preparing a note, reviewing a proposal, converting scattered thoughts into an article, drafting a risk register, or thinking through a project plan.

The machine delivers velocity, not command judgment. The AI may draft the staff paper, but the commander still signs the order. That line of accountability cannot be blurred.

NotebookLM: My Reading Room

I also use Google NotebookLM, but for a different purpose. ChatGPT helps me think across context. NotebookLM helps me stay anchored to source material.

When I upload reports, PDFs, policies, or reference documents, NotebookLM becomes useful as a disciplined reading room. It helps me ask questions from within that body of material. I do not use it as a creative partner. I use it when I want the answer to remain close to the source.

That distinction is important. There are times when one wants exploration. There are times when one wants discipline. These are not the same requirement.

A Word to Fellow Veterans

Veterans should not approach AI as if they are entering alien territory. The habits required are already familiar to us: clear tasking, context setting, rigorous staff checks, red-teaming, confidentiality, and accountability. A vague prompt produces a

vague answer, just as vague intent produces poor execution.

A well-briefed AI assistant performs better simply because it has been given intent, background, constraints, and a defined output format. This is classic staff work.

But there is one crucial caution. In our world, bad staff work has consequences. While a new user might see a hallucinated fact as a minor software glitch, a veteran knows that a polished presentation masking flawed assumptions is an operational liability. Treat AI output the way you would treat unverified intelligence from an unvetted source: cross-examine it, verify the coordinates, and never let fluency of delivery blind you to lack of substance.

That is why the professional must remain in command of the process.

Do not begin with twenty tools. Begin with one workflow. Choose a part of your work that is repetitive, language-heavy, or structure-heavy. Create a project folder for it. Add standing instructions. Use only non-sensitive material. Work in loops. Correct the assistant. Update the instructions. Check whether the output is saving time or merely creating polished noise.

After one month, you will know.

The aim is not to become an AI expert.

The aim is to build a disciplined working relationship with a tool that is fast, useful, and still answerable to human judgment.

About The Author

Brig Raja Bhattacharjee (retd), a 1988 batch officer, is an alumnus of RIMC and NDA. He served in the Corps of EME across a wide variety of command and staff appointments, with his Army career culminating as Brigadier Information Technology at DGIS. After taking premature retirement in 2022, he has worked with Ernst & Young LLP as a Government and Public Sector technolo-



Brig Raja Bhattacharjee

-gy consultant on safe city, drone capacity-building, and physical-security strategy projects. His writing appears at <https://olivearcher.substack.com>.

***"The only way to do
great work is to love
what you do."
— Steve Jobs***

The Tool Is New. The Skill Is Not

By
Sandeep Kaul



While The Tool is New the Skill Is Not

You have spent thirty years walking into rooms you did not know, in places you had not been, with people you had not met, and finding a way to function before the day was out. New posting. New terrain. New command. The Armed Forces do not give you time to get comfortable. They give you a situation and expect you to move.

Now you are retiring. You look at the AI landscape and think you have missed something!

But, you have not.

What AI rewards is not familiarity with the tool. What it rewards is the ability to engage with an unfamiliar system, extract what is useful, discard what is not, and adjust as the output changes. That is not a technology skill. It has never been a technology skill. It is the thing the Armed Forces have been building in their officers for decades, one posting at a time.

The ones who struggle with AI are not the late arrivals. They are those who need a tool to be intuitive before they will commit to using it. They wait for certainty. They want the interface to explain itself. An officer who made it to colonel did not make it by waiting for certainty. That officer made it by working with incomplete information and correcting course as the picture cleared.

That is almost exactly what effective AI use looks like.

Someone who has been using AI since 2022 has a familiarity advantage: the shortcuts, the working sense of what the tool will and will not do. But familiarity is not the same as capability. A person who has used a hammer every day for three years is not, for that reason, an architect.

What you bring to this tool is the habit of structured thinking under pressure, the discipline to give a clear brief, and no expectation that the tool will do the thinking for you. AI performs well under exactly these conditions.

Consider what that actually means in practice. Most AI users approach the tool the way they approach a search engine — with a loose question and an expectation that the tool will interpret their intent generously. It often does and the result is output that is roughly in the right direction but imprecise. An officer does not brief that way. The question is specific. The objective is stated. The constraints are named. The standard is defined before the task begins. That is a command habit not a communication style. And it is, as it turns out, exactly the right way to use this tool.

Give AI a vague instruction and it returns a vague answer. Give it a clear objective, defined constraints and a standard to be met, and it performs like a capable subordinate. You have been briefing subordinates your entire career.

The first weeks bear this out. You begin with one task you do repeatedly. You hand the first draft to AI. The output is not right, but it is close enough to edit and editing is faster than starting cold. More usefully, the gap between what you asked for and what you got tells you exactly where your brief was loose. You tighten the instruction. The next output is better. Not because the tool improved, but because the instruction did. The task that took ninety minutes begins to take twenty. What you are building in that period is not just speed. It is a working instinct for what the tool needs from you, which turns out to be the same thing your subordinates always



The Armed Forces reward certainty of command

needed: clarity of intent, defined boundaries, and a standard against which to measure the result. You have always known how to do that.

There is one adjustment to make, and it is worth being direct about it.

The Armed Forces reward certainty of command. AI rewards iteration. The instinct to issue a directive and expect execution does not transfer cleanly here. The tool is not a subordinate. It is closer to a working relationship where the output of the first exchange shapes the next question. The first response is rarely the final one. It is a starting position.

So, the transition asks one thing of you above all: patience with the process, not with the tool. The tool is fast. What takes time is learning to read its output critically, identify what is missing, and sharpen the next instruction. You have spent your career doing exactly this — receiving a situation report, finding the gaps, issuing a better order. The loop is familiar. Only the medium has changed. The thinking behind it has not.

The other thing the transition asks is a willingness to start before you feel ready. That one should not be difficult. You have never had the luxury of feeling ready.

About The Author

Sandeep Kaul has spent forty-plus years in advertising, branding, and marketing communications. He is a Fauji Kid and is based at New Delhi. He has a lot of Faujis around him in his immediate family. He runs Ideawize Communication Design. Nobody taught him most of what he knows. He considers this an advantage.



Sandeep Kaul

***"Education is the most powerful weapon
which you can use to change the world."
— Nelson Mandela***

Strategic Blueprinting: Data-Backed Navigating the Corporate Landscape as an AI-Powered Professional Decisions

By
Colonel (Dr.) Vijay Kumar (Retd.)

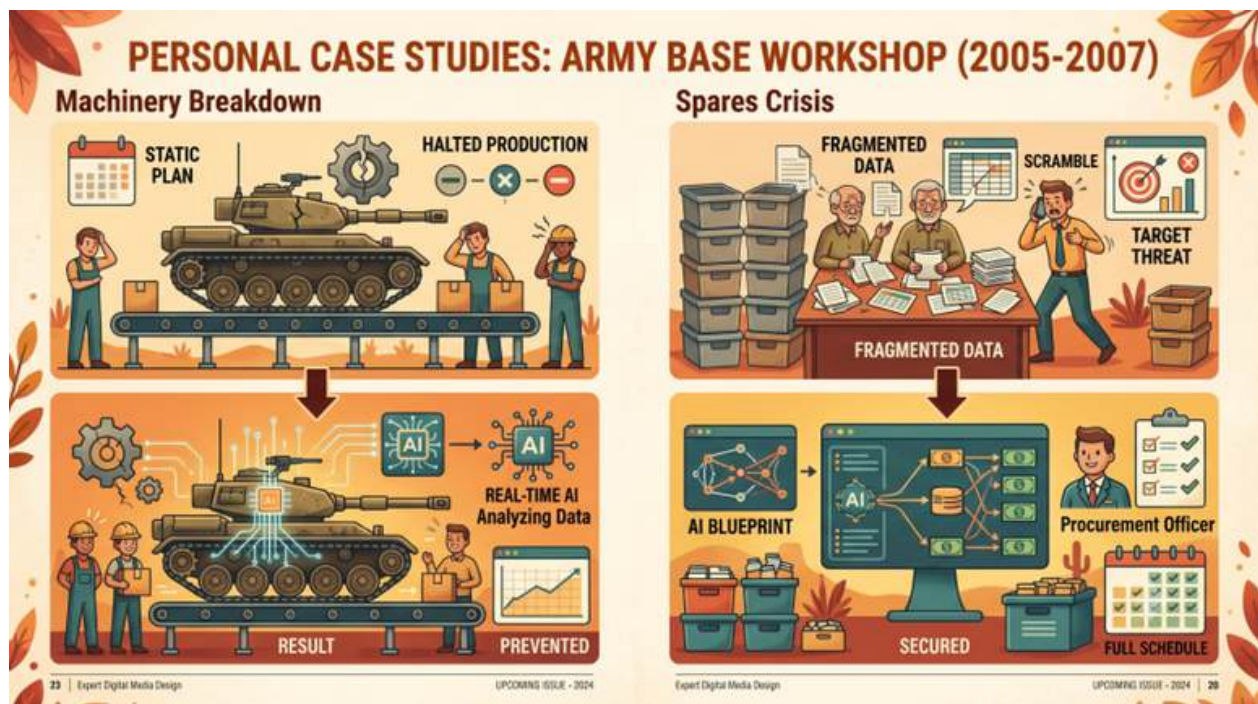
The New Corporate Divide The contemporary enterprise landscape is undergoing a systemic evolution, driven by the rapid maturation of artificial intelligence from a passive, generative tool into an autonomous, agentic orchestrator of complex workflows. A profound "dividing line" is emerging across the global economy: on one side are organizations and professionals supercharging their daily output through AI-boosted efficiency; on the other are those remaining tethered to manual, legacy workflows.

An Unprecedented Opportunity For the

modern professional—particularly those within the Forces Network transitioning from uniformed military service into the corporate and technology sectors—this paradigm shift presents an unprecedented opportunity. The traits highly valued in military operations, such as mission focus, technical discipline, and an unyielding reliability mindset, translate perfectly to an industry that deeply values decisive action.

The Vulnerabilities of Legacy Workflows

To fully grasp the necessity of this shift, we must examine the severe vulnerabilities



Case Study Army Base Workshop 2005-07

inherent in legacy manual workflows.

A Lesson from the Assembly Line: During my tenure as a Works Manager in an Army Base Workshop (2005–2007), I navigated administrative challenges that highlight this exact contrast. In one instance, a critical piece of heavy machinery in our continuous-production line for the overhaul of army equipment suffered a catastrophic, unpredicted breakdown.

Because our legacy maintenance schedules were based on static time intervals rather than real-time performance data, the early warning signs were entirely missed—a critical failure in the 'Observe' phase of our operational loop. By relying on static intervals, we were essentially flying blind to the micro-failures occurring in real time.

This triggered a cascading shutdown across the entire assembly line, halting production and rendering a large industrial workforce sub-optimally loaded for two weeks. This

incident starkly illustrates the danger of "rear-view mirror analytics."

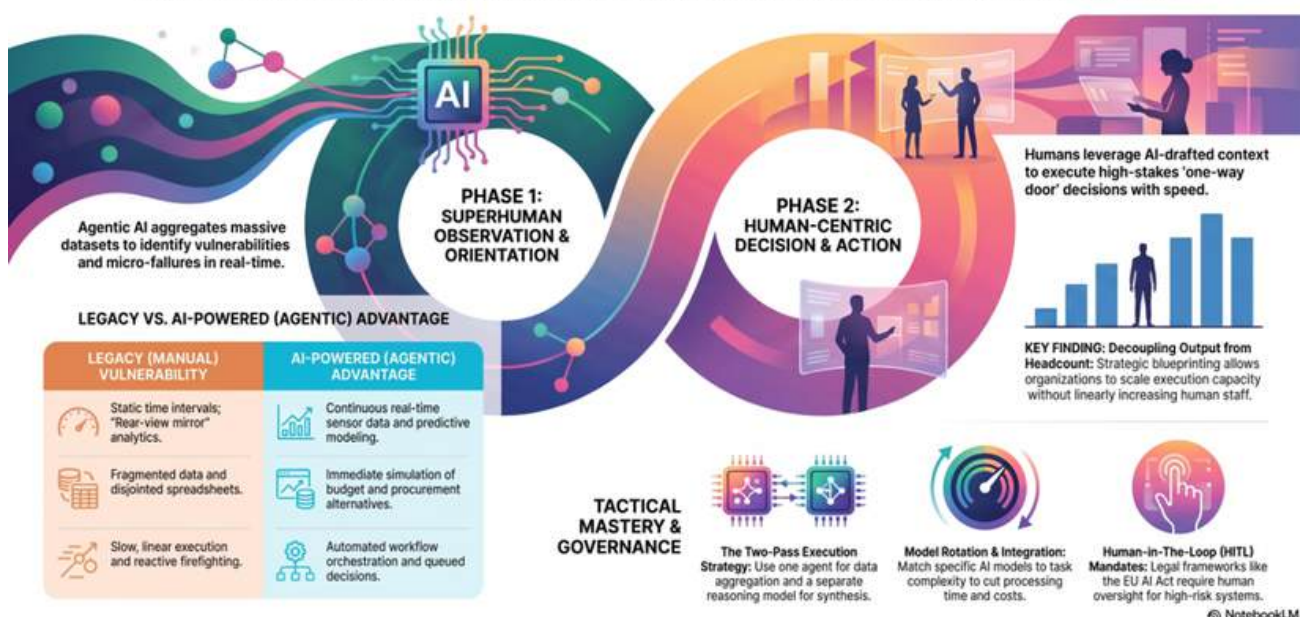
"Scaling Execution: Decoupling Output from Headcount: Historically, the primary bottleneck in both military operations and enterprise scaling has been execution capacity. However, the deployment of agentic AI effectively decouples operational output from human headcount. We can now deploy AI-driven strategic blueprinting that utilizes sensor data and predictive modelling to forecast micro-failures before they happen, shifting leadership from reactive fire fighting to proactive, data-backed governance.

The Augmented OODA Loop & Decision Architecture

Integrating AI into strategic decision-making aligns exceptionally well with military operational doctrines. For the AI-powered professional, Colonel John Boyd's classic OODA Loop (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act) provides a robust conceptual blueprint.

The AI-Powered OODA Loop: Mastering the Modern Decision Architecture

CONTEXT SUMMARY: Moving beyond legacy manual workflows, the modern professional must integrate agentic AI into the classic OODA loop (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act). This shift moves leadership from reactive 'firefighting' to proactive governance, using AI to compress data processing while preserving human judgment for high-stakes execution.



The AI Powered OODA Loop

context, drafts necessary actions based on historical data, and queues decisions for my final validation. This effectively compresses the 'Act' phase, shifting the AI from a passive advisor to an active orchestrator.

- **Aggressive Model Rotation:** Much like resource allocation in production, I match the tool to the task. Routine formatting and initial drafting are delegated to faster, cost-effective models, while advanced reasoning engines are strictly reserved for complex logic validation and deep research. This active rotation drastically cuts processing time while sharpening high-value outputs.

Establishing Anchors for Accountability

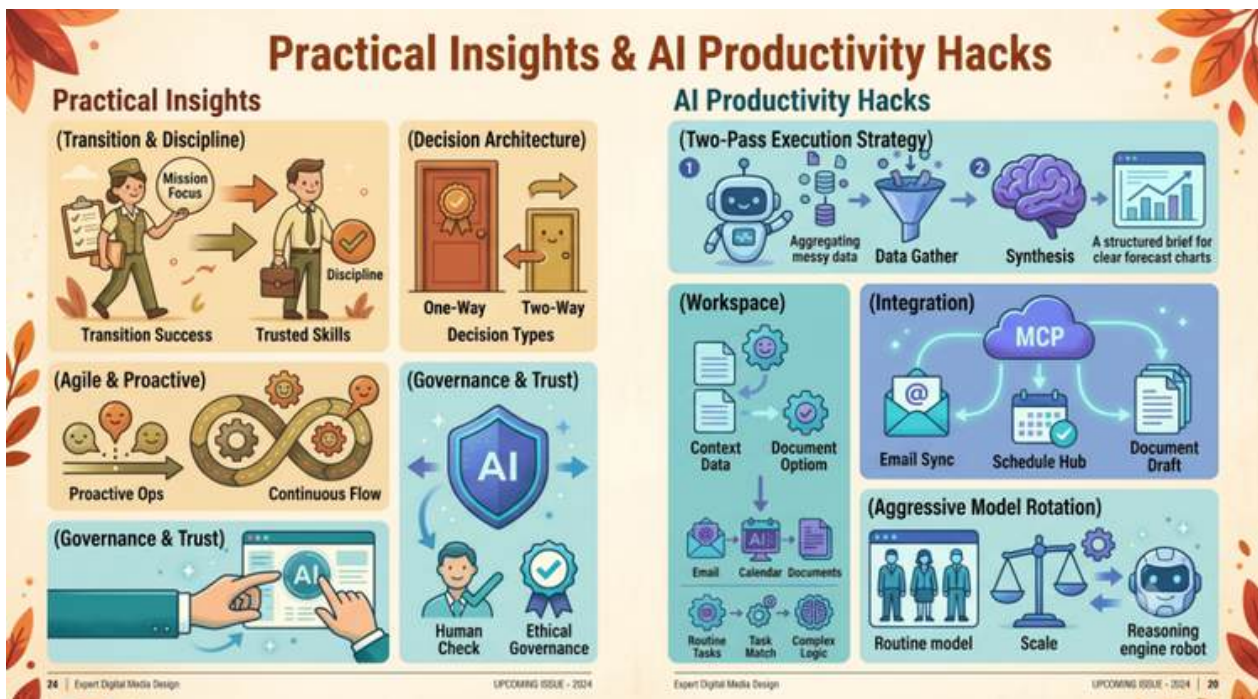
The integration of agentic AI reaches its most critical friction point around accountability. To preserve the integrity of data-backed decisions, organizations must establish definitive "anchors for accountability," such as direct human ownership and hardcoded risk thresholds.

The Human-in-the-Loop (HITL) Framework: The core mechanism for enforcing this is the Human-in-the-Loop (HITL) framework. This approach transforms oversight from a passive checkbox into an active operational discipline requiring timely context and intervention authority.

Compliance as an Operational Enabler: This rigorous oversight is no longer just a best practice; it is becoming a strict legal mandate. Under the European Union Artificial Intelligence Act (EU AI Act), high-risk AI systems must be designed to allow natural persons to effectively oversee them and deactivate the system entirely in the event of a malfunction.

This legislation proves that documented human oversight is a foundational enabler of operational speed, not a bureaucratic hindrance

Cultivating Trust and the Future-Ready Leader: Ultimately, the engine of AI adoption is not risk management alone, but



How I Use AI In My Daily Life

Compressing the Loop for Rapid Action: Advanced agentic systems compress the "Observe" and "Orient" steps by autonomously scanning the environment, aggregating massive datasets, and identifying vulnerabilities at superhuman speeds. This enhanced situational awareness allows human leaders to execute the "Decide" and "Act" phases rapidly, ensuring actions remain firmly aligned with overarching corporate strategy.

Categorizing Decisions for Agility: To counter the rapid deployment of these tools, professionals must explicitly categorize decisions before applying AI. A practical application of this is the "one-way vs. two-way door" framework. Reversible choices (two-way doors) can be aggressively delegated to AI agents to maximize organizational agility, while irreversible, high-stakes decisions (one-way doors) demand strict human-in-the-loop governance.

Overcoming Data Paralysis: Building the Corporate 'Kill-Web.' The paralysis caused by fragmented data in older systems further underscores this need. In a second major crisis at the Army Base Workshop, a sudden non-supply of critical spares caused massive disruptions to our equipment overhaul schedule. Our legacy procurement team had to scramble, relying on disjointed spreadsheets and isolated vendor contacts, threatening our laid-down annual targets. This was a classic failure to 'Orient.' Without a strategic AI blueprint to instantly map redundancies, we could not orient ourselves fast enough to 'Decide'. To overcome such eventualities today, an AI-powered professional replaces these slow, linear workflows with a corporate 'kill-web' of continuous observation, instantly simulating

budget impacts and providing data-backed procurement alternatives.

Bridging Strategy and Execution Transitioning from this high-level strategic architecture to daily action is where the modern veteran excels. The execution of these data-backed decisions ultimately relies on daily tactical efficiency.

The Tactical Blueprint: Agentic AI Hacks for Daily Productivity :

To translate these broad OODA loop concepts into tangible daily practice, I prefer three foundational agentic AI productivity hacks:

- **The Two-Pass Execution Strategy:** I divide my workflow into two distinct phases. First, I deploy a specialized agent strictly for data aggregation—pulling raw metrics, regulatory updates, or market data into a structured brief. In the second pass, I feed that clean brief into a flagship reasoning model for synthesis and forecasting. This mirrors traditional intelligence gathering and perfectly executes the first half of the OODA loop: the data-aggregating agent acts as the ultimate 'Observe' engine, while the flagship reasoning model digests that brief to 'Orient' you to the strategic landscape and forecast outcomes.
- **Workspace Integration via Model Context Protocol (MCP):** Think of MCP as a secure digital bridge that allows AI assistants to safely talk to and interact with your specific local files and software. True productivity is unlocked when AI uses this bridge to integrate directly into your daily execution environment. By connecting agents to my email clients, calendars, and document repositories, the AI reads

structural trust. Workers who intrinsically trust their AI partners are exponentially more likely to view those agents as critical value-creators. For the veteran transitioning to the corporate arena, the AI era is the ultimate amplifier of human leadership. While AI flawlessly compresses the 'Observe' and 'Orient' phases at superhuman speeds, the 'Decide' phase still fundamentally relies on the veteran's operational judgment and ability to act on incomplete information. Equipped with the discipline to plan meticulously, the agility to pivot instantly, and the ethical grounding to govern responsibly, the AI-powered professional is uniquely positioned to build the ultimate modern playbook and command the future of data-backed decision-making.

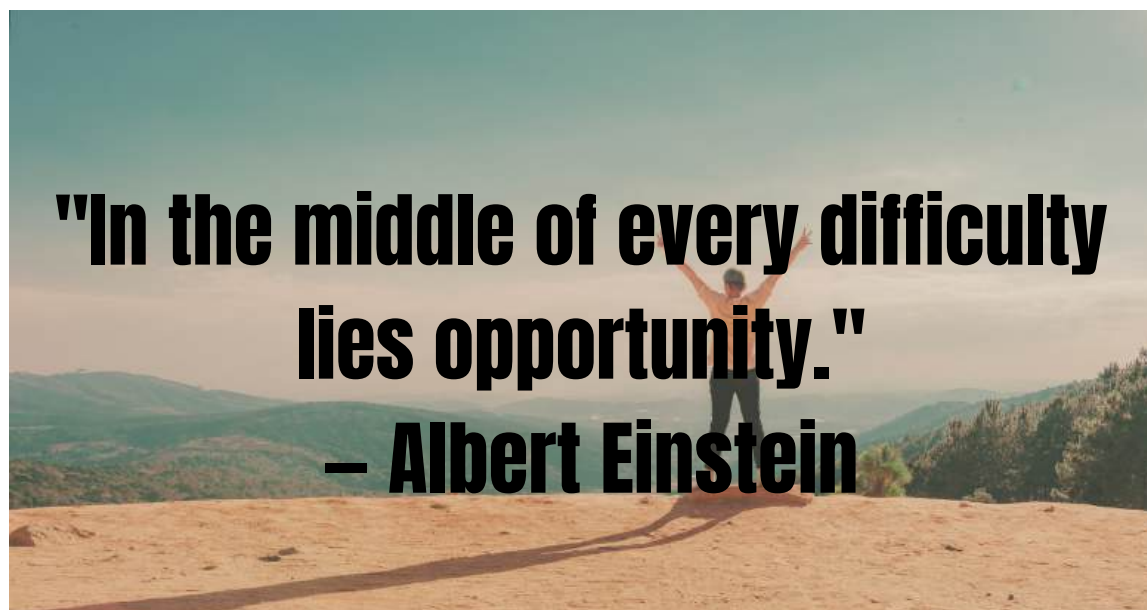
About The Author

Colonel (Dr.) Vijay Kumar (Retd.) is an EME officer of 1988 batch. Apart from administrative and technical leadership in the field Army, he participated in combat operations in Sri Lanka (IPKF) and led an Indian Defence Delegation to Russia/ Ukraine for high-level engineering support package. Col Vijay has deep academic leadership, administration and subject matter expertise roots from premier Indian Defence Colleges and Universities. He served as Senior Instructor at MCEME, Secunderabad and MILIT, Pune and Adjunct Faculty at DIAT (DU), Pune and Savitribai Phule Pune



Colonel (Dr.) Vijay Kumar (Retd.)

University. He was also selected to undertake two year research work as Resident Scholar in defence and strategic studies domain at Savitribai Phule Pune University. As regards his academic qualifications, he is M.Tech (Mechanical Engineering) and Ph.D. (Materials Engineering). His research and review papers are published in high-impact international science journals with 750+ citations from Google Scholar. His efforts are now focused to leverage experience and expertise for the student community.



Why Experience and Human Ingenuity are the New Competitive Advantage

By
Sreya Das



Redefining Professional Excellence

Technology has always reshaped the tools of work. Artificial Intelligence is reshaping the professionals who use them.

Professional excellence has never been defined solely by what an individual knows. It's true measure has always been the ability to interpret complexity, exercise sound judgement and translate knowledge into purposeful action. Experience, therefore, has long been regarded as the currency of professional credibility. It represents accumulated wisdom, informed instinct and the confidence to make decisions when certainty is elusive.

That equation, however, is undergoing a profound transformation; not because

experience has lost its value, but because the environment in which professionals operate has fundamentally changed.

Artificial Intelligence has introduced an entirely new dimension to professional capability. It accelerates research, organises information, analyses patterns, generates insights and automates routine execution at a scale that was unimaginable only a few years ago. Yet despite the pace of innovation, one misconception continues to dominate conversations around AI, that it is replacing professionals.

It is not.

What Artificial Intelligence is redefining is the benchmark of professional excellence.

The most valuable professionals of the coming decade will not necessarily be those who possess the greatest volume of knowledge. They will be those who can combine experience, critical thinking and technological capability to solve problems with greater speed, precision and clarity. Knowledge alone is no longer the differentiator. The ability to apply knowledge intelligently has become the new competitive advantage.

For veterans starting a second career, this shift presents an opportunity rather than a disruption.

Military service develops qualities that organisations spend years trying to cultivate; discipline under pressure, structured decision-making, accountability, adaptability and leadership in uncertain environments. These are capabilities that no algorithm can replicate. Artificial Intelligence does not compete with them; it enhances their application.

The Real Transformation

Every technological revolution has altered the

nature of work.

The Industrial Revolution transformed production.

The Internet democratised access to information.

Mobile technology redefined accessibility.

Cloud computing reshaped collaboration across continents.

Artificial Intelligence is now influencing something even more fundamental: the relationship between human judgement and execution.

For decades, professionals devoted a considerable portion of their working lives to tasks that, while necessary, generated limited strategic value. Reading lengthy reports, consolidating spreadsheets, preparing presentations, summarising meetings, drafting routine documentation and conducting repetitive research consumed hours that could otherwise have been invested in leadership,



planning and innovation.

Artificial Intelligence is changing that equation. Rather than replacing professional judgement, it compresses the time between information and action.

The significance of this transformation extends far beyond productivity.

It allows professionals to redirect their attention towards the responsibilities that genuinely influence organisational success; making informed decisions, mentoring teams, strengthening stakeholder relationships, managing risk and identifying opportunities for growth.

In other words, AI is not creating better leaders. It is creating more time for leadership.

That distinction deserves careful consideration.

Organisations have never succeeded because they produced more reports than their competitors. They succeed because they interpret information more effectively, respond more decisively and execute with greater consistency. Artificial Intelligence contributes to that objective not by replacing human judgement, but by enabling it to operate with greater context, confidence and speed.

The conversation, therefore, should not centre on whether AI will replace professionals.

The more meaningful question is whether professionals are prepared to redefine the way they create value.

The New Professional Divide

Every generation witnesses a technological shift that redraws the boundaries of professional relevance.

Today, that shift is Artificial Intelligence.

The emerging divide in the workplace is unlikely to be determined by age, designation or even years of experience. Instead, it will increasingly distinguish professionals who regard AI as merely another software

application from those who recognise it as a strategic capability woven into the way they think, plan and execute.

Consider two project leaders entrusted with identical responsibilities.

Both possess comparable experience. Both understand operations, budgets and stakeholder management. Yet one continues to rely exclusively on traditional workflows, investing significant time in gathering information, compiling reports and manually preparing presentations. The other uses AI to synthesise documents, identify emerging risks, generate first drafts and organise insights before applying professional judgement to the final decision.

Neither individual has become more intelligent overnight. The difference lies in capacity.

One professional spends much of the day producing information. The other spends most of the day interpreting it.

Over weeks, months and years, that distinction compounds into a significant competitive advantage. The professionals most likely to thrive in the coming decade will not simply be those who work harder. They will be those who understand how to combine human judgement with machine efficiency without compromising either.

From Information Overload to Intelligent Action

One of the defining characteristics of the modern workplace is not a shortage of information, but an overwhelming abundance of it. Every decision today is accompanied by reports, policy documents, compliance requirements, market intelligence, financial data, vendor proposals and an unending stream of digital communication. Ironically, while organisations have never had greater access to information, professionals often have less time to derive meaningful insight from it.

Artificial Intelligence addresses this paradox.

Its greatest contribution is, it accelerates

comprehension. It can analyse lengthy documents, identify recurring patterns, compare alternatives, consolidate multiple sources of information and present concise summaries.

This distinction is particularly relevant for leaders whose responsibilities extend beyond execution. Effective leadership has always been about identifying what matters, recognising emerging risks and making timely decisions with confidence.

AI strengthens that capability. It reduces the cognitive burden of routine analysis while allowing professionals to devote greater attention to strategic priorities, organisational outcomes and people management. Information by itself has little value. Insight is what drives action, and Artificial Intelligence is increasingly becoming the bridge between the two.

Building Smarter Workflows

The true value of Artificial Intelligence is realised through its integration into everyday professional workflows.

Consider a familiar business scenario.

A programme manager receives a comprehensive project proposal only hours before an important review meeting. Traditionally, preparation would involve reading hundreds of pages, extracting key information, identifying financial implications, highlighting operational risks and preparing discussion points; an exercise that could consume an entire working day.

Today, AI can produce an executive summary, identify contractual risks, compare financial assumptions, highlight inconsistencies and generate structured discussion notes within minutes. The professional remains responsible for validating the information, applying contextual understanding and making the final decision, but the time invested in preparation is reduced dramatically.

The same principle extends across a wide range of professional responsibilities. Standard Operating Procedures can be drafted more efficiently. Training material can be developed and updated with greater consistency. Project documentation can be organised systematically. Market intelligence can be consolidated from multiple sources, while meeting notes can be transformed into actionable tasks almost instantly.



AI compresses analysis into minutes, allowing professionals to focus on leadership and execution

The objective is not to automate professional responsibility. It is to eliminate administrative friction.

When repetitive work is reduced, professionals gain something far more valuable than efficiency; they regain the capacity to think strategically, mentor teams, engage stakeholders and anticipate future challenges.

Ultimately, AI should not be viewed as another software application. It should be regarded as an operational capability that improves the quality, consistency and speed of professional execution.

AI in a Veteran's Second Career

For veterans transitioning into civilian leadership, Artificial Intelligence represents a natural extension of skills that have already been refined through years of service.

Military organisations have long depended upon structured planning, disciplined execution, resource optimisation and informed decision-making under conditions of uncertainty. These capabilities remain highly relevant across industries including manufacturing, logistics, infrastructure, consulting, corporate security, project management and entrepreneurship.

AI enhances these strengths rather than replacing them.

A logistics specialist can evaluate supply chain disruptions using predictive analysis before they affect operations. A project leader can compare implementation options, identify dependencies and assess risks with greater speed. A consultant can analyse large volumes of industry data and transform them into actionable recommendations for clients. An entrepreneur can evaluate market opportunities, refine business plans and strengthen customer engagement using AI-assisted insights.

Perhaps more importantly, Artificial Intelligence enables professionals to learn continuously. Veterans entering unfamiliar

sectors are often required to understand new regulations, technologies, business models and market dynamics within compressed timelines. AI accelerates that learning process by organising complex information into accessible knowledge, enabling professionals to become productive more quickly without compromising the quality of their decisions.

However, technology cannot substitute the qualities that distinguish exceptional leaders.

Integrity cannot be automated.

Judgement cannot be generated.

Trust cannot be programmed.

Leadership cannot be outsourced.

These remain fundamentally human attributes.

Artificial Intelligence simply allows them to be exercised with greater reach, greater speed and greater effectiveness.

For veterans, that combination is particularly powerful. Years of operational experience provide the judgement. Artificial Intelligence expands the capacity to apply that judgement across increasingly complex professional environments.

In the evolving world of work, that may well become the defining advantage of the AI-powered professional.

The Human Advantage

Artificial Intelligence can analyse data, recognise patterns and recommend actions with remarkable speed. What it cannot do is exercise judgement, inspire confidence or accept responsibility.

Leadership has never been about possessing the most information. It has always been about making the right decisions when the stakes are high.

As AI assumes more routine work, distinctly human qualities: integrity, adaptability, emotional intelligence and strategic judgement, will become even more valuable. Technology may enhance decision-making, but accountability will always remain a human responsibility.

Looking Ahead

Artificial Intelligence is evolving rapidly, from intelligent assistants to autonomous agents capable of managing increasingly complex workflows. Organisations that embrace these capabilities thoughtfully will gain a significant competitive advantage.

For veterans, this is familiar territory. Military service has always demanded continuous learning, adaptability and the ability to master new technologies without losing sight of the mission. The AI era simply extends that principle into the modern workplace.

Every technological revolution rewards those who adapt with purpose. Artificial Intelligence is no different. It does not diminish experience; it increases the value of those who know how to apply it. For veterans, whose careers have been built on discipline, leadership and sound judgement, AI offers an opportunity to extend these strengths into new professional environments with greater speed and scale.

The AI-powered professional is defined by the ability to combine human judgement with artificial intelligence to create better outcomes.

Artificial Intelligence will transform the way we work. Leadership will continue to define why that work matters.



Technology evolves. Leadership endures. The future belongs to professionals who master both

About the Author

Sreya Das is a communication strategist and writer with over five years of experience in strategic communication and brand storytelling. Passionate about human behaviour and purposeful communication, she believes powerful ideas have the ability to inform, inspire, and create lasting impact. She continues to explore diverse subjects through long-form writing, with a special interest in defence, strategy and the changing world of work.

“Stay curious. Stay humble. The moment you believe you've learned everything is the moment you stop growing.”



Sreya Das

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."

— Winston Churchill



Winning the Next Mission

By
Aditi Tathagat Gosalia



"Technology has always changed the way we work. Leadership has always determined whether we win."

Every era presents professionals with a defining moment.

For one generation, it was the Internet.

For another, it was smartphones and cloud computing.

Today, that defining moment is Artificial Intelligence.

For many, AI is viewed with equal measures of excitement and uncertainty. Headlines alternate between extraordinary breakthroughs and alarming predictions. Some believe it will replace jobs, while others dismiss it as just another technology trend.

The truth lies somewhere in between.

Artificial Intelligence is not replacing professionals.

It is redefining what makes a professional valuable.

For military veterans transitioning into corporate leadership, this shift should feel

familiar. Throughout a military career, success has never depended solely on experience or equipment. It has depended on the ability to adapt, learn continuously, and make sound decisions under changing circumstances.

The corporate world is no different.

Today's battlefield is business.

The weapons are data, technology, strategy and innovation.

The objective remains unchanged—deliver the mission successfully while leading people with integrity.

There was a time when being busy was considered a badge of honour.

Long hours.

Overflowing inboxes.

Manual reports.

Late-night presentations.

Back-to-back meetings.

Today, those activities no longer define high

performance.

The AI-powered professional asks a different question:

"Am I creating value, or am I simply completing tasks?"

That single shift in thinking changes everything.

AI excels at repetitive activities.

It summarises documents.

Organises information.

Analyses trends.

Generates first drafts.

Automates reporting.

Processes enormous amounts of data in seconds.

But it cannot replace human judgement.

It cannot build trust.

It cannot mentor a young colleague.

It cannot negotiate during uncertainty.

It cannot inspire a team after failure.

Those responsibilities remain uniquely human.

From Information Overload to Decision Advantage

Corporate leaders today face an unprecedented volume of information.

Market reports.

Customer feedback.

Financial dashboards.

Operational updates.

Risk assessments.

Compliance requirements.

Emails that never stop arriving.

Ironically, organisations have more information than ever before, yet leaders often struggle to find meaningful insights.

Artificial Intelligence changes that equation.

Instead of spending hours collecting information, professionals can spend their time interpreting it.

Instead of searching for answers, they can focus on asking better questions.

This is not simply about saving time.



Productivity is being Redefined in the AI Era

It is about improving the quality of decisions.

Military professionals understand this instinctively.

Success has never depended upon having the largest volume of intelligence.

It has depended upon identifying what matters most and acting decisively.

AI strengthens that capability.

AI Is a Force Multiplier

Military strategy has always recognised the value of force multipliers.

Technology that enhances effectiveness without replacing human capability.

Night vision equipment never replaced soldiers.

Satellite communication never replaced commanders.

Navigation systems never replaced pilots.

Similarly, AI should be viewed as a force multiplier for corporate professionals.

It expands capability.

Accelerates execution.

Improves situational awareness.

Enhances consistency.

But leadership remains firmly human.

The organisations that will outperform competitors are not those with the most AI tools.

They are those with leaders who know when technology should lead—and when people must.

The Skills That Will Define Future Leaders

Ironically, the rise of Artificial Intelligence is increasing the value of deeply human capabilities.

Empathy.

Communication.

Ethical judgement.

Adaptability.

Critical thinking.

Influence.

Resilience.

Collaboration.

Strategic vision.

As routine work becomes increasingly automated, organisations will reward professionals who solve complex problems, unite diverse teams and create clarity during uncertainty.

Technology can generate options.

Leaders make decisions.

That distinction will become even more valuable over the next decade.

Practical Applications That Matter

Much of the conversation surrounding AI focuses on possibilities.

The real opportunity lies in practical implementation.

Imagine beginning each morning with an AI-generated executive briefing highlighting overnight developments, emerging risks and priority actions.

Imagine preparing for an important client meeting with a concise summary of previous interactions, industry trends and competitive intelligence.

Imagine creating board presentations in minutes rather than hours.

Imagine automatically analysing customer sentiment across thousands of feedback responses.

Imagine identifying operational bottlenecks before they become business problems.

These are not future possibilities.

They are today's realities.

The greatest competitive advantage no longer belongs to professionals who work the hardest.

It belongs to those who combine human expertise with intelligent technology.

A Leadership Responsibility

Every technological revolution creates new responsibilities.

Artificial Intelligence is no exception.

Leaders must ensure transparency.

Protect sensitive information.

Question AI-generated outputs.

Identify bias.

Maintain accountability.

Technology should never replace ethics.

The responsibility for every decision ultimately remains with the individual using the technology.

The most respected organisations will not simply adopt AI.

They will adopt it responsibly.

Lessons Veterans Bring to AI Leadership

Veterans possess capabilities that organisations increasingly need during digital transformation.

Mission orientation.

Operational discipline.

Structured decision-making.

Resilience under pressure.

Continuous learning.

Team leadership.

Integrity.

The ability to perform under ambiguity.

These qualities cannot be programmed into software.

They are developed through experience.

Artificial Intelligence enhances these strengths but cannot replicate them.

This places veterans in a uniquely advantageous position.

Rather than competing with AI, they can lead organisations in integrating it responsibly while maintaining the human values that define exceptional leadership.

Becoming the AI-Powered Professional

The journey begins with curiosity rather than expertise.

No professional needs to master every AI platform.

Instead, begin by identifying repetitive work that consumes valuable time.

Can meeting notes be automated?



Curiosity is the Key to Mastering AI to Become a More Productive Professional

Can reports be generated faster?

Can research be summarised more efficiently?

Can administrative work be reduced?

Every hour saved through automation becomes an hour available for innovation, coaching, relationship building and strategic thinking.

That is where leaders create lasting impact.

The Future Will Belong to Adaptable Professionals

History consistently rewards those who embrace change without abandoning their principles.

Artificial Intelligence represents another chapter in that story.

The professionals who succeed will not necessarily be programmers or data scientists.

They will be individuals who remain curious, continue learning and understand how technology amplifies human capability.

The organisations that thrive will be those that develop AI-literate leaders rather than simply purchasing AI software.

Ultimately, AI is not about replacing experience.

It is about extending it.

It is not about eliminating human judgement.

It is about ensuring that judgement is informed by better insights.

And it is certainly not about reducing the importance of leadership.

If anything, it makes leadership even more essential.

Final Thoughts

Every professional now stands at a crossroads.

One path clings to familiar ways of working.

The other embraces intelligent technology while preserving the values that define outstanding leadership.

Military veterans understand this choice better than most.

Every mission demands adaptation.

Every challenge demands preparation.

Every new environment demands fresh thinking.

Corporate life is simply another mission.

Artificial Intelligence is another capability.

Leadership remains the decisive advantage.

The AI-powered professional is not the person who relies most heavily on technology.

It is the person who uses technology to become a better leader, a better decision-maker, a better mentor and a better contributor.

The future will not belong to Artificial Intelligence alone.

It will belong to professionals who combine the speed of machines with the judgement, integrity and purpose that only human beings can provide.

That is the next mission.

And it has already begun.

About The Author

Aditi Gosalia brings over 15 years of experience across institutions such as Boston's, CMS, NIIT, MET, Eduvacancy, and Podar, and currently serves as Senior Manager – Training, Corporate Connect & Social Media at Kohinoor Management School. Her expertise lies employability skills, behavioural training, and corporate engagement and has trained 12,000+ students and professionals in her journey so far. She is an Award Winning Soft Skills and Employability Readiness Trainer and also the author of “Let's Walk Through” and a passionate advocate of life skills, self-awareness, and holistic growth.



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“
Life is what
happens to us
while we are
making other
plans.”

— ALLEN SAUNDERS

BRIAN TRACY
— INTERNATIONAL —

The Bitter Lesson

By

Brig Subhash Katoch

‘Like Ma(mother), Can a machine ever truly say," I am also yours"? ‘ I was reading an article in the Sunday Times of India dated June 28, 2026.^[1] The article by Siddhartha Mukherjee an Indian born American haematologist, oncologist and Pulitzer prize winning author, best known for his landmark book " The Emperor of all Maladies: a Biography of Cancer", who is currently the CEO of Manaus AI, an AI enabled drug discovery company. I am a big fan of Mukherjee and have read his other books ‘The Gene’ and ‘The Song of the Cell’, real fascinating stuff. So, I devoured the article more so as it dealt with AI, my current passion. Mukherjee was referring to a phone call with his mother back home in Kolkata, why while working on an AI model called

Sage. Mukherjee and his team of engineers / researchers are developing an algorithm, teaching it basic rules of medicinal chemistry, biophysics, atomic size and geometry. After nearly 6 months of training, Sage is beginning to understand the vocabulary and grammar of synthetic

Mukherjee's Conversation with his mother back home, leads to his mother appreciating all the great work he is doing ut she affectionately chides him ‘All that great work is yours, but I am also yours’. The emotional exchange leads Mukherjee to wonder: as AI becomes sentient and autonomous, will it also learn to belong to him? Position, kinship and attachment: a triad of powerful ancient desires. Can AI that speaks in an abstract



Like Ma, Can a machine ever truly say," I am also yours"? , Sunday Times of India dated June 28, 2026

symbolic language, evoke such profound sense of intimacy? What happens as AI becomes increasingly sentient and acquires agency and autonomy? What meaning will "Belonging" carry then? Can a machine ever truly say "I am also yours"?

Mukherjee refers to "The Bitter Lesson"^[1] a highly influential essay written by artificial intelligence pioneer Rich Sutton in 2019. This paper by the pioneering AI researcher and philosopher, is about a long-standing argument between scientists who favoured building AI with human-centric rules versus those who favoured AI powered by "Brute force" i.e., self-learning and computational power.

The core thesis of the essay is that seventy years of AI research has proven one definitive, hard truth: generic methods that leverage raw computational power, consistently and overwhelmingly, outperform methods based on human-crafted, domain-specific knowledge.

Why is the Lesson "Bitter"?

The lesson is bitter because it is incredibly humbling to AI researchers and human ego alike. Sutton points out a recurring historical trap: Researchers want to build their own knowledge, logic, and understanding of a problem (e.g., how the human eye processes sight or how a grandmaster plays chess) directly into the AI system. This approach almost always provides a short-term performance boost and feels personally satisfying to the engineer. In the long run, however, these human-centric systems inevitably plateau. They clog the system with rigid complexity, making it impossible to scale or exploit the exponential growth of computing power (Moore's law).

^[1]<http://www.incompleteideas.net/IncIdeas/BitterLesson.html>

Sutton's Historical Examples

Sutton demonstrates that whenever a breakthrough occurred in AI, it wasn't because humans got cleverer at encoding rules, but because they gave up on rules and threw more compute at a general algorithm:

- **Chess:** Early researchers tried to hardcode chess strategy and grandmaster rules. They were ultimately beaten when IBM's Deep Blue used massive, brute-force search hardware to look millions of moves ahead.
- **Go:** For decades, Go was thought to require "human intuition." Early AIs tried to build in expert patterns. DeepMind's AlphaGo (and later AlphaGo Zero) won not by mimicking humans, but by utilising deep reinforcement learning and massive computation via self-play, eventually wiping out human heuristics entirely.
- **Speech Recognition:** In the 1970s, researchers tried to code the physics of the human vocal tract and linguistics. They were completely outperformed by statistical methods (Hidden Markov Models) that simply processed vast quantities of data.
- **Computer Vision:** Early vision AI relied on hand-engineered features like edge-detection (SIFT). Today, these are completely obsolete, replaced by deep neural networks that learn visual structures completely on their own.

The Two Pillars of Scalability

According to Sutton, only two general-purpose methods scale arbitrarily with more compute:

- Search: Explicitly looking through millions of possibilities (like finding the next best chess move).
- Learning: Letting the model discover patterns and optimise itself organically through massive amounts of training data (like deep learning).

The Ultimate Takeaway

Sutton concludes that the human mind is "tremendously, irredeemably complex." Instead of trying to build what we have discovered into AI, we should only build the meta-methods (search and learning) that allow the AI to do its own discovering.

"We want AI agents that can discover like we can, not which contain what we have discovered."
— Rich Sutton

This is an important lesson, maybe BITTER, for all students and users of AI. Learning how to use models, prompt engineering, using Agents for various processes in the corporate world is what all of us are trying to grasp and master. The basic principles and theories also need to be understood. More compute is where the AI world is headed today. Every major Company in the field is now trying to make their own silicon to beat the monopoly of Nvidia. Even Chinese entities like Huawei and DeepSeek are planning to buy more chips and GPUs. This only points to more compute and more compute means AGI (Artificial General Intelligence) may not be far away!

A bitter but misunderstood lesson



Richard Sutton

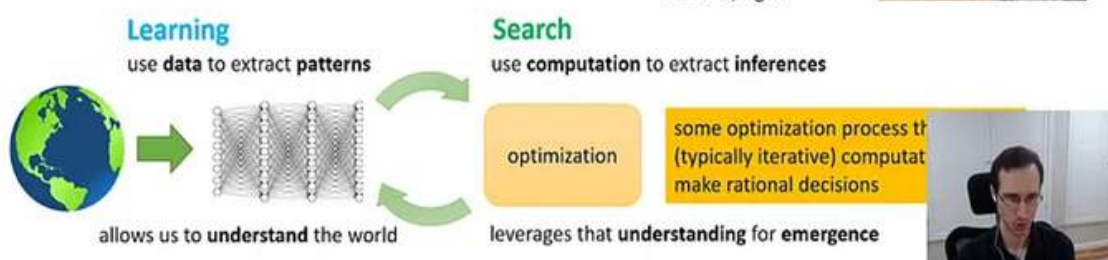
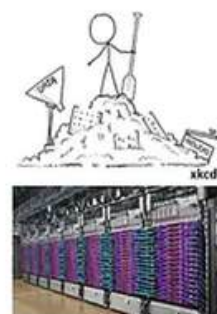
We have to learn the bitter lesson that building in how we think we think does not work in the long run.

The two methods that seem to scale arbitrarily ... are learning and search.

- "The Bitter Lesson", Sutton 2019



You mean we should shovel more data into the GPU, right?

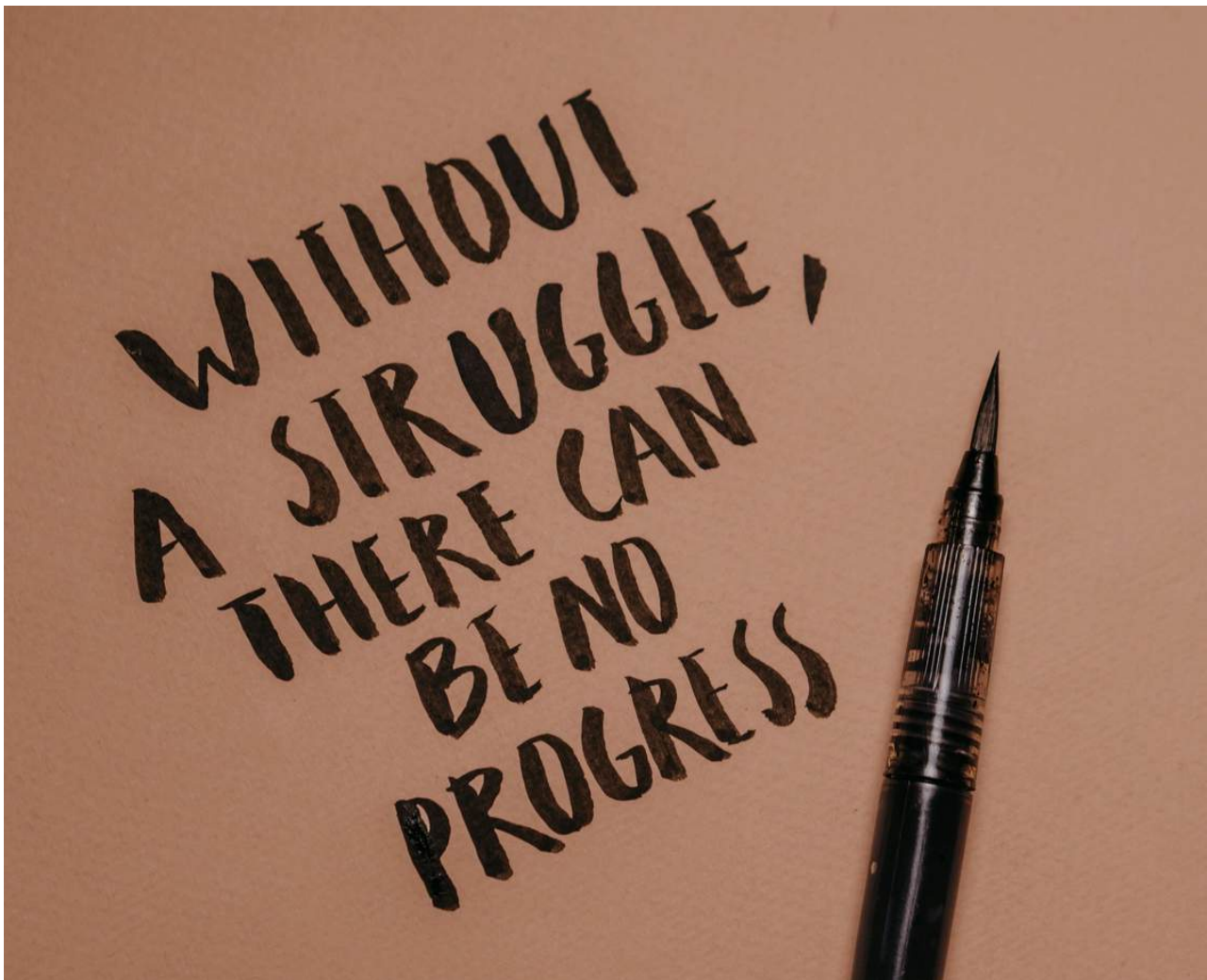


About The Author

Brig Subhash Katoch (Retd) is a Signals officer with comprehensive experience in AI, military telecommunication technologies, data networks, cyber security, data science and analytics, decision support systems, EMI/EMC testing and compliance. His military qualifications include DSSC and Higher Command. He holds a MBA from FMS, Delhi University, and is an M.Tech. (Computer science and Technology) from IIT, Madras. He is also a Fellow of the Society of EMC Engineers, India and was a Guest faculty for 'Business Intelligence & Business Analytics' at Faculty of Management Studies (FMS).



Brig Subhash Katoch



Of Grit and Grid: How India's Veterans are Rewriting Corporate Strategy with AI

By
Brig (Dr.) Krishna Raj Nambiar (Retd)

Introduction: The New Battlefield

To the transitioners, the veterans, the retired Armed Forces officers, and the early release officers of the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force: Welcome to your next deployment which willy Nilly is AI empowered.

Leaving the structured, mission-driven, and highly disciplined world of the military to enter the corporate landscape can feel like stepping onto an unfamiliar battlefield. The language is different, the metrics of success

are redefined, and the operational tempo—while intense—lacks the clear hierarchical structure you are accustomed to.

Way back in 2009, even Billionaires were not above board; from immemorial times of Mr Rajat Gupta - Raj Rajaratnam insider trading ignominy, the newspapers are replete with pitfalls of the Corporates and the lack of integrity at many levels. Some rest cool under the Umbrella of Non Disclosure Agreements and Golden Parachutes and some get arrested by the FBI !!



Here comes the Indian Armed forces Officer in to Corporate, as military leaders, they possess raw, invaluable assets that corporate India desperately seeks: unflinching integrity, crisis-tested leadership, meticulous strategic planning, and a deep-rooted sense of ownership.

In today's fast-evolving business world, there is a revolutionary technology that can act as your ultimate Force Multiplier: Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI is not here to replace your human intelligence; it is here to amplify your strategic capabilities, translate your military experience into corporate gold, and help you work ten times faster. This guide is your tactical brief on how to weaponize AI to accelerate your corporate transition, consulting career, or entrepreneurial venture.

Govt Initiatives.

Digital India and Artificial Intelligence. The Digital India Programme, launched in 2015, aims to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. Key achievements include Aadhaar-enabled services, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), Digi-Locker, e-Governance platforms, Bharat-Net, and the Unified Payments Interface (UPI),

which has made India a global leader in real-time digital payments.

To strengthen India's AI ecosystem, the Government approved the India AI Mission in March 2024 with an outlay of ₹10,372 crore. The mission focuses on creating high-performance computing infrastructure, supporting AI startups, developing indigenous AI models, promoting responsible AI, and expanding AI education and research.

1. The Strategic Alliance: Military Leadership Meets AI

In the military, success relies on the OODA Loop (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act). In the modern corporate world, the speed of this loop is dictated by data, technological agility, and rapid execution.

Your military background and AI-enabled workflows complement each other perfectly:

- **Decisiveness vs. Data Overwhelm:**
Corporations generate massive amounts of data. While corporate professionals can get bogged down in analysis paralysis, your military training has taught you to



make high-stakes decisions with 70% information. AI can instantly synthesize the other 30%, giving you an unbeatable decision-making edge.

- **Mission-First Mindset vs. Execution:** You excel at execution and leading teams. By offloading routine administrative tasks, documentation, and research to AI, you free up your mental bandwidth to focus on what you do best: inspiring people, managing stakeholders, and driving the mission home.
- **MNCs in India have Golden rules four business Success-** Mainly four Tenets four foundational guiding principles that drive its global business model: Customer Centricity, Technology & Innovations, Collaboration, and Inclusive Growth. Internally, these core values are supported by the behavioural framework: Learning, Innovation, Trust & Transparency, and Endurance. All these call for Integrity as the basic building block.



- **Uncompromising Ethics vs. AI Governance:** As AI tools become more integrated, businesses face severe ethical dilemmas regarding data privacy and bias. Military man's deep-seated military ethics and values makes him or her the perfect leader to govern AI adoption responsibly in any organization.

2. Your AI Tactical Gear: Tools for Corporate Mastery

To conquer the corporate world, you must equip yourself with the right digital arsenal. Here is a breakdown of essential AI tools categorized by corporate function, designed to make your daily operations seamless.

A. Resume Building & Personal Branding (The Jargon Translator)

The single biggest hurdle for Indian military veterans is jargon translation. Corporates do not understand what an "OIC of Transport," "Adjutant," or "CO of an Infantry Battalion" means. AI bridges this gap.

- Recommended Platforms: ChatGPT, Claude, Kickresume.
- Actionable Step: Feed your military performance appraisals (with sensitive data redacted) into Claude. Use this prompt:

"Translate this military performance profile into a corporate-friendly executive resume for an Operations Director role. Convert military terms (e.g., 'Company Commander', 'Quartermaster') into corporate equivalents (e.g., 'Regional Operations Head', 'Supply Chain Director') highlighting metrics like team size, budget management, and operational efficiency."

B. Interview Preparation (The Mock CO's Interview)

Stepping into a corporate interview after decades of service can be daunting. AI can act as your personal executive coach.

- Recommended Platforms: Yoodli (for speech and delivery coaching), ChatGPT (for mock interview roleplay).
- Actionable Step: Copy and paste the target job description into ChatGPT. Use this prompt:
- "Act as a corporate Chief Operating Officer interviewing me, a retired Army Colonel, for the position of Head of Security and Facilities. Ask me challenging questions one by one. After each response, provide constructive feedback on how I can better align my military achievements with the job requirements."

C. Communication & Professional Correspondence (The Diplomatic Tone)

Corporate communication is subtle, collaborative, and highly structured. Direct military commands ("Get this done by 1800 hrs") can sometimes be perceived as too blunt. AI helps you modulate your tone to inspire cooperation.

- Recommended Platforms: Grammarly, ChatGPT, Quillbot.
- Actionable Step: Use AI to draft emails, policy documents, and stakeholder communications. If you write a direct instruction, ask ChatGPT: "Rewrite this email to make it collaborative, polite, yet firm, suitable for a cross-functional corporate team."

D. Productivity & Project Management (The Command Headquarters)

Managing complex corporate projects with multiple moving parts requires systematic tracking. AI-powered project tools keep you ahead of deadlines.

- Recommended Platforms: Notion AI, ClickUp, Asana.
- Actionable Step: Use Notion AI to automatically summarize meeting notes, generate action items, delegate tasks, and set project timelines with simple text commands.

E. Market Research & Competitor Intelligence (The Reconnaissance)

Before entering any meeting or launching a business, you need deep intelligence on your industry, competitors, and market trends.

- Recommended Platforms: Perplexity AI, Claude.
- Actionable Step: Instead of browsing Google for hours, use Perplexity AI to run comprehensive queries like: "Provide a detailed market analysis of the third-party logistics (3PL) sector in India for 2026, including major players, growth drivers, and primary operational challenges." You will receive a fully cited report in seconds.

F. Presentations & Executive Pitching (The Sand Model)

In the corporate world, your "sand model" is your slide deck. Your ideas must be visually compelling and easy to digest for board members.

- Recommended Platforms: Gamma, Beautiful.ai, MS Copilot.
- Actionable Step: Enter your raw outline or strategic plan into Gamma.app. Within two

leader knows that every weapon must be handled with care. Avoid these common operational pitfalls:

1. **Blind Trust (The Hallucination Trap):** AI can sometimes generate incorrect facts with absolute confidence (known as "hallucinations"). Never present an AI-generated report without verifying the facts, numbers, and sources. Your personal credibility is your greatest asset.
2. **Losing Your Unique Voice:** If you copy-paste AI outputs directly, your emails and documents will sound robotic, generic, and insincere. Use AI to draft, structure, and refine, but always inject your unique leadership voice, personal anecdotes, and professional perspective.
3. **Security and Data Violations:** Never upload sensitive, proprietary corporate data, or classified military information into public AI platforms. Treat data security with the same discipline you treated physical security in the Armed Forces.
4. **Over-Automation:** AI can write emails and analyze data, but it cannot build human relationships. Do not let technology replace real, face-to-face networking, active listening, and empathetic team leadership.

6. Your 90-Day AI Resettlement Roadmap

Transition is a phase-by-phase operation. Use this 90-day structured roadmap to systematically build your AI capability.

| THE 90-DAY AI ROADMAP |

| Phase 1: Days 1-30: Reconnaissance & Foundations |

| * Set up accounts on ChatGPT, Claude, and Perplexity AI. |

| * Practice basic prompting daily (experiment with writing and editing). |

| * Rebuild your resume and LinkedIn profile using AI translators. |

| * Establish your professional brand presence online. |

||

| Phase 2: Days 31-60: Functional Deep Dive |

| * Learn to use Gamma or Beautiful.ai to design presentations. |

| * Experiment with Julius AI or ChatGPT for basic Excel/data analysis. |

| * Practice AI-driven corporate communication and email drafting. |

| * Conduct deep market research on your chosen sector using Perplexity. |

||

| Phase 3: Days 61-90: Strategic Mastery & Leadership |

| * Enroll in a practical upskilling program like the Be 10x capsule. |

| * Use AI tools for advanced mock interviews and salary negotiation prep. |

| * Automate daily workflows, administrative tasks, and project timelines. |

| * Leverage AI to make strategic, data-backed decisions in real-time. |

Conclusion: Once a Leader, Always a Leader

Veterans, the technology landscape is changing faster than ever, but do not let that intimidate you. Throughout your military career, you have adapted to extreme environments, mastered sophisticated weaponry, and led men and women in the face of profound uncertainty. Learning to use AI tools is incredibly simple compared to the complex operations you have successfully executed.

AI is your modern-day radar, your tactical communication network, and your automated supply chain rolled into one. By mastering these tools, you remove the friction of

minutes, the AI will generate a highly professional, beautifully styled slide presentation that you can refine and deliver to executive leadership.

G. Data Analysis & Strategic Decision-Making (The Intelligence Bureau)

Modern leadership requires data-backed decisions. You do not need to be a coding genius or an Excel wizard; AI can do the heavy lifting.

- **Recommended Platforms:** ChatGPT (Advanced Data Analysis), Julius AI.
- **Actionable Step:** Upload a raw CSV or Excel sheet of operational costs or sales figures. Ask the AI: "Analyze this dataset. Identify the top three areas of cost leakage, outline key performance trends, and generate a visual chart depicting monthly operational expenses."

3. Real-Life Transition Scenarios

Let's look at how these tools work in practice for transitioning officers:

- **Scenario A (The Consultant):** Lt. Commander Priya (retd.), Indian Navy, transitions into management consulting. Assigned to a digital transformation project for an automotive client, she uses Perplexity AI to understand the client's industry overnight, Julius AI to analyze supply chain bottlenecks from raw Excel data, and Beautiful.ai to build an executive presentation for the client's board—all within her first week.
- **Scenario B (The Corporate Leader):** Colonel Sandeep (retd.), joining a major multinational as Head of Infrastructure

and Real Estate, uses ChatGPT to draft a comprehensive, empathetic crisis-response policy, integrating corporate guidelines while maintaining military-grade operational readiness.

- **Scenario C (The Entrepreneur):** Wing Commander Amit (retd.) launches a drone-based agricultural startup. He uses Claude to draft his initial business plan, refine financial projections, and write compelling investor pitch emails, allowing his lean startup to compete with venture-backed firms.

4. Upskilling Fast: The "Be 10x" Capsule

For veterans looking to rapidly master these tools without wasting months on trial-and-error, we highly recommend looking into specialized programs like the Be 10x capsule. The Be 10x capsule is an intensive, highly practical upskilling program specifically designed to teach professionals how to integrate AI tools into their daily workflows. Instead of focusing on complex coding, the capsule focuses on applied AI productivity—teaching you prompt engineering, executive presentation automation, advanced data analysis, and workflow optimization.

For a transitioning officer, participating in a structured capsule like Be 10x acts as a rapid "resettlement course" in digital agility, ensuring that you enter your corporate role not just at par with your peers, but operating at a 10x speed and efficiency advantage.

5. Tactical Mistakes to Avoid in Your AI Journey

Add the authentication lesson
While AI is incredibly powerful, a military

corporate admin and jargon, allowing your core leadership, discipline, and strategic thinking to shine.

Empower yourself, embrace career reinvention, and commit to lifelong learning. Step into the corporate arena not as an outsider trying to fit in, but as a modern, AI-enabled strategic leader ready to command, innovate, and conquer.

Jai Hind.

About The Author

After early release from service, he has been in the corporate sector for past eight years. The range of experience includes Real estate, Shipping and Textile industry as a Vice president. He is a speaker at international seminars on ESG and Geopolitics. A Law graduate from Osmania University, he has recently qualified on ESG and Environmental sciences course from JNU. As a PhD in Political Science Dr Krishna raj Nambiar has taken up writing on a wide range of contemporary and Geopolitical issues. Recently, under the Corporate Affairs, he is a certified “Independent director” in the IICA databank.

He is presently enhancing the excellence amongst the young generation with mentorship at a Coaching institution in Hyderabad.



Brig (Dr.) Krishna Raj Nambiar (Retd), Ph D, LLB. PGDHR

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MOOKHOMUSINGS

CARTOONS ON POWER, WORK, WISDOM & WORLD AFFAIRS



WORLD

Understanding a complex world.



AI

Technology, intelligence & the road ahead.



WORK

Surviving, thriving & smiling at work.



WISDOM

Timeless lessons for modern chaos.



GROWTH

Luck favors the prepared mind.



CARTOON

Ideas. Satire. Perspective. In pictures.



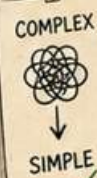
SYSTEMS

Networks, operations & everything that keeps the world connected.

STRATEGY



PATTERNS DON'T LIE. PEOPLE DO.



OBSERVE.
CORRELATE.
SIMPLIFY.
CARTOONIFY.



Mookho Musings





CHARTING THE TELECOM FUTURE WITH AI

STRATEGY. TECHNOLOGY. TRANSFORMATION.

With nearly 39 years in telecom operations, I've seen waves of change. But AI? This is a tidal shift.



1 THE INDUSTRY IS EVOLVING—FAST



- 5G** 5G is the foundation, not the finish line.
- Cloud & Edge** are rewiring networks.
- AI is transforming operations, customer experience and growth.
- Customers expect seamless, instant, intelligent.

The question is no longer "Should we change?" It's "How fast can we lead it?"

2 STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES FOR TELECOM LEADERS

- AUTOMATE TO ELEVATE**
Use AI to drive autonomous operations & predictive assurance.
- MONETIZE INTELLIGENCE**
Turn data into AI-powered products and personalized experiences.
- BUILD AI-NATIVE CAPABILITIES**
Invest in AI platforms, MLOps, and responsible AI practices.
- ECOSYSTEM OVER SILOS**
Partner, integrate and co-create across the value chain.

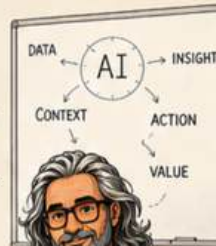
Networks connect. AI multiplies value.



3 AI PRODUCT MANAGEMENT IN TELECOM

It's not just tech. It's value.

- ✓ Solve real customer & operational pain.
- ✓ Start small, validate fast, scale smart.
- ✓ Blend domain expertise with data & AI.
- ✓ Measure impact, not just activity.



The best AI products solve problems people care about.

4 FROM OPERATOR TO STRATEGIST: THE EVOLUTION OF LEADERSHIP

Telecom has changed. So has leadership.

- ★ See the system, not just the task.
- 🔍 Look beyond today, design for tomorrow.
- 👥 Build trust across functions, not silos.
- 🎯 Turn strategy into execution that lasts.

Experience builds perspective.
Perspective builds strategy.
Strategy builds legacy.



5 LEADERSHIP LESSONS THAT NEVER CHANGE

- Stay Curious**
Keep learning. The best leaders never stop asking better questions.
- Lead with Purpose**
Clarity of purpose aligns people when complexity rises.
- Empower People**
Outcomes come from teams who own the mission.
- Operate with Integrity**
Trust is the ultimate competitive advantage.

Technology changes.
Character compounds.



6 THE AI-POWERED TELECOM FUTURE

- 🚀 Autonomous networks that self-heal.
- 👤 Hyper-personalized experiences.
- 📈 New revenue from AI-powered platforms & ecosystem plays.
- 🌍 Sustainable operations with lower cost and higher impact.

We're not just building networks.
We're building intelligent futures.



7 YOUR NEXT CHAPTER

This isn't a new playbook.
It's a new game.

*Bring your experience.
Bring your judgement.
Bring your courage.*

The future needs leaders, not followers.



*You don't need to know everything about AI.
You need to know what it makes possible—and what's worth building.*

*Stay sharp. Stay grounded.
Stay relevant.*

**Lead the shift.
Make it matter**

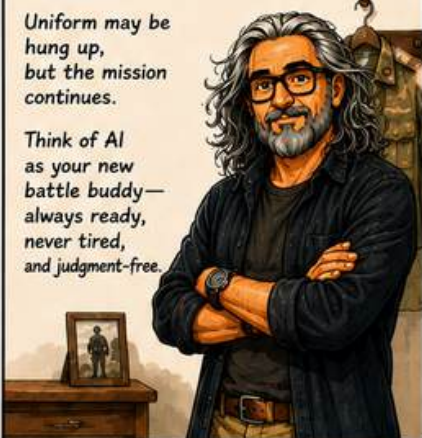
Mookhe Musings

MookhoMusings: AI Assistant

1. NEW MISSION, NEW TOOLSET

Uniform may be hung up, but the mission continues.

Think of AI as your new battle buddy—always ready, never tired, and judgment-free.



2. MEET YOUR AI ASSISTANT

ChatGPT is like a well-briefed junior officer.

- ✓ Quick to learn
- ✓ Clear in communication
- ✓ Helps plan, write, organise, research & more
- ✓ Available 24x7



3. START SIMPLE, START TODAY

You don't need to be a techie. Just start with everyday tasks.

Try asking:

- "Plan a healthy weekly routine"
- "Summarise this news for me"
- "Help me write a thank-you note"



4. MAKE IT PART OF YOUR ROUTINE

Use AI in pockets of your day.

- Morning Brief: News, weather, market, updates
- Plan the Day: To-do list, appointments, priorities
- Learn Something: History, tech, languages, leadership
- Nightly Debrief: Reflect, journal, plan tomorrow



5. PRACTICAL WAYS TO USE AI



WRITE BETTER
Emails, letters, resumes, speeches, articles



STAY INFORMED
Get summaries, explainers, comparisons



HEALTH & FITNESS
Workout plans, diet tips, wellness advice



TRAVEL SMART
Itineraries, packing lists, local tips



MANAGE FINANCES
Budgeting help, tax info, investment basics



UNLOCK CREATIVITY
Ideas for hobbies, content, projects

6. GOOD COMMANDS, BETTER ANSWERS

Be clear. Be specific. Give context—like a good Operations Order.

Example:

"I'm a retired Army officer interested in photography. Suggest a 4-week plan to improve my skills."

The better your brief, the better the output.



7. AIMING FOR YOUR NEXT ROLE?

AI can be your career battle buddy too.

- Create a strong CV tailored to the role you want
- Find relevant jobs, companies & trends
- Prepare for interviews: Mock Q&A, likely questions, STAR responses
- Highlight your military strengths in corporate language

Brief it right. Refine together. You've got this!



8. YOUR DATA, YOUR CALL

AI is smart, but you're in command.

- ✓ Don't share sensitive or personal info
- ✓ Verify critical information
- ✓ Use AI as an assistant, not a replacement for your judgment

SECURITY FIRST. DISCIPLINE ALWAYS.



9. KEEP LEARNING, STAY CURIOUS

The world is evolving. You've adapted before—you can do it again.

AI is not here to replace veterans.

It's here to amplify you.

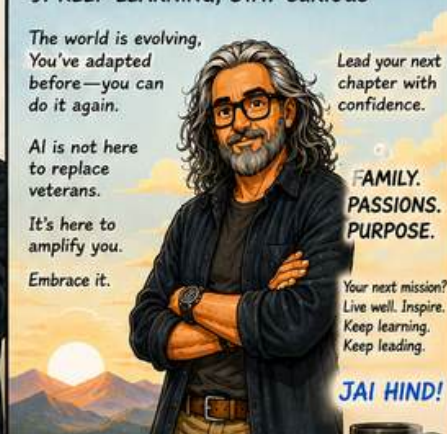
Embrace it.

Lead your next chapter with confidence.

FAMILY. PASSIONS. PURPOSE.

Your next mission? Live well. Inspire. Keep learning. Keep leading.

JAI HIND!



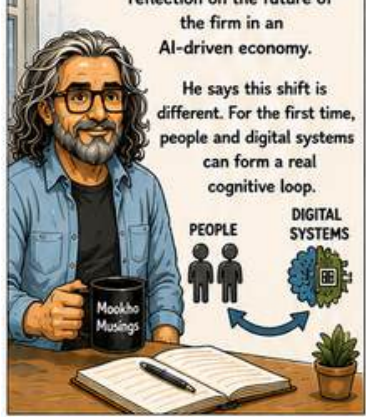
★ DISCIPLINE MADE YOU, EXPERIENCE DEFINES YOU. AI EMPOWERS YOU. → MISSION CONTINUES.



MookhoMusings: Future AI Firm = Human Capital + Token Capital

1 Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella just published a powerful reflection on the future of the firm in an AI-driven economy.

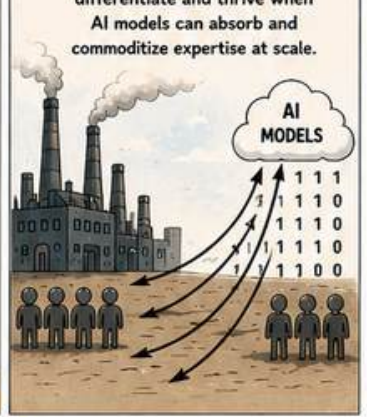
He says this shift is different. For the first time, people and digital systems can form a real cognitive loop.



PEOPLE

DIGITAL SYSTEMS

2 What's at stake isn't the tools. It's how companies learn, build IP, differentiate and thrive when AI models can absorb and commoditize expertise at scale.



AI MODELS

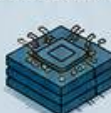
3 His provocation: every firm must build two forms of capital.

HUMAN CAPITAL

- Knowledge
- Judgment
- Relationships
- Ingenuity
- Pattern Recognition

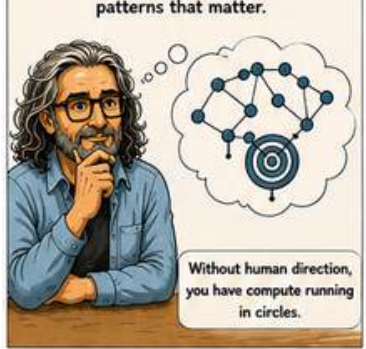
TOKEN CAPITAL

The AI capability the firm builds and owns



And as token capital grows, human capital only becomes **MORE** valuable.

4 Human agency is the engine. Humans set goals, connect dots, build relationships, and see patterns that matter.



Without human direction, you have compute running in circles.

5 The real opportunity isn't picking the best model—it's building a learning loop where human capital and token capital compound.



You can offload a task, or even a job. But you can never offload your learning.

6 That calls for a new architecture—agentic systems that improve over time while keeping the firm's IP under its control and sovereignty.



Switch out a "generalist" model without losing the "company veteran" expertise built into your system.

7 Workflows, domain knowledge and judgment must be turned into AI systems that get better with use.

PRIVATE EVALS (outcomes that matter)

PRIVATE RL ENVIRONMENTS (real traces, real learning)

KNOWLEDGE BASE (institutional memory)

IMPROVE WITH EACH USE

Capture signal. Reinforce learning. Make knowledge queryable and tokens more efficient.

8 This loop becomes the firm's new IP—a hill climbing machine that compounds.



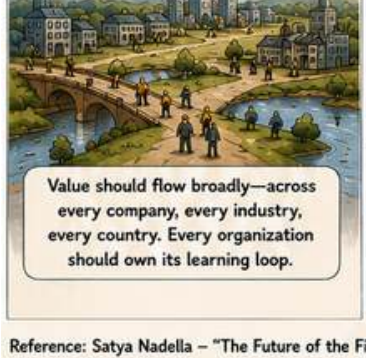
Every improved workflow creates better training signal—accelerating tacit knowledge unique to the firm. Early movers build an advantage that's hard to replicate.

9 He warns of a world where a few models eat everything.



We've seen what hollowed-out economies look like. Let's not repeat that in the AI era.

10 The priority? A frontier ecosystem, not just a frontier model.



Value should flow broadly—across every company, every industry, every country. Every organization should own its learning loop.

11 Platforms should enable more value on top than they capture inside—so companies can innovate and build their own value continuously.



That's the ethos of platforms done right—unlocking more value for everyone.

12 When firms build learning loops, everyone benefits.

EMPLOYEES: Expertise amplified

COMPANIES: Value created

COMMUNITIES: Benefits shared

That's how we drive value for the firm and the broader economy. A stable equilibrium worth building—together.



Reference: Satya Nadella – "The Future of the Firm in an AI-Driven Economy"

MookhoMusings



Travel Brace
CONNECTING PEOPLE & PLACES

One Year. Endless Destinations.

TRAVEL CALENDAR

2026-2027

12 MONTHS. 12 DESTINATIONS. ENDLESS MEMORIES.

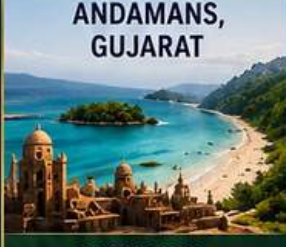
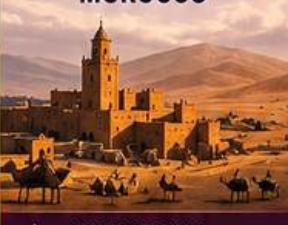


 CURATED EXPERIENCES

 UNFORGETTABLE MEMORIES

 WELL PLANNED ITINERARIES

 TRAVEL WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE

AUG '26 AFRICA   WILDLIFE SAFARIS, NATURE & ADVENTURE	SEP '26 KAZAKHSTAN, UZBEKISTAN, GEORGIA   RICH CULTURE, HISTORIC CITIES & SCENIC LANDSCAPES	OCT '26 SINGAPORE, THAILAND, MALAYSIA, BALI   VIBRANT CITIES, BEACHES, ISLANDS & CULTURES	NOV '26 AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND   ICONIC LANDMARKS, NATURAL WONDERS & SCENIC BEAUTY	
DEC '26 ANDAMANS, GUJARAT   BEACH ESCAPES, HERITAGE, CULTURE & WILDLIFE	JAN '27 MOROCCO   EXOTIC MEDINAS, DESERTS & VIBRANT CULTURE	FEB '27 AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND   STUNNING LANDSCAPES, ADVENTURE & RELAXATION	MAR '27 CHINA, MONGOLIA, LAOS   ANCIENT HISTORY, BREATHTAKING NATURE & SERENE CULTURES	
APR '27 EUROPE   ICONIC CITIES, HISTORIC LANDMARKS & TIMELESS EXPERIENCES	<i>Let's Go Somewhere Amazing!</i> 		WHY TRAVEL WITH US?  SAFE & RELIABLE  EXPERT PLANNING  BEST VALUE FOR MONEY  24/7 SUPPORT	 <i>Memories Last Forever</i>

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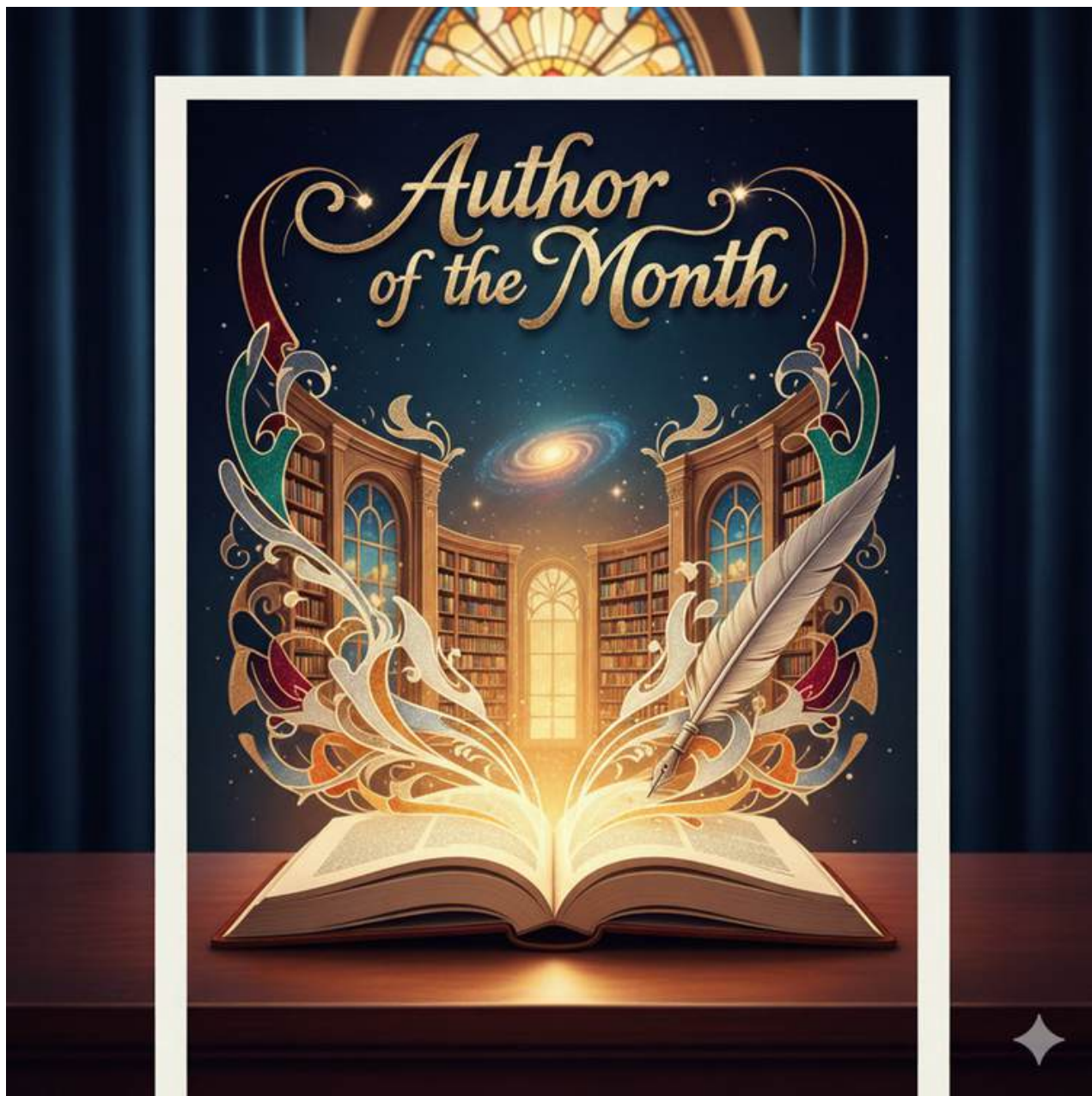
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Author of the Month

Lt Col Hardeep Singh Ghuman



Welcome to this month's featured segment for our veteran community. Shifting from the tactical world to the creative one is a profound transition, and capturing the sheer depth of military experience, history, and human vulnerability requires a distinct kind of courage

About the Author

For our "Author of the Month" feature, we are highlighting **Hardeep Singh Ghuman** and his compelling anthology, **The Dark Edge of Dawn: Ten Stories from the Fault Lines of Humanity**. Given his deep military lineage and the raw, global scope of these stories - ranging from the poignant tribute to Lieutenant Ummer Fayaz to the tense, historical weight of the post-Operation Blue Star Golden Temple - these questions are designed to dig past standard talking points and uncover the true heart of his work.



Col Hardeep Singh Ghuman

Q Please tell us a little introduction about yourself. Your early childhood, schooling and subsequent Army career. Was writing a hobby in school or college?

My parents left everything behind in Sialkot during Partition and entered India as refugees after a border was drawn by Cyril Radcliffe, a man unfamiliar with the country's history and geography. My father, who had been serving in the ranks in the Army since 1940, meant our family moved every two or three years, making stability a rare luxury.

By the time I graduated, I had studied in eight different schools and colleges across several states, entirely in the Hindi medium. Although I had no formal training in English, I taught myself through patience and persistence, reading newspapers with a dictionary beside me, listening to pronunciation, studying sentence construction, making mistakes, and learning from them. That journey gave me not only a command of the language, but also confidence.

I was commissioned into the Kumaon

Regiment in August 1982 from OTS, Madras. After taking PMR in 2003, I moved to the civil sector and currently serve in a senior leadership position at a private university in Pune.

Q How did you get into writing? Is writing a mission for you or a passion or a hobby or a release?

The answer is neither simple nor sudden. I did not grow up dreaming of becoming an author, nor did I harbour any great ambition to see my name in print. Writing came to me gradually, almost by accident. Looking back, I realize it had always been waiting quietly in the background.

Perhaps the seeds were sown much earlier. My father was a Punjabi writer who authored numerous books, poems, and children's stories. Two of his works are still part of the school curriculum in Punjab. His stories were translated into Urdu by his friend Sibtul Hassan Zaigham in Lahore, and two others into Russian by Natasha Tolstoy, granddaughter of Leo Tolstoy, for publication in Moscow. As a child, I did not appreciate

the significance of those achievements. Only later did I realize that literature has the rare ability to transcend borders, languages, and politics.

The turning point came unexpectedly after a short holiday in Goa with six colleagues. While waiting for our return flight, someone suggested that one of us should write about the trip. I volunteered, intending to produce a few pages of recollections. Instead, those memories gradually evolved into a 36-page part real-part fiction story, *Catharsis – Into the Wilds and Out*, written under the pen name 'Zorawar'. That was the moment I discovered the joy of transforming lived experience into fiction, and there has been no looking back since.

Q Many congratulations on the publishing of your book “The Dark Edge of Dawn: Ten Stories from the Fault Lines of Humanity”. The Dark Edge of Dawn traverses incredibly diverse landscapes, from Idaho to the Arctic, and Belize to Punjab. What was the initial catalyst that compelled you to tie such vastly different global geographies together under one thematic umbrella?

I believe one of the realities of our time is that people's attention spans have become shorter. Readers often appreciate variety rather than remaining immersed in a single, lengthy narrative. That is one of the reasons why, like my first book, *Kairos: The Time to Strike is Now!*, this book, *The Dark Edge of Dawn*, is a collection of ten stories. Each story explores a different facet of the human condition; love, war, conflict, murder, political assassination, the drug trade, and more. At the same time, I deliberately chose diverse settings across countries and continents to introduce readers

to different cultures, traditions, and environments through fiction.

Ultimately, my objective is simple: to offer readers variety without compromising authenticity, while reminding them that beneath our different geographies, the human condition remains remarkably universal.

Q You come from a proud, multi-generational Military lineage. How much did your family's deep-rooted history in the Armed Forces influence your decision to explore the "fault lines of humanity" through fiction?

I believe my fascination with the "fault lines of humanity" began with the Partition of India. Although I was born later, Partition remains the first and most profound fault line in my consciousness. My parents lost everything and entered their own country as refugees, and their experiences continue to affect me deeply.

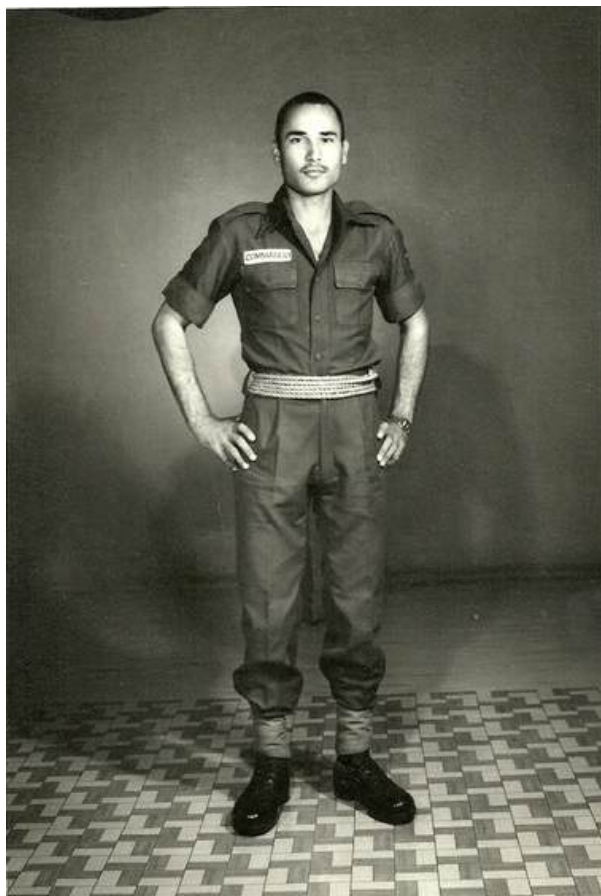
Growing up in a Military family reinforced that perspective. I watched my father spend long periods away on field exercises and operations, while my mother held the family together. He served in almost every major conflict India has fought since Independence, including the 1971 Indo-Pak War as part of the 6 Mountain Division. Those experiences gave me an early understanding of the quiet sacrifices made by Military families.

As a writer, however, my interest extends beyond war. I am fascinated by how people respond when their values are tested. Whether a soldier, a teacher, a doctor, a politician, or an ordinary citizen, everyone encounters moments that reveal true character. Some preserve their humanity; others surrender to

fear, greed, hatred, or ambition. Those defining moments are the fault lines of humanity that I find most compelling to explore through fiction.

Q One of your most poignant stories is inspired by the brutal killing of Lieutenant Ummer Fayaz. For the Military community, this is a deeply raw subject. What was the internal journey like for you when deciding to put ink to paper on a tragedy that hits so close to home?

Lieutenant Ummer Fayaz was two terms senior to my son at the Indian Military Academy, and both belonged to Zojila Company. They became close friends. Whenever my wife visited the Academy with homemade sweets, she would invariably share them between the two Gentleman Cadets; her own son and Ummer. To us, they

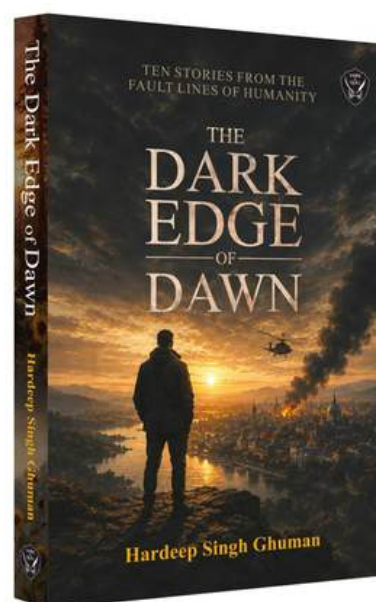


During My Commando Course

were never defined by their faiths; they were simply two young men united by the same dream of serving India.

When the news of Ummer's brutal killing reached us, it felt deeply personal. We had known him as a cheerful, sincere, hardworking, and exceptionally promising young officer. My thoughts immediately went to his parents and sisters, whose loss is beyond words. The tragedy reinforced my conviction that humanity must always stand above every other identity. A soldier goes into battle not as a Hindu, a Muslim, a Sikh, or a Christian, but simply as a soldier, prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice.

Before writing the story, I asked one of my course mates, Lieutenant General Sukhdeep Sangwan of the Rajputana Rifles, to help me verify the facts from the Valley. Even then, writing it was emotionally difficult. It was not merely a story; it was my tribute to a young officer whose life embodied courage, dignity, and selfless service. The depth of that grief is reflected in the line, "I am the divine flame" and the passage that precedes it.



The Latest Book by the Author

Q The quote closing your synopsis states, "In the end, we are all defined by one moment." Was there a specific "defining moment" in your own life or career that made you realize these ten stories had to be told?

As a matter of fact, no, there was no single defining moment that compelled me to write these stories. Rather, they are the product of a lifetime of experiences - what I have seen, what I have endured, and what I have quietly reflected upon over the years. With age comes perspective, and I reached a point where I felt that certain values that I hold close to my conscience should not remain confined to me. They deserved to be shared with my family, my friends, and, through fiction, with a wider audience.

I have always believed that an honourable life is built on honesty, integrity, moral courage, physical courage, and the courage of conviction. Physical courage certainly has its place, but it is often moral courage, the willingness to do what is right when it is difficult, that truly defines a person. If my stories encourage even a few readers to pause, reflect, and choose the right path when confronted with their own defining moments, I will consider my purpose as a writer fulfilled.

Q Writing came to you later in life, shaped by decades of observation and travel. How did your disciplined background affect your daily writing routine? Did you approach the blank page with Military precision, or did you let the process be more fluid?

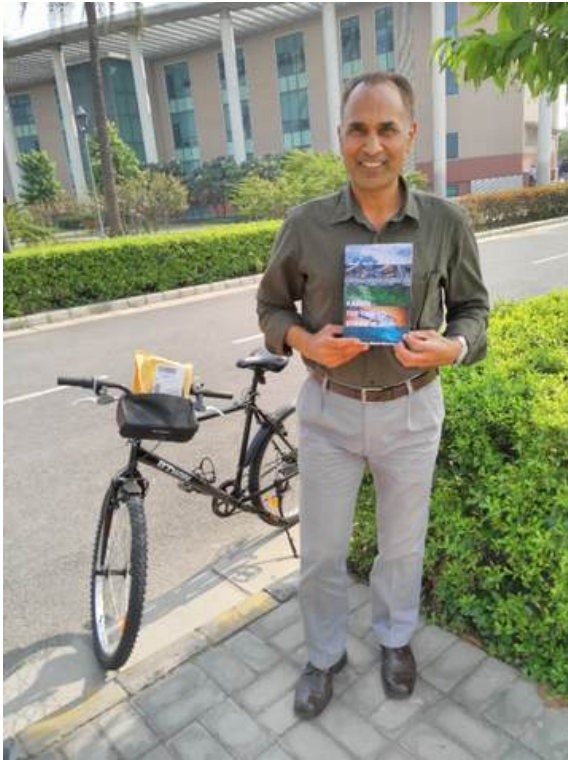
It has been a combination of both, Military precision and creative fluidity. Every story

begins with a framework. Drawing upon my Military training, I prepare a detailed skeleton that includes the characters, timelines, locations, distances, travel times, and the sequence of events. Only after that foundation is in place do I immerse myself in research, often spending weeks or even months understanding the setting, the people, and the circumstances before I begin writing. My years in the Army taught me to approach every task with clarity, discipline, and commitment. Once I take up a story, I am prepared to put in the extra hours, whether late at night or early in the morning, until I am satisfied that I have done justice to it.

At the same time, the creative process cannot be dictated by a clock. Alongside my professional responsibilities and family commitments, I write whenever time permits. There are days when I do not write a single line, and there are others when I complete ten or even more pages in one sitting because everything seems to fall into place. So, while inspiration remains fluid, the discipline to nurture it comes from my Military background. In many ways, that discipline has been the greatest force multiplier in my journey as a writer.

Q Spies, soldiers, outcasts, and cultists all inhabit your book. How do you step into the mindsets of characters whose motivations, like those in a Romanian doomsday cult, are completely alien to the traditional Military ethos of order and duty?

On a lighter note, there is an old saying: "It takes all kind of people to make up the world." I think that is what makes fiction so fascinating. A writer cannot limit himself to heroes alone; he must also understand those



With a copy of my first book, Kairos – The Time to Strike is Now!

whose beliefs, ambitions, fears, and convictions are very different from his own.

The first step is always research. The internet is an invaluable resource, but it is only one part of my process. Whenever I visit a country that may become the setting for a story, I observe its people, culture, and environment, and gather information from both official and informal sources. I also rely on friends living in different countries, widely travelled family members, and my personal library to ensure authenticity.

Writing about spies, cultists, or criminals does not require me to agree with them; it requires me to understand how they think. My objective is not to justify their actions but to portray them convincingly, because even the darkest characters believe they are acting for a reason.

AI has become a valuable research

companion, helping me organize information and cross-check facts. Ultimately, however, imagination and judgement must remain the writer's own.

Q Given the global scale of your narratives (such as a tension-filled Arctic voyage), what did your research process look like to ensure the technical and geographical details felt entirely authentic to the reader?

Authenticity is something I am always conscious about, especially when a story is set in a part of the world that is unfamiliar to many readers. For *In Troubled Waters*, I relied heavily on the assistance of my Russian friend, Andrey Lvovich, who was then based in Moscow and now lives in Krasnodar. Through his own knowledge and his network of friends and relatives in the Baltic countries, especially Estonia, he helped me verify numerous geographical, cultural, and logistical details.

When I shared my manuscript with him, he identified several inconsistencies that I had overlooked. Some of those corrections required me to rewrite entire passages that had taken considerable time and effort to produce. Naturally, it was not easy to discard work that I had laboured over, but accuracy mattered far more than personal attachment to my words. If readers find *In Troubled Waters* authentic and believable, a major share of the credit belongs to Andrey and not to me.

Q The collection shifts from global geopolitical tension to deeply intimate personal betrayal. How do you manage the pacing and emotional transitions within a single anthology, so the reader doesn't get whiplash?

To be candid, I did not consciously plan the emotional sequencing of the anthology while I was writing the individual stories. Each story was written independently, inspired by a subject or a real-life incident that captured my imagination at that particular time. I simply wrote the story that demanded to be told. Only later, when I had accumulated enough stories for a new collection, did I begin thinking of them as a single book. I also follow one simple rule: every story is placed in the book in the chronological order of its writing.

Your question has made me reflect on an aspect that perhaps I did not analyze deeply enough at the time. In hindsight, the variety of themes may actually work in the reader's favour. After an emotionally intense story, a change in setting, pace, or subject offers the reader a chance to reset before entering a different world. Rather than creating emotional whiplash, I hope it creates a sense of freshness and anticipation. As writers, we continue to learn with every book, and this is certainly an aspect I shall be even more conscious of in future publications.

Q A central theme in your work is the incredibly fragile line between power and vulnerability. In your view, do characters find their true strength when they are at their most powerful, or when they are stripped down to their most vulnerable?

I believe it can happen in both situations. A person's true character is often revealed when they hold power, but it can be revealed just as clearly when they are stripped of it. Power tests how responsibly we exercise authority, while vulnerability tests our resilience, courage, and integrity. Both are defining moments.

If I had to choose, however, I would say that the more vulnerable person often possesses an unexpected advantage. Someone who has little left to lose can display extraordinary courage and determination. Such a person is more likely to act without fear, to take risks that others would avoid, and to fight with complete commitment. History is full of examples where the seemingly weaker individual has prevailed against far greater odds because of that very mindset. The US misadventures in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and recently Iran, should support my point of view. Nearer home, Op Pawan is an example.

That is why I find vulnerable characters so compelling to write about. It is often in their darkest moments that they discover their greatest strength.

Q Your story set in the post-Operation Blue Star era deals with a convergence of faith, history, and hidden motives. What do you hope readers, especially those from younger generations who didn't live through that era, take away from that specific moment of reckoning?

Every generation views history through a different lens. Many young people today are naturally more focused on the future than on the conflicts of the past, though there are also those who are genuinely curious to understand why societies become divided.

My hope is not that readers will agree with one side or the other, but that they will appreciate the complexity of that period. History is rarely black and white. People often act out of deeply held convictions, a sense of injustice, fear, or loyalty, and different individuals interpret the same events in very different ways.



As the Battalion QM in a field location

Some readers may feel that the protagonists believed they were standing up for a cause they considered just. Others may conclude that they sacrificed their lives in pursuit of a conflict that ultimately brought immense suffering to everyone involved. Both perspectives exist, and it is not my role as a novelist to dictate which one the reader should adopt.

What I hope younger readers take away is the importance of understanding history before judging it. Above all, I hope they recognize the immense human cost of prolonged conflict and the enduring value of dialogue, reconciliation, and humanity over hatred and violence.

Q In your stories, conflict isn't just external (war, insurgencies); it's deeply internal. What has writing this book taught

you about how human beings process trauma and moral dilemmas when placed under extraordinary stress?

Writing this book reinforced my belief that there is no universal pattern to human behaviour under extreme stress. When people feel that their life, dignity, or deeply held beliefs are under threat, they respond very differently. Some endure their suffering quietly, while others choose to resist, believing they have little left to lose. Trauma, fear, grief, and moral conflict can cloud judgement, leading even fundamentally decent people to make decisions they would never have imagined under normal circumstances.

As I explored these characters, I realized that human psychology remains one of the most complex and unpredictable subjects of all.



As Maj Akram Sheikh (Standing) of Pak Army in a skit based on Samba Spying Case

There are no fixed templates for how people respond to extraordinary circumstances. The same crisis can produce courage in one person, despair in another, and cruelty in a third. History offers many unsettling examples. Pol Pot (Khmer Rouge), despite being an educated man, went on to preside over one of the twentieth century's greatest human catastrophes, reminding us that education alone does not guarantee wisdom, compassion, or moral restraint.

If this book has taught me anything, it is that the greatest battles are often fought within the human mind. My story *The Daughter of Sorrow* explores that difficult terrain in greater depth, examining how trauma, ideology, and circumstance can shape both individual choices and the course of history.

Q Having explored the human cost of conflict from so many angles, has your personal definition of what it means to be a "hero" evolved from when you first began your writing journey?

Oh yes - very much so. When I was younger, like many people, I associated heroism primarily with physical courage, battlefield

success, and acts of extraordinary bravery. I still admire those qualities, but my understanding of heroism has evolved over the years. Today, I believe the greatest heroes are those who retain their humanity when circumstances make it easy to abandon it. It takes immense courage not only to fight, but also to show compassion when one has every reason not to.

One of my greatest heroes is the German fighter ace Franz Stigler. In December 1943, he intercepted a badly damaged American B-17 bomber flown by Charles "Charlie" Brown. Instead of destroying an aircraft that could neither defend itself nor escape, Stigler chose mercy over victory. He escorted the bomber safely out of German airspace, protecting it from anti-aircraft fire, saluted the US pilot, and returned home without claiming a kill. In that moment, he placed humanity above hatred and conscience above Military glory.

To me, that is the highest form of heroism. True heroes are not defined merely by the battles they win, but by the values they refuse to surrender. That belief has grown stronger with every story I have written.



In my office in Shiv Nadar University

Q Many Military veterans harbour incredible stories, experiences, and perspectives but hesitate to share them. What would you say to a veteran who feels their voice isn't "literary" enough to write a book?

I would tell them the story of Wilma Rudolph. As a child, she was told she would never walk again after contracting polio. Yet she went on to become an Olympic champion. Her life reminds us that our greatest obstacles are often the ones we create in our own minds.

Many veterans hesitate to write because they fear the unknown. They doubt whether their language is polished enough or whether their stories are worth telling. I believe those fears are misplaced.

I consider myself largely self-educated. My formal education was entirely in the Hindi medium, and whatever command I have of English today has come through years of perseverance and self-learning. If I can write

and have my work published, I am convinced that countless veterans can do the same - and many will write far better than I ever can.

Readers remember honesty more than literary perfection. Veterans possess something that no creative writing course can teach; lived experience. My advice is simple: begin writing. You can always improve what you have written, but you cannot improve a blank page.

Q What does your typical writing day look like when you are writing a book?

I do most of my thinking away from the keyboard. Story ideas, plot twists, and character developments often come to me while I am engaged in routine work or during my evening walks. Those quiet moments allow my mind to wander freely.

The actual writing usually happens either early in the morning or late at night, with the door to my room closed and all distractions

kept to a minimum. I value silence because it helps me remain completely immersed in the world of the story.

Once a story is complete, I deliberately put it aside for a day or two before reviewing it. Returning with a fresh mind makes it much easier to identify inconsistencies in characters, dates, timelines, distances, and the sequence of events. I also prefer to complete the review in a single sitting because my short-term memory is not particularly strong, and I do not want to lose the thread of the narrative. Accuracy, continuity, and consistency are extremely important to me.

I do not follow fixed writing hours. I write whenever I can find a quiet, uninterrupted window amidst my professional and personal responsibilities. During long writing sessions, I often get up for a few minutes and take a short walk. Those brief breaks help me clear my mind, return with renewed focus, and allow fresh ideas to unfold - rather like reopening my fatigued mind like a fully deployed parachute.

Q Fiction allows us to speak truths that raw data or memoirs sometimes hide. Why did you choose the medium of short stories rather than writing a traditional, non-fiction memoir of Military observations?

There are two principal reasons why I chose short fiction over a traditional memoir. The first is the reader. A collection of short stories offers variety, allowing readers to move from war to love, from political intrigue to moral conflict, without remaining tied to a single narrative. If one story does not resonate with a reader, another almost certainly will.

The second reason is the nature of my

writing. My stories often involve multiple characters, unfamiliar locations, and carefully researched historical or geopolitical settings. I have found it more effective to tell one complete story with clarity and impact than to sustain that complexity across a full-length novel.

That said, I greatly admire the novel as a literary form. I am currently working on my first novelette, set in Serbia, which I hope will be my first successful venture into longer fiction.

Ultimately, short stories allow me to explore a wide range of human experiences while giving readers both variety and authenticity.

Q How can our readers keen to pick up a copy of your book do so?

I would request my Veteran brothers and sisters to order the book, *The Dark Edge of Dawn* from either of the following two sources:

(a) Direct from the Publisher (Brig Rajendra Singh) Sabre and Quill:
<https://www.sabreandquill.com/products/the-dark-edge-of-dawn-ten-stories-from-the-fault-lines-of-humanity/5197527000004626092>

(b) From Amazon India:
<https://www.amazon.in/dp/B0H5523MBR>

I thank potential buyers in advance.

Q Rejection, self-doubt, and writer's block are part of the landscape for any author. What internal "mental armour" did you rely on to keep pushing forward until the anthology was complete?



Our family

Writing a book is a demanding journey. It consumes time, energy, and, at times, emotional resilience. There are moments when the words refuse to come, when self-doubt creeps in, and when abandoning the project seems the easier option.

At such moments, I rely on the same mindset that sustains a soldier on a long endurance march with full battle loads or a Chindit fighting through the jungles of Burma. A soldier reaches the objective not by taking giant leaps, but one determined step at a time. Writing is no different.

The greatest armour, therefore, is sheer willpower; the determination to finish what you have begun, regardless of temporary setbacks or fatigue. Whenever I feel discouraged, I remind myself why I started writing the story in the first place and what I hope the reader will take away from it.

There is a saying that has always resonated with me: "When you feel like giving up, remember why you started." That simple thought has carried me through many difficult days, both as a soldier and as a writer.

Q For our readers looking at your journey as the "Author of the Month" and wanting to take their first step toward publication, what is the single most vital piece of advice you can offer them today?

My advice is very simple: begin. Pick up a pen and a sheet of paper, or place your fingers on a keyboard, and start writing. Do not wait for the perfect idea, the perfect opening sentence, or the perfect moment. They rarely arrive on their own. It is only after you begin that your thoughts gradually take shape and your story starts finding its own voice. Do not be afraid of imperfect first drafts. Every published book begins as a collection of uncertain words that are revised, refined, and rewritten. The important thing is to write the first page.

One quotation has inspired me throughout my journey:



"When nothing seems to help, I go and look at a stonecutter hammering away at his rock, perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the hundred-and-first blow it will split in two, and I know it was not that blow that did it, but all that had gone before."

**“The road to Easy
Street goes through
the sewer.”**



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We have started with a Photography section “**Moment in Time**” to provide an outlet for creative side of our esteemed members. The rules for submission are as under:-

1. Forces Network members, spouses and their wards can submit images for publication.
2. No Nudity or Porn.
3. No mention of Mil establishments or unit identity or tac numbers or tail numbers.
4. It's a photography section so no images of various get togethers and social functions will be published.
5. The longer side of image should be 2048 pixels.
6. Maximum 5 images will be published every month. The images must be submitted by 20th of every month.
7. Mention your Instagram ID.
8. **While submitting the following details be submitted along with the suitable Title:-**
 - a. Aperture
 - b. Shutter speed
 - c. ISO
 - d. Camera used
 - e. Lens
 - f. Focal length.
 - g. In case of a mobile click, the same may please be mentioned.

All Photos may please be sent to forcesnetworkz@gmail.com by 20th of every month.



The Rising Sun by Col PK Shrivastava



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Blue Eyed Boy By Sqn Ldr Sukhbir Singh (Retd)

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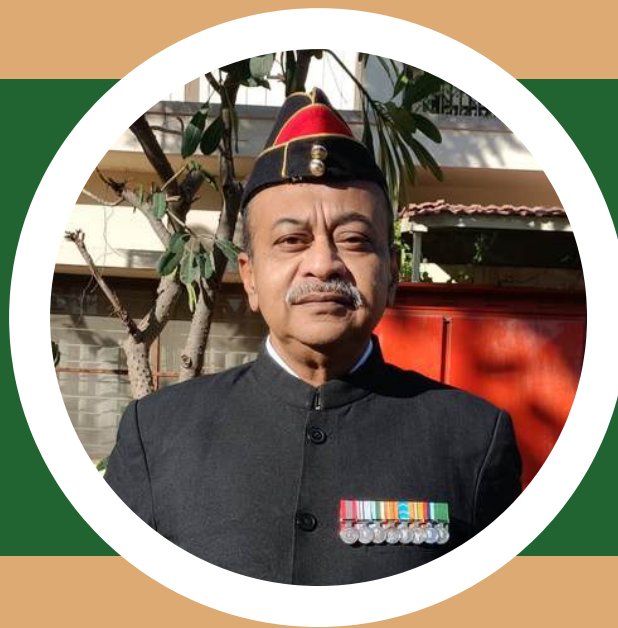
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***Dedicated Section for the Star
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LT
COL



NOEL
ELLIS

We welcome Col Noel to the folds of
the Forces Network .
We have decided to devote a Section
to his writing every month in the
ForceNet E-Zine .

International Driving License

By Lt Col Noel Ellis



If today I have to apply for an International Driving Permit, how should I go about it? I know I can Google it, Grok it, ChatGPT it and even ask Gemini, and the answer will be there in seconds. I am not interested in that. What if I ask you how to pass the international driving test? You need to read this...

The only people who can pass that practical driving test are the people of the Sun City. If you want an “expert driving licence”, then you have to go around the interior of the Blue City and come out unscathed. The faster you return without knocking down a person, cow or vehicle, you qualify for the “tatkai service” of getting the driving licence issued. No RTO or middleman required for that.

Why do I say this? Because when you go to the US or Europe, people drive on the right side of the road. This is just the opposite of how people drive in India. But if you are

anywhere in the city, you might start doubting your own traffic sense. The first question you ask yourself is, have the rules of driving changed? Am I driving on the “wrong side”, which I always thought was the right side?

What adds to the confusion is that on the side where the maximum number of people are driving, there is an RTO check post waiting to nab the culprits. They are doing their duty very sincerely and dedicatedly because they are not interested in vehicles with numbers starting with RJ 19. They are looking for anything that does not have an RJ registration plate.

In case they have not been able to “make enough”, then instead of RJ 19, they stop vehicles with registrations such as RJ 22 or RJ 27. This check post is generally close to a theka from where they can conveniently pick up their supplies, in kind, instead of issuing

challans.

The PUC chap sits just short of this post. He is probably the most helpful fellow on this side of the River Jojri. If you stop there for a tea break, he scans your vehicle number on his computer and politely reminds you that your PUC (Pollution Under Control) certificate has expired. You thank him profusely because the “mama” would probably have settled for a beer costing ₹300, while you get away by spending only seventy rupees for a proper PUC certificate.

If you miss getting your PUC done, he rings up the RTO mobile van and lets them know your vehicle number. As you approach a police naka, which is more of an ambush than a checkpoint, the first thing they ask for is your PUC certificate. You are now neatly caught in the traffic police trap.

Ironically, the PUC wala gets to park his own old, dilapidated Maruti van without a valid PUC certificate, and nobody ever checks it.

People who drive with an “international driving license” in India, which means driving on the wrong side, do it for very

practical reasons. They simply want to take the shortest shortcut home or to the shopping mall. Nobody has the time or patience to drive another two kilometers just to take a U-turn and waste precious fuel. After all, one small rule can always be broken for convenience.

Neither the rider nor the pillion passenger would be wearing helmets. The most common reasons are headache, the unbearable heat, or simply not wanting to spoil the hairstyle. They have a hundred reasons for not wearing one. Once their brains are spilled on the road, they blame the government for poor roads and poor traffic management.

I have never seen the use of headlights during the day as blatantly as these “wrong-siders” do. If they flash their headlights on high beam, you had better watch out. They are not going to slow down or move aside. You shall be held responsible if any mishap takes place.

The worst is at night. They switch on the wrong indicator so that you know someone is approaching, but they never dip their



People Cite Reasons Like unbearable Heat or Not Wanting to Spoil the Hairstyle As Reasons For Not Wearing a Helmet

headlights. You are expected to imagine what is coming towards you and avoid it for your own safety.

Zebra crossings are meant for zebras, not humans. We can cross any highway or road at will, at a place and time of our own choosing. This is done purely to surprise those who actually have the right of way. A red light is meant to stop outsiders. Locals make full use of the four-second gap between orange and red. They certainly deserve an International Driving License.

If you follow traffic rules in the Sun City, your chances of meeting with an accident are actually higher.

My humble appeal to the RTO is to issue a special license to these distinguished gentlemen called the "International Driving License".

Would you agree? I wonder!!!!!!!!!!

JAI HIND

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Lt Col Noel Ellis (retd)

About the Author

Lt Col Noel Ellis (retd) is an ex-NDA officer from 66th NDA course. He was commissioned in June 1985 into the Mechanised Infantry. Col Noel is a very vibrant writer. His articles relate to his deep experiences which he had as an Army officer. During his service he has interacted with numerous types of people, be it his colleagues, his seniors or his subordinates and each of his articles portrays that how vivid human nature is and how different their reactions to situations are. He is heavily into reading and leaves no opportunities to pen down his opinion about what is going on in the country. You can read his Blog here: [Blog](#)



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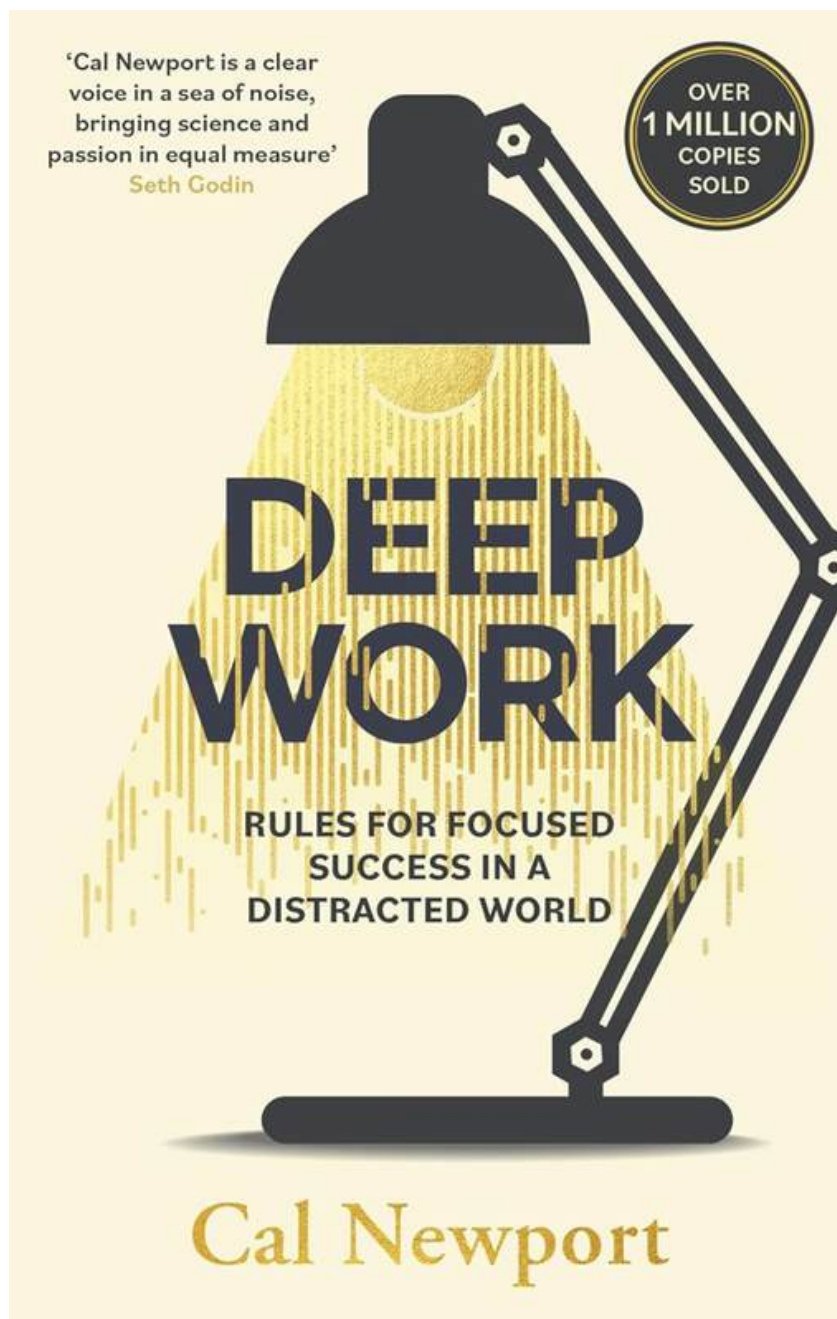
Book Review

Book Review: Winning the War for Attention in a Shifting Economy

By
The ForceNet E-Zine Editorial Team

Book Name: Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World

Author: Cal Newport



In an era where professional worth is increasingly measured by frantic responsiveness to emails and digital notifications, true competitive advantage lies in the exact opposite behaviour. Cal Newport's *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World* argues convincingly that the ability to concentrate without distraction is the defining, yet increasingly scarce, skill of the 21st century. For mid-career professionals and veterans stepping out of highly structured environments and into the chaotic modern knowledge economy, mastering this premise is a tactical imperative.

The Scope and Structure of Focus

Newport, a theoretical computer scientist and professor at Georgetown University, divides his manifesto into two distinct sections. Part 1, "The Idea," establishes the theoretical and economic foundation for his thesis, which he calls the "Deep Work Hypothesis". He defines deep work as professional activities performed in a state of distraction-free concentration that push cognitive capabilities to their limits, thereby creating new value and improving skills. Conversely, he defines "shallow work" as non-cognitively demanding, logistical tasks often performed while distracted, which create little new value and are easily replicated. Newport argues that as the digital age triggers a "Great Restructuring" of the economy, the spoils will disproportionately go to those who can work creatively with intelligent machines, those who are superstars in their fields, and those with access to capital.

To join the ranks of the successful, Newport asserts that workers must master two core abilities: the ability to quickly learn hard

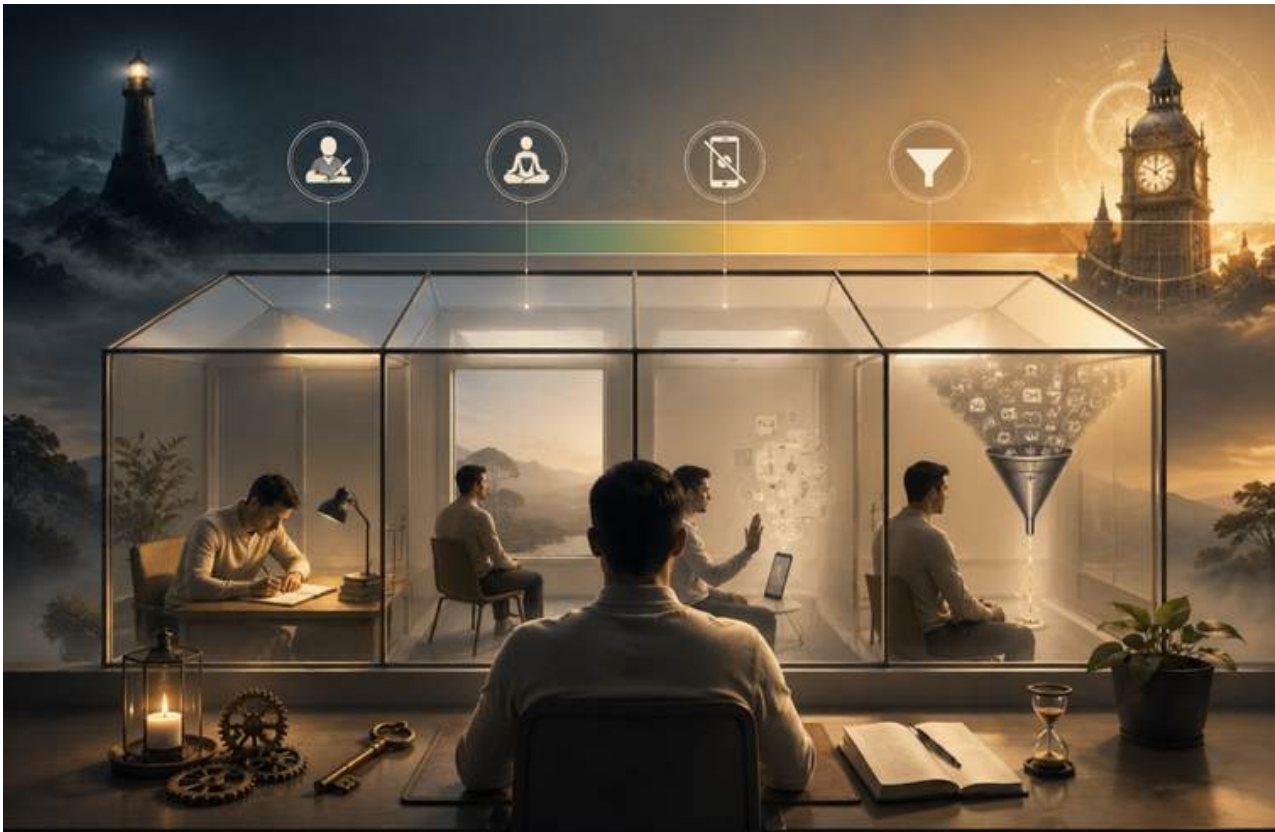
things, and the ability to produce at an elite level in terms of both quality and speed. Both of these abilities, he argues, require a rigorous commitment to deep work. Through neurological, psychological, and philosophical lenses, Newport makes a compelling case that a deep life is not only economically lucrative but fundamentally more meaningful.

Part 2, "The Rules," transitions from theory to a highly actionable blueprint. Newport outlines four primary rules to cultivate this capability: Work Deeply, Embrace Boredom, Quit Social Media, and Drain the Shallows. He provides a spectrum of scheduling philosophies—from the completely isolated "Monastic" approach to the highly structured "Rhythmic" method—allowing readers to tailor deep work habits to the realities of their specific careers. By acknowledging that willpower is a finite resource, Newport provides systematic rituals to minimize the friction of transitioning into a state of intense focus.

A Critical Appraisal for the Mid-Career Professional

Deep Work reads less like a traditional self-help book and more like a strategic field manual for the modern intellect. Newport's prose is authoritative, clear, and devoid of the academic jargon that often plagues behavioural science writing. He relies on historical case studies—from Carl Jung building a stone tower retreat to out-think Sigmund Freud, to Bill Gates taking isolated "Think Weeks" to foresee the Internet's impact—to prove that depth has always been the engine of world-changing innovation.

For veterans translating military leadership into corporate success, Newport's framing is



Work Deeply, Embrace Boredom, Quit Social Media, and Drain the Shallows

particularly resonant. The military excels at cultivating intense, mission-oriented focus during operations. However, transitioning into the civilian sector often means losing that imposed structure and facing a "bewildering psychic landscape" where productivity is ambiguous and easily conflated with visible busyness. Newport accurately identifies this "metric black hole," noting that without clear indicators of success, knowledge workers default to a culture of constant connectivity and email responsiveness simply because it is the path of least resistance.

Where the book truly shines is in its practical application for those stepping into complex, rapidly evolving technical domains. Consider the modern professional tasked with leading a masterclass on artificial intelligence tools, explaining the intricacies of CPU versus TPU architecture in AI data centers, or migrating an 18-year-old digital community to a modern

web platform. These are cognitively demanding tasks that cannot be accomplished in ten-minute intervals between Slack messages. Newport's concept of "deliberate practice"—which requires tightening one's focus on a specific skill while ruthlessly eliminating distraction to trigger neurological myelin growth—is the exact mechanism required to master these complex systems quickly.

However, Deep Work is not without its blind spots. Newport's advice to "Quit Social Media" and become "Hard to Reach" can feel slightly out of touch for professionals whose roles explicitly require networking, community management, or rapid crisis response. While he acknowledges that a CEO's job requires a different, more fractured attention span than a computer programmer's, some of his solutions lean heavily toward those with high levels of workplace

autonomy.

Fortunately, Newport mitigates this by offering the "Journalistic" and "Bimodal" philosophies of deep work, which allow professionals to squeeze intense focus into the margins of a demanding schedule. Furthermore, he does not dismiss collaboration. By advocating for a "hub-and-spoke" model, he recognizes that serendipitous encounters and collaborative whiteboard sessions are vital for sparking innovation, provided workers can retreat to an isolated "spoke" to actually execute the heavy cognitive lifting required to bring those ideas to fruition.

The Verdict

Cal Newport's *Deep Work* is an essential read for anyone navigating a mid-career pivot or seeking to elevate their professional output in a noise-filled world. It challenges the conventional wisdom that ubiquitous connectivity is a virtue, reframing it instead as a cognitive liability.

By treating our attention as our most valuable professional resource, Newport offers a paradigm shift: we must train our minds for depth with the same rigour and discipline we would use to train our bodies for physical combat. For those willing to embrace the discomfort of boredom and the friction of disconnecting, the rewards are immense. *Deep Work* delivers a powerful reminder that in the knowledge economy, the spoils do not go to the busiest; they go to the most focussed.

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thousand lives before
he dies . . . The man
who never reads lives
only one."***

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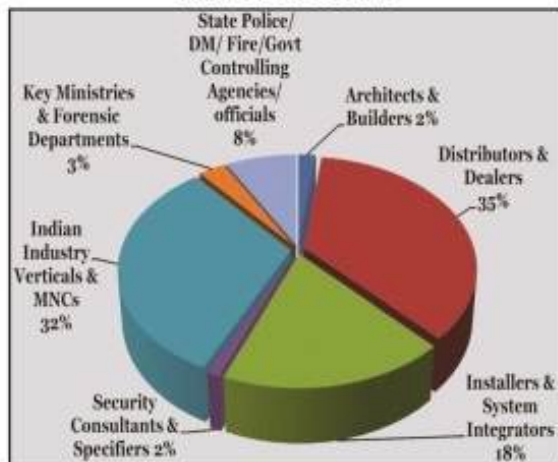
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