

Transcript | AI Skills Lab | AI for Email Writing

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00:00:06.100 --> 00:00:29.579

Joel Smith: Hello! Hello, everybody, and welcome to the second edition of the AI Skills Lab, covering AI for email writing. My name is Joel Smith, and I'm the events manager here at Apolitical. It would be great to hear from all of you, so please do post in the chat where you're joining us from, and what organization you work for.

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00:00:29.770 --> 00:00:46.169

Joel Smith: Today, we're going to be covering how to use AI tools for email writing, one of the most time-consuming, everyday tasks in government. You'll learn how to use AI tools to draft faster, fine-tune tone, and handle tricky replies with confidence.

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00:00:46.180 --> 00:01:00.799

Joel Smith: Now, for those of you who might be joining us for the first time, welcome! Apolitical is the world's largest community for government, used by over a quarter of a million public servants and policymakers from more than 170 countries.

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00:01:00.800 --> 00:01:10.000

Joel Smith: Our mission is to make government smarter, and we do this by equipping public servants worldwide with the knowledge and skills they need to lead the change.

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00:01:10.000 --> 00:01:34.929

Joel Smith: I can see the chat is already popping off, so I'm just going to jump in and see who we've got joining us. Hello, welcome Maggie from Toronto, the brave first poster. We have Manpreet, also from Toronto. We have Owen dialing in from MECP, Northern Allison from Northern Ireland. We've got, British Columbia, Canada.

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00:01:34.930 --> 00:01:37.639

Joel Smith: Hello, Newfoundland and Labrador.

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00:01:37.640 --> 00:02:02.569

Joel Smith: Lots of Canada and UK, I can see, which is very classic for our events, so welcome, all of you. Really lovely to have you. These messages are coming in thick and fast. Too fast for me to read, but please do keep them coming. It's always lovely to see, everyone just kind of

introducing themselves and see where you are all coming in from. So, as you might know, today's session is going to be a compact 30 minutes.

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00:02:02.680 --> 00:02:14.170

Joel Smith: tightly focused around building your AI skills. We know that as public servants, you are likely short on time, and we want these events to suit your learning needs and work with your busy schedules.

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00:02:14.170 --> 00:02:34.619

Joel Smith: We're gonna get to the presentation very shortly, but just before we do, we'd also love to extend an invitation to join over 10,000 of your peers in the public service from across the globe in our AI in Government community. The link has just been posted in the chat, and will be in the resources tab at the bottom of your screen.

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00:02:34.650 --> 00:02:44.749

Joel Smith: We'd love to see your voices in there, and we'll be sharing some resources in there after the event, so please do sign up for that community, and you can make the most of all the expertise that's in there.

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00:02:44.770 --> 00:02:56.950

Joel Smith: Another just quick technical note to get out of the way before we get into the session, the events today will be recorded for on-demand viewing on the Apolitical website, so please don't record it yourself.

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00:02:56.990 --> 00:03:07.470

Joel Smith: Contact details for privacy concerns are in the apolitical homepage footer, and closed captions are available, and they can be toggled on or off in your screen settings.

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00:03:07.620 --> 00:03:32.389

Joel Smith: Okay, so now onto the main event. It is my absolute pleasure to welcome Dr. Stuart Thompson, who is our speaker for today. Stuart is a political communications and public affairs consultant and founder of CWE Communications. He has over 25 years of experience advising clients on all aspects of their political and corporate communications and reputation management.

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00:03:32.510 --> 00:03:40.380

Joel Smith: You can read Stuart's full bio by visiting the Resources tab at the bottom of your Zoom screen and heading to the speaker section.

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00:03:40.380 --> 00:03:59.599

Joel Smith: Stuart, it is an absolute pleasure to have you with us, so I'm going to hand things over to you for the next 15 minutes, and then we'll have some time at the end for a Q&A. So, attendees, just remember to submit your questions for Stuart in the Q&A tab at the bottom of your screen. But without further ado, Stuart, the floor is yours.

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00:03:59.600 --> 00:04:12.729

Dr Stuart Thomson: Thank you, Joel. Well, I'll start by sharing my slides, so we'll pop those up on the screen for everybody to see, so I hope they've come up for everyone. Look, thanks for your time. Thanks for the wonderful introduction, Joel, and thanks for everybody's time.

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00:04:12.730 --> 00:04:35.599

Dr Stuart Thomson: today. I suppose what I'm trying to get across in the next, sort of, 15 minutes is, Joel has given you sort of an overview of what we're trying to do in terms of, you know, clearer and faster and, you know, get better at those tricky replies. But I suppose I'm just trying to give a bit of confidence, really, at the end of it, really just to... so that everybody has an idea of some things that they can do, that they might be able to apply in the workplace.

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00:04:35.600 --> 00:04:45.659

Dr Stuart Thomson: with the use of AI and, emails as well. So, hopefully nice and practical, but, as Joel said, if you've got questions, we've got some time at the end, but feel free to put them in the chat, and one of the team will,

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00:04:45.940 --> 00:04:48.580

Dr Stuart Thomson: get them through to us. So...

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00:04:48.600 --> 00:05:01.179

Dr Stuart Thomson: So, what do we cover? Look, AI to draft and edit emails more efficiently. We'll look at tone and clarity with, again, with some suggestions about how you can do that using the tools that are out there.

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00:05:01.180 --> 00:05:16.720

Dr Stuart Thomson: And how we can handle some of those sort of common email challenges that we all have using smart prompts. And really, prompts, I suppose, are at the heart of the use of AI and email. So I'll go through a few examples of those during our time as well today.

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00:05:16.720 --> 00:05:31.909

Dr Stuart Thomson: And as Joel outlined, look, frankly, there's a massive impact on all of our lives, but particularly for, you know, official civil servants, in terms of dealing with, emails. There are various surveys out there,

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00:05:32.110 --> 00:05:34.249

Dr Stuart Thomson: But frankly, you...

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00:05:34.370 --> 00:05:44.349

Dr Stuart Thomson: have to deal with emails all the time. A lot of civil servants then have to deal with them outside of work hours, so that challenge of the extension of the work day because of

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00:05:44.460 --> 00:06:02.640

Dr Stuart Thomson: how many emails that we all have to deal with, and inboxes, and, you know, the stress, and other effects that they can have as well. But you deal with them in holidays as well, so the stats around, sort of, 70% of people end up, you know, dealing with things during holidays as well.

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00:06:02.710 --> 00:06:05.300

Dr Stuart Thomson: But, they extend the workday.

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00:06:05.300 --> 00:06:23.179

Dr Stuart Thomson: So if we can do... use the technology that's out there, use the tools of AI to try and put some sort of challenge to that, and help manage your day more effectively, then there's a whole range of benefits. So not just in terms of, you know, your working day and the quality of the work that you can do, but I think, you know.

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00:06:23.460 --> 00:06:33.440

Dr Stuart Thomson: mental health and other issues can also be quite usefully challenged, one of the benefits of using AI as well. So, look,

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00:06:33.550 --> 00:06:35.440

Dr Stuart Thomson: They're the main form of communication.

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00:06:35.640 --> 00:06:37.909

Dr Stuart Thomson: But they're also a main source of... of...

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00:06:38.270 --> 00:06:50.850

Dr Stuart Thomson: I was gonna insert a swear word down, that wasn't the word that I was gonna use, but anyway, a hassle, during the work, day as well. And that drafting, redrafting, considering, thinking, responding, all of that stuff...

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00:06:50.880 --> 00:07:02.370

Dr Stuart Thomson: which is email, has that massive impact. So, that's the sort of scale of the challenge, and AI, if I can even speak properly, can help us deal with that and respond to those challenges, I think.

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00:07:02.830 --> 00:07:09.500

Dr Stuart Thomson: Look, there are lots of different tools and platforms out there. Employers.

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00:07:10.030 --> 00:07:18.430

Dr Stuart Thomson: you know, civil services across the world, and I know there are people from literally all over the world, that come to... come to these sessions.

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00:07:18.730 --> 00:07:36.949

Dr Stuart Thomson: You may use a different AI at home as you do to work, but these are some of the main ones. There are a whole range. There are loads of AIs out there, and again, that's one of the things that we tend to forget. We just think of ChatGPT, or we just think of Copilot, but actually there are a range of different, things. Now.

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00:07:36.950 --> 00:07:56.580

Dr Stuart Thomson: Each of these can be used for AI, and we can use AI as a sort of a writing assistant, if you like, and I think it's in that context that I think of it. It's an assistant. It's a tool, it's not a replacement for you or your expertise, your understanding of the issues that you deal with, but a tool that you can use.

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00:07:56.790 --> 00:08:15.670

Dr Stuart Thomson: But there are also other AIs that will deal with some things very particular. So, I know it's not what we're talking about today, but if you want ones that draw pictures, if you want ones that, you know, are better at dealing with, you know, Excel and spreadsheets and things like that, there will be a particular AI out there for you as well. So.

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00:08:15.670 --> 00:08:26.689

Dr Stuart Thomson: again, we don't have to worry ourselves about that, but just having an understanding of the range of different tools that are out there that can help us. And you don't have to use the same ones at home as you do in the workplace as well.

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00:08:27.190 --> 00:08:31.860

Dr Stuart Thomson: The other part, I think, that really...

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00:08:32.250 --> 00:08:36.710

Dr Stuart Thomson: is critical in all of this, is that

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00:08:37.330 --> 00:08:48.919

Dr Stuart Thomson: The fundamentals of writing a good email are the same, or constructing a good email, are exactly the same, when you're doing it yourself, as opposed to

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00:08:49.100 --> 00:08:50.490

Dr Stuart Thomson: Along with AI.

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00:08:50.670 --> 00:08:55.620

Dr Stuart Thomson: Along with ChatGPT, or Copilot, all on the other platforms that are out there as well.

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00:08:55.770 --> 00:09:07.750

Dr Stuart Thomson: So let's not, sort of, put that to one side. Let's keep that in mind. What you've been doing for all these years in your workplace is still really useful and really essential.

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00:09:08.320 --> 00:09:18.240

Dr Stuart Thomson: So that... Particularly that clarity. Now, one of the things that AI can do is sort of

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00:09:18.350 --> 00:09:23.989

Dr Stuart Thomson: flower things up a bit. They just... they just put a lot of words in there, a lot of descriptive words in particular.

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00:09:25.470 --> 00:09:35.229

Dr Stuart Thomson: But if we've got the fundamentals of email writing at our heart of what we do, we can recognise that. And that's something else I'll come back to as we go through.

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00:09:35.390 --> 00:09:39.279

Dr Stuart Thomson: Which is that double... the need for that double-checking process. Don't just...

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00:09:39.790 --> 00:09:49.490

Dr Stuart Thomson: you know, use what's put out there, and just treat it as the absolute, you know, definitive of what should be, you know, used. It is only the starting point.

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00:09:50.040 --> 00:09:57.060

Dr Stuart Thomson: So those fundamental rules, so having the confirmation, you know, the, the... information up front, bluff.

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00:09:57.440 --> 00:09:59.220

Dr Stuart Thomson: Bottom line up front.

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00:09:59.910 --> 00:10:11.500

Dr Stuart Thomson: key. Doesn't matter whether you're doing it yourself, or whether you're using AI. Make sure that key request, that key part of that email, is the first part of what you do.

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00:10:11.670 --> 00:10:13.640

Dr Stuart Thomson: The need to avoid jargon.

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00:10:13.790 --> 00:10:29.429

Dr Stuart Thomson: Again, you will find sometimes that if you use an AI, it can put lots of flowery words in, yeah, but then it starts to use juggle. No, we don't want any of that. But we know that, because actually we've got the fundamentals of email writing right in the first instance.

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00:10:30.460 --> 00:10:39.409

Dr Stuart Thomson: We don't do very long emails. Again, some drafts that you get from an AI might put too much information in there.

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00:10:39.650 --> 00:10:52.530

Dr Stuart Thomson: If we're not thinking about it, we just send that out, we just put it out there. But again, back to the fundamentals of writing those emails, we know that being concise... I was going to say conciseness, which I don't think is even a word anyway, but being concise

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00:10:53.000 --> 00:10:58.370

Dr Stuart Thomson: still has to be there at a, you know, as a fundamental. And clarity.

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00:10:59.540 --> 00:11:02.800

Dr Stuart Thomson: So when we're considering whatever has come out of AI,

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00:11:03.880 --> 00:11:16.969

Dr Stuart Thomson: we know that we want that to be clear, and we use our own insight and expertise and background and, you know, evidence base to help with that clarity. So AI is a tool

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00:11:17.230 --> 00:11:21.780

Dr Stuart Thomson: It is all it is. It is not a replacement for those fundamentals.

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00:11:26.270 --> 00:11:28.180

Dr Stuart Thomson: Ask yourself questions.

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00:11:29.250 --> 00:11:34.470

Dr Stuart Thomson: So let's say that we are going to use, that

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00:11:35.500 --> 00:11:48.489

Dr Stuart Thomson: let's say ChatGPT. Look, I'm a... I'm a... more than any others, I'm a ChatGPT user, and that is the one that I tend to use more than any others, and I use it for a range of different

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00:11:49.800 --> 00:12:05.630

Dr Stuart Thomson: reasons. I definitely use it with emails, but I use it for, helping me draft blogs, I help use it for helping me pull together, bits of research, I use it for,

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00:12:06.000 --> 00:12:17.469

Dr Stuart Thomson: a double check. I'm a sole practitioner a lot of the time. Actually, some proofreading I find quite helpful as well, and I can ask it to proofread my materials and make suggestions about what I've drafted.

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00:12:17.620 --> 00:12:22.759

Dr Stuart Thomson: So, a whole range of different things, but I don't do that from a blank sheet of paper. Instead.

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00:12:24.060 --> 00:12:39.270

Dr Stuart Thomson: I sort of set myself some parameters, I set myself some questions. So when I'm asking it to look at a draft email, or put a draft email together, for instance, I always think about what is it that I want the audience

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00:12:39.420 --> 00:12:40.789

Dr Stuart Thomson: To hear from me.

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00:12:41.580 --> 00:12:47.529

Dr Stuart Thomson: So what is the information? What is the perspective I'm trying to give? What is the insight that I'm trying to give?

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00:12:48.040 --> 00:12:52.869

Dr Stuart Thomson: what do I want the audience to do on the back of it?

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00:12:53.670 --> 00:12:58.169

Dr Stuart Thomson: Is it simply an information email, or am I expecting some sort of response?

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00:12:59.820 --> 00:13:17.310

Dr Stuart Thomson: Have I reflected the input of others already? Do I need to name-check those individuals as well? Do I need to sort of explicitly... well, I was going to say call out, that normally has a sort of negative connotation to it, but what is it that I want to, you know, to reflect from those people?

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00:13:17.800 --> 00:13:23.160

Dr Stuart Thomson: Do I want to receive input? Do I want this to be challenged? Is this a starting point?

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00:13:23.920 --> 00:13:36.849

Dr Stuart Thomson: And another key theme, I think, through all of this is remembering yourself in all of this. So, what does this email say about me? What is my position in the workplace, or my personality?

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00:13:37.910 --> 00:13:48.169

Dr Stuart Thomson: the humanity of this email that I'm trying to get across as well. So having some of those thoughts, some of those questions at the start helps you then develop the prompts.

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00:13:48.450 --> 00:13:52.119

Dr Stuart Thomson: And it's those prompts which are the real heart of...

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00:13:52.170 --> 00:13:54.300

Dr Stuart Thomson: I suppose the use of AI.

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00:13:54.320 --> 00:14:09.120

Dr Stuart Thomson: And those detailed prompts need to think about the tone that you're trying to adopt, the audience that you're trying to get to, the purpose of the result that you're asking that AI for, some of those questions that I just touched on in the previous slide.

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00:14:09.120 --> 00:14:18.599

Dr Stuart Thomson: So if I'm writing a professional email, you know, write a professional email explaining the particular topic in a clear and concise tone for an audience of

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00:14:19.030 --> 00:14:24.730

Dr Stuart Thomson: tell it. If you don't tell it, it won't provide it. It won't tailor it sufficiently.

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00:14:25.760 --> 00:14:33.039

Dr Stuart Thomson: You can use it to not just to draft, but to shorten it. As I said earlier, it could be too long. Well, ask it to be shorter, 30% shorter.

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00:14:33.200 --> 00:14:42.760

Dr Stuart Thomson: Keep the tone, think about the tone, make it more relaxed, make it more informal. But you only know to do that if you thought about the intended recipient of that email.

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00:14:43.380 --> 00:14:53.369

Dr Stuart Thomson: rewrite the reply to make it sound less bureaucratic, again, more informal. That's absolutely fine. It will do these things, but only if you tell it to. So the prompts

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00:14:53.740 --> 00:15:04.099

Dr Stuart Thomson: are your, effectively, your instructions to the AI. Draft a calm response. But again, never take what it puts out there as a first

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00:15:04.260 --> 00:15:08.179

Dr Stuart Thomson: And only version of What it could do.

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00:15:10.550 --> 00:15:13.290

Dr Stuart Thomson: Ask it questions. Think about...

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00:15:13.980 --> 00:15:26.129

Dr Stuart Thomson: what's the call to action? Is that clear in the email? Again, because you've thought about what you want this email to do at the start, rather than once you've got the draft together. Those early questions.

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00:15:26.570 --> 00:15:28.630

Dr Stuart Thomson: Is the tone respectable enough?

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00:15:28.810 --> 00:15:36.979

Dr Stuart Thomson: Have I considered, do I have, sorry, sufficient information in there? Is it clear? Have I avoided jargon?

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00:15:36.980 --> 00:15:56.640

Dr Stuart Thomson: typically are those typographical errors as well. Again, some of those you can then redraft your prompts and ask the AI again for a different version, for a shorter version,

for a more informal version, whatever it happens to be. But you set the parameters. It doesn't set the parameters. It doesn't know what you want, literally, unless you tell it to.

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00:15:56.710 --> 00:16:06.740

Dr Stuart Thomson: So, think about telling it about the audience, about the tone, about the content, what you want. Are you wanting a response? Are you doing this simply for information?

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00:16:06.970 --> 00:16:16.229

Dr Stuart Thomson: How many words it would be? Do you want it set out into certain paragraphs? Do you have a house style or a team style that you particularly stick to? Again.

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00:16:16.230 --> 00:16:27.199

Dr Stuart Thomson: That only works if you tell it those, if you put those in the parameters. Otherwise, it simply doesn't know. It will just do by pulling out all the information from various other sources that it has out there.

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00:16:27.740 --> 00:16:37.160

Dr Stuart Thomson: And you always need to think about... well, lots of points. I won't go through all of these. You'll get the slides afterwards, so, you know, you can look through them. But I think the key amongst them is security.

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00:16:37.220 --> 00:16:55.610

Dr Stuart Thomson: you know, you're not putting information up or sharing it to platforms that you don't know where it's going to be shared to, so that's a fundamental importance. Now, if there's a platform that your employers, i.e. your, you know, the home team, sort of, if you like, allow you to use, then that will all be considered already. But if you're using it at home, for instance.

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00:16:55.730 --> 00:17:02.420

Dr Stuart Thomson: you're not sticking documents up there, because those are all then, in effect, public. They can all then be shared.

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00:17:02.810 --> 00:17:05.000

Dr Stuart Thomson: You always check.

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00:17:05.380 --> 00:17:16.729

Dr Stuart Thomson: Proof it. You always personalize it. So again, whatever comes out of the AI is only a draft. It is not a definitive version. You have to put your fingerprints on it. Words that you use.

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00:17:17.240 --> 00:17:19.910

Dr Stuart Thomson: Tone that you normally adopt.

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00:17:20.280 --> 00:17:32.930

Dr Stuart Thomson: bit of humor in there. If it's to an individual, you'll stick the bit in about how was your holiday, or whatever it happens to be. The bit that makes an email personable, and is likely to elicit the response that you know.

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00:17:33.060 --> 00:17:45.350

Dr Stuart Thomson: that it will do, only if you personalize it, you know, as well as one. And you have, again, back to, you know, what makes all of this, you know, is yours.

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00:17:45.690 --> 00:17:51.379

Dr Stuart Thomson: You have the history, you have the content, you have the background, all of that can be good. AI won't have that, you have that.

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00:17:52.980 --> 00:18:02.189

Dr Stuart Thomson: there are some bits to look out for as well, because people don't like often being sent, documents sent across, or created by, you know, ChatGPT and others as well.

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00:18:02.690 --> 00:18:13.130

Dr Stuart Thomson: You know, a bit optimistic, a bit too, you know, a bit too, up, if you like, at all times. And, you know, sadly, we're not all like that, or all our emails aren't like that.

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00:18:13.130 --> 00:18:24.099

Dr Stuart Thomson: Too many descriptive words, as I mentioned. M-dashes, I'm not a... you know, some of us use it. Just whatever looks and feels right in your usual style. Again, just think about that.

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00:18:24.790 --> 00:18:29.830

Dr Stuart Thomson: Always do a final review, of course.

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00:18:29.990 --> 00:18:34.079

Dr Stuart Thomson: I use it as a, as I say, as a thinking partner.

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00:18:34.390 --> 00:18:42.550

Dr Stuart Thomson: You might want to add emphasis to it as well. Again, ChatGPT can do those things, or, you know, AI, Copilot, etc. can do all of those things.

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00:18:42.750 --> 00:18:58.900

Dr Stuart Thomson: think about the shortness of the paragraphs again for the intended recipients as well, your audience, keep that at the heart of what you're doing for it as well. And if you find things that work for those prompts, then keep reusing them as well.

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00:18:59.960 --> 00:19:10.359

Dr Stuart Thomson: And just a couple of things just to finish off with as we come towards the end of my comments before we open it up to the Q&As and Joel starts challenging me with your questions.

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00:19:10.650 --> 00:19:16.259

Dr Stuart Thomson: Think about... I would experiment with it.

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00:19:16.370 --> 00:19:33.429

Dr Stuart Thomson: Frankly, that's how I've always done it. You know, kick it around a bit, see what happens. And a case study like this, so, you know, if a stakeholder is complaining about what, complains about their funding request for... it was ignored. Let's take that as a scenario.

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00:19:33.790 --> 00:19:35.540

Dr Stuart Thomson: What sort of prompt might you...

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00:19:37.050 --> 00:19:39.040

Dr Stuart Thomson: put into your AI for that.

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00:19:39.180 --> 00:19:49.190

Dr Stuart Thomson: Well, you might ask it for a calm reply. You might ask it for something that sort of recognizes the frustration that that person feels, because then you can try and then you manage that.

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00:19:49.470 --> 00:20:05.680

Dr Stuart Thomson: you can then talk about what's being done already, maybe what outcomes, in terms of types, that's not the outcome of the review, obviously, because you wouldn't preempt anything like that, but what reviews are going on. So you put yourself and the AI in the, sort of, in the seat

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00:20:05.830 --> 00:20:08.550

Dr Stuart Thomson: Of the recipient of that audience.

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00:20:08.700 --> 00:20:09.960

Dr Stuart Thomson: She might want to do that.

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00:20:10.230 --> 00:20:15.360

Dr Stuart Thomson: And an AI output might thank you for your patience. Reviews are ongoing, we'll update shortly, but again.

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00:20:15.360 --> 00:20:30.919

Dr Stuart Thomson: Is there more background that you would want to add to that to make it much more personal? That feels... that sort of reply, which is the type that would come out, feels very impersonal. You don't want that, you want it to feel more human. So what can you do to that email?

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00:20:30.920 --> 00:20:34.949

Dr Stuart Thomson: to make it feel much more, engaging, I think, in tone.

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00:20:36.970 --> 00:20:48.039

Dr Stuart Thomson: So, in terms of... in terms of key takeaways, what are we thinking about? Well, we're looking at AI for the first draft, maybe second, third, fourth, fifth draft, absolutely fine, but it's not the final word. You have the final word.

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00:20:49.190 --> 00:21:06.550

Dr Stuart Thomson: I think you should need to be as specific in some of the prompts that we touched on earlier, about tone and audience and purpose. If you leave it too open-ended, you'll get a very wiffly-waffly, sort of just over-encompassing reply from the AI, tell it about the words, et cetera stuff.

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00:21:08.130 --> 00:21:15.499

Dr Stuart Thomson: I say, experiment with it. Treat it like a tutor, treat it like something that's really helping you through this process.

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00:21:15.700 --> 00:21:24.389

Dr Stuart Thomson: And start small. If you're not already familiar with it, if you're not already using it, pop on to ChatGPT or others, and play about with it.

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00:21:24.570 --> 00:21:42.869

Dr Stuart Thomson: in an informal way, at home, in the evening, ask it to help plan holidays, whatever you want it to do, just so you start to get used to it. So start small, and work your way up, but you need to keep absolutely firmly in control. And you are by putting yourself into whatever replies the AI come out with.

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00:21:43.280 --> 00:21:44.199

Dr Stuart Thomson: Thank you, Joe.

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00:21:45.010 --> 00:21:53.990

Joel Smith: Brilliant. Thank you so much, Stuart. Some really, really helpful tips in there. I'm sure the audience agree. I can see all the emoji reactions firing off.

129

00:21:54.080 --> 00:22:18.290

Joel Smith: So remember to keep sharing any questions you have for Stuart. We've got a lot of questions coming in already, so just ensure it gets seen, just pop it in that Q&A feature at the bottom of your screen so it doesn't get lost in the chat. Just before we dive into the questions, I want to quickly let you know we've also created a great follow-on resource for today's topic that we think you'll find useful, a prompting cheat sheet.

130

00:22:18.290 --> 00:22:21.710

Joel Smith: Packed with guiding principles and examples to get you started.

131

00:22:21.710 --> 00:22:34.859

Joel Smith: To receive your link to that cheat sheet, go to that AI in government community that I mentioned. I think my colleague's just going to post that in the chat again, after this event, and leave a comment on my post that is currently pinned to the top of the page.

132

00:22:34.860 --> 00:22:41.779

Joel Smith: We'll send you the resource later this week, so if you comment on there, we'll send you that cheat sheet of prompts.

133

00:22:41.880 --> 00:22:54.930

Joel Smith: Okay, so on to the Q&A. Wow, the questions have come in very quickly. So there is a question here I wanted to start off with from David, who has asked.

134

00:22:54.930 --> 00:23:07.750

Joel Smith: Is there a good way for me to have the AI use a similar style, tone, or language to how I would normally write emails? So getting the AI to kind of speak in your voice, do you have any tips on that?

135

00:23:07.970 --> 00:23:11.959

Dr Stuart Thomson: Yeah, I mean, there's a couple of things you can do. Again, I put this all against the backdrop of

136

00:23:12.200 --> 00:23:28.429

Dr Stuart Thomson: sort of security and, you know, thinking carefully about what you are able to share. But give it some examples. If you've got some nice examples of emails that you think you've done particularly well in the past, or phraseology that you use.

137

00:23:28.480 --> 00:23:36.019

Dr Stuart Thomson: your particular approach, get a couple of copies, put those into a... you can put them into a Word document, and then upload that Word document, and say.

138

00:23:36.470 --> 00:23:48.379

Dr Stuart Thomson: And then the prompt can be, you know, draft an email to a, you know, colleague on this particular issue in the same style, and it will learn from that. So, you know, literally sharing what you think is your best practice is

139

00:23:48.740 --> 00:24:01.720

Dr Stuart Thomson: perfectly doable. Or, maybe you don't have to do that, just, you know, again, you can just cut and paste one or two, actually, into the prompt section as well, but I always

think quite, you know, creating a document is quite nice, because you can then give it a bit of a range of different ones that you've done in the past.

140

00:24:01.720 --> 00:24:19.519

Joel Smith: Yeah, yeah, I think, yeah, from a few of our events, we've seen the more info, I guess, you put into it, obviously, with all of those kind of parameters in place, the better the response you're going to get. Actually, I guess on the other side of that, then, are there any obvious signs that AI has been used?

141

00:24:19.520 --> 00:24:32.270

Joel Smith: that you should look for before sending an email. So, obviously, you mentioned, kind of, M-dashes and things like that. Are there any other signs that an email is AI-written that people should, kind of, watch out for, and maybe even ask the AI to remove?

142

00:24:33.030 --> 00:24:36.639

Dr Stuart Thomson: Yeah, I think some of the overly flowery language, sometimes.

143

00:24:37.180 --> 00:24:42.170

Dr Stuart Thomson: It certainly does, you know, it tends to do that.

144

00:24:42.350 --> 00:24:45.589

Dr Stuart Thomson: I always look out for just...

145

00:24:46.040 --> 00:25:01.700

Dr Stuart Thomson: it's normally in the tone more than anything else. It's just in words and phrases that, you know, you as an individual or you as a team, wouldn't tend to use. You know, it's that sort of thing which I... which I tend to... which I tend to look for.

146

00:25:01.860 --> 00:25:11.650

Dr Stuart Thomson: More than anything else. And of course, as all these things progress, they become, you know, it becomes slightly less, obvious.

147

00:25:12.020 --> 00:25:29.690

Dr Stuart Thomson: But yeah, it's... it's the flowery language for me, you know. It just doesn't look... you can sort of feel... a bit like when you look at images that AI has created. You know,

there's some fuzzy bits on there, or a hand has six fingers, or, you know, those are... you know, there's things that just don't look and feel quite right.

148

00:25:30.320 --> 00:25:38.070

Dr Stuart Thomson: And it's those that you look for, so it's those often that you look for in, you know, the equivalent of six figures in an email as well.

149

00:25:38.250 --> 00:25:55.700

Joel Smith: Yeah, absolutely. I have another question here, more about, kind of, using AI to act as a thinking partner. So, someone's asked, what questions do you have... do you use to have it act as a thinking partner to help you think about what you might not be, maybe, considering?

150

00:25:55.910 --> 00:25:57.089

Joel Smith: In an email.

151

00:25:57.840 --> 00:26:10.130

Dr Stuart Thomson: Yeah, I mean, look, sometimes it depends if you're getting it to start the thing from scratch, and sometimes it would be if I've already got a draft that I've put together. So if it's a draft that I've already put together, I might say, you know.

152

00:26:10.270 --> 00:26:27.580

Dr Stuart Thomson: if you were a, again, think about our prompts and parameters, if you were a, you know, senior leadership team in this sector, and I want you to reply to the, you know, I'm looking for some sort of response, you know, does this email convey

153

00:26:28.460 --> 00:26:35.860

Dr Stuart Thomson: the key challenges or, you know, the need for a response. So again, I'm sort of providing some sort of

154

00:26:37.070 --> 00:26:48.449

Dr Stuart Thomson: I suppose what I'm trying to say is I'm trying to get it to think of itself as the recipient to this email, and it will say, no, you haven't done this, or have you thought about this? And again, it's only going to make suggestions.

155

00:26:48.930 --> 00:26:54.590

Dr Stuart Thomson: And if I think, actually, no, do you think I've actually been clear enough there? That's fine, I'll ignore that. Equally.

156

00:26:54.780 --> 00:27:04.019

Dr Stuart Thomson: they might say, no, actually, the request isn't upfront enough, it's not... it's not clear enough. So, I think it's partly whether I'm using it from scratch. If I'm using it from scratch.

157

00:27:04.160 --> 00:27:19.649

Dr Stuart Thomson: then again, I'm... I'm providing as much context as possible, so I'm, you know, researching a piece on, you know, this particular issue. You know, I fully understand there was a consultation here or there, can you help me

158

00:27:19.650 --> 00:27:31.849

Dr Stuart Thomson: you know, decide on who the key stakeholders are, or what some of those key responses were, and that's my, sort of, you know, initial first draft, which I'll use for my thinking, but then again, again, I'll use that to then challenge... challenge back to the AI.

159

00:27:32.160 --> 00:27:51.009

Joel Smith: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Great. Okay, I think we've got time for one final question, and we've got one here, actually, slightly different kind of angle from, Graeme has asked, curious to know if you've seen a general improvement in the quality of the emails you deal with in your line of work as a result of AI usage.

160

00:27:52.010 --> 00:27:54.139

Dr Stuart Thomson: That's a really interesting question.

161

00:27:54.630 --> 00:27:59.390

Dr Stuart Thomson: Have I seen an improvement? I think...

162

00:28:00.740 --> 00:28:09.139

Dr Stuart Thomson: I'm not... sorry, this is going to be a really caveat answer, because I don't think it's as universal as a sort of a yes-no sort of thing. I think it's...

163

00:28:09.210 --> 00:28:21.219

Dr Stuart Thomson: I have seen an improvement, but I wouldn't say that was universal, because I think a lot of people... I mean, obviously everybody on, you know, today's call, you know, we've all thought about these things, but there's an awful lot of people

164

00:28:21.250 --> 00:28:35.180

Dr Stuart Thomson: that are scared, put off by AI, or think it's here to sort of simply nick their jobs, or whatever. So, yes, I think I have seen some improvement. I couldn't quite put my finger on it, but it just sort of

165

00:28:35.180 --> 00:28:42.010

Dr Stuart Thomson: feels a bit better, but equally, because I know there's an awful lot of people out there that aren't using it, I still receive a lot of crappy emails as well.

166

00:28:42.250 --> 00:28:44.200

Joel Smith: Yeah, okay, great.

167

00:28:44.270 --> 00:28:57.160

Joel Smith: Brilliant! Okay, well, I'm afraid we are... that's all we have time for in terms of questions. We've had some incredible wisdom for Stuart today, so I'd just like you all to join me in giving him a huge virtual round of applause.

168

00:28:57.160 --> 00:29:14.889

Joel Smith: And most importantly, thank you to all of you, the attendees, for investing in your learning and being so engaged in this topic. If you do have further questions, do get them in that AI in government community, and there's a load of people in there who will be able to kind of help you and advise you on AI usage.

169

00:29:14.890 --> 00:29:23.930

Joel Smith: The team's gonna pull up a quick poll, as we do on all of our events. If you can just give us a rating on how you found this event on a scale of 1 to 10, that would be great.

170

00:29:23.930 --> 00:29:35.229

Joel Smith: And before you go, and while you're responding to that poll, I want to share that the next event coming up in the AI Skills Labs series will be AI for Policy Making, taking place next month.

171

00:29:35.230 --> 00:29:57.100

Joel Smith: We will be joined by the head of futures and Foresight from the Cabinet Office, James Ansell, so I really recommend getting this unmissable session in your calendars now. My colleague will also post the registration link to that in the chat, and as always, if you're not available to join live, remember, if you just register, we will send you the recording for all of our events the day after, once... if you're registered for that event.

172

00:29:57.100 --> 00:29:59.250

Joel Smith: So, do register for that.

173

00:29:59.250 --> 00:30:23.620

Joel Smith: And I'm afraid that is all we have time for. I hope you found it super helpful. I know I did. A huge thank you again, Stuart, to you and to all of the attendees here for taking time out of your busy days. Keep an eye out for the email coming your way with today's recording and resources, and don't forget to find my post in the AI and government community and put your comment on there to get that cheat sheet.

174

00:30:23.840 --> 00:30:30.879

Joel Smith: We hope to see you at another apolitical event very soon. Thank you very much. Have a great day, everybody. Goodbye.