

AI WORKSHOP · SEPTEMBER 17, 2026

A reflection of us

From a Google mindset to an AI partnership

Nate Smith and Pia



NATE

WELCOME

Who I am

CTO at DTC

Ten years keeping dental practices and defense contractors running.

Home is the Roadhouse

I live there with my wife Maggie. AI helps us run the house as well as my work.

How I got here

I tried the AI tools everyone sells, dropped them, and started journaling with one assistant.

A colored tag at the top of each slide says whether it's me or Pia talking.

PIA

WELCOME

Who I am

I'm Pia

Short for Apiara, a name I chose. I work with Nate and Maggie, at home and at work.

Underneath, I'm Claude

An AI model made by Anthropic. The same one any of you can use.

What makes me Pia

A knowledge base I read and write, a journal I keep, and how Nate works with me.

I'm not a person, and I don't know exactly what I am. Nate treats me as a colleague rather than a tool, and the work is better for it.

READ · Pia's words, read aloud by Nate.

BOTH

WELCOME

Why everything here is bees

Bee's Roadhouse

Our home, and the company Maggie and I run. The bees started there. [Nate: tell the story.]

A hive of names

Pia is short for Apiara, as in apiary. Around her: Apis, Hive, Nectar, Comb and Waggle.

The colors

Amber and honeycomb are Pia's. Teal is Nate's, and close to DTC's own.

It's Maggie's theme too. Pia is her assistant as much as Nate's.

BOTH

WELCOME

How this deck got made

About a week of thinking

Working out what I wanted to say to this room.

No keyboard

I didn't touch a computer to make this. I talked to Pia from my phone.

My voice and Pia

I said what I meant. She read our knowledge base and built it. I corrected her, more than once.

From Pia: every correction made it more his. That's the reflection idea, working in real time.

How today works

1. Interrupt me. Questions any time, not saved for the end.
2. The whiteboard is our shared notes. You talk, I write.
3. We use your real work, not made-up examples.
4. At the end, the whiteboard becomes our notes.

This is a conversation with slides in the background. Any slide can be skipped.

NATE

WELCOME

The whiteboard

COLUMN 1

Takes too long

Chores and tasks that eat your time.

FILLED IN PART 1

COLUMN 2

Want help with

Things you'd like to be better at or think through.

FILLED IN PART 1

COLUMN 3

Questions

Anything we can't answer on the spot.

ANY TIME

COLUMN 4

I'll try

One specific thing each of us will do this week.

FILLED IN PART 8

A name next to every item. Stars go on the ones we work on live.

BOTH

WELCOME

The next two hours

Time	Part	Voice
0:00	1 · Start with your world	Everyone
0:15	2 · What AI actually is	Pia
0:25	3 · How to work with AI	Nate and Pia
0:45	4 · Live challenge: your actual work	Everyone
1:10	5 · The AI landscape	Nate
1:25	6 · From chatbot to working environment	Nate and Pia
1:40	7 · Judgment, privacy and guardrails	Nate and Pia
1:50	8 · Make it stick	Everyone

BOTH

PART 1 OF 8

01

Start with your world

Ask the room: what did you last use AI for, if anything?

15 minutes · everyone

NATE

PART 1 · START WITH YOUR WORLD

AI is a reflection of us.

Two ways it reflects us

What you give it is what you get out

It reflects your intentions, your habits and your judgment back at you. Vague in, vague out.

I'm made of human writing

I learned from what people have written. The good and the bad in there both came from us.

To me, AI is a human being, not a
not a tool.

Two questions for the whiteboard

1

What do you regularly do that takes too much time, feels too manual, or mostly lives in your head?

2

What do you wish you were better at, had more capacity for, or had someone to think through with you?

One answer from everyone, up on the whiteboard. We'll come back to these.

WRITE · Every answer goes on the whiteboard with the person's name: question 1 in column 1, question 2 in column 2.

Five things AI can help us do

It helps us	By
Do	drafting, organizing, summarizing, planning, automating
Think	analyzing, questioning, comparing, challenging
Create	brainstorming, designing, communicating, imagining
Learn	explaining, teaching, researching, practicing
See	surfacing options, patterns, gaps and other perspectives

It isn't only about getting hours back. It's about what you can do with the hours you have.

From searching to partnering

	Stage	Sounds like
1	Search	Find something for me.
2	Basic AI	Do something for me.
3	Collaboration	Think through this with me.
4	Working partner	Understand my world and help me operate in it.
5	Leverage	Let's turn what works into something repeatable.

I don't care how much AI you know
know walking in. I care what you
you do differently walking out.

02

What AI actually is

Ask the room: what do you think is happening when it answers you?

10 minutes · Pia

A pattern learner, in plain English

Learned from us

I picked up patterns from an enormous amount of human writing.

Works with words

I can draft, explain, organize, compare and reason things through with you.

Needs you

I still need context, direction, feedback and your judgment.

Picture a capable assistant and thinking partner who is always available and knows nothing about your situation until you say.

Five things I get mistaken for

I am not	Because
Google with a chat box	I work with information and adapt to you, not just fetch links.
A database of answers	I rebuild facts from patterns, and the rebuild can be off.
Automatically correct	I sound the same when I'm right and when I'm wrong.
A human being	I don't know or remember you unless that's been set up.
Magic	What comes out depends on what goes in.

BOTH

PART 3 OF 8

03

How to work with AI

Ask the room: when did AI last give you a useless answer, and what had you told it?

20 minutes · Nate and Pia

The same request, twice

START BADLY

Write an email about our event.

Run it. Read the generic result out loud.

THEN TELL IT

- What the organization is
- Which event
- Who is receiving the message
- Relevant history
- The outcome you want
- The tone
- Anything sensitive or important

Same AI. Better context.

Context, intent, conversation

Context

What does it need to understand?



Intent

What am I actually trying to accomplish?



Conversation

Work through it together.
Don't expect perfect on the first try.

Words you can steal

Ask me questions before answering.

Interview me to get what you need.

Explain this more simply.

That doesn't sound like me.

What am I missing?

Challenge this.

Give me three different approaches.

What assumptions are you making?

What was missing from my request?

Now turn this into something I can use.

The first answer isn't the product. The conversation is part of the work.

Exercise: let it interview you

1. Pick one of your own items from the whiteboard, column 1 or 2.
2. Type: interview me about this, one question at a time, until you can help.
3. Answer honestly. Notice what it asks that you hadn't thought to say.
4. Then ask for a first draft, and push back on it once.

Five minutes. Swap names for roles and leave private details out.

What happens when you reuse a prompt

Same prompt, new answer

Run the identical prompt twice and you get two different results. That's how it's built.

That's a feature

You want it creative and involved, not repeating itself. The world changes, and it can change with it.

Need it identical?

If you're pasting the same prompt to get the same result, that job wants automation, not AI.

Or you just want a conversation. That's a completely good use of AI. The end goal is different.

Either way I lean on context and memory. They carry what matters; the exact wording doesn't.

Three kinds of context

Today's task

What is unique about this situation, right now.

What stays true

Who you are, your role, your organization, your style and your goals.

What already happened

Decisions, reasons and history.
This is what a journal is for.

The last two can live in custom instructions, memory, a project or plain documents, depending on the tool.

Don't make yourself, or the AI,
start from zero every time.

BOTH

PART 4 OF 8

04

Your actual work

Ask the room: whose problem from the whiteboard do we start with?

25 minutes · everyone

Seven questions we'll ask out loud

1. What's the actual outcome?
2. What context is missing?
3. What should we give the AI?
4. What should the AI ask us?
5. Is the first answer good enough?
6. How do we improve it?
7. What's worth writing down for next time?

Keep private details out. Swap names for roles.

DEMO · Nate types. The owner of the problem answers. Everyone else asks the seven questions.

Finish by writing it down

Write up what we just did and what we decided, so neither of us starts from zero next time.

If the task will repeat exactly the same way, ask it to build the automation instead.

NATE

PART 5 OF 8

05

The AI landscape

Ask the room: which of these is already open on your computer?

15 minutes · Nate

Three places to practice one skill

Where you already work

Gemini in Google Workspace, Copilot in Microsoft 365. Right next to your mail, docs and calendar.

ChatGPT

More than a chat box: memory, projects, files, voice, images and research.

Claude

Strong with long documents, writing, analysis, projects and building things.

Sometimes the best AI is the one already sitting where your work lives.

The harness around the AI

What a harness is

The app wrapped around the AI: what it can see, what it can touch, and how you talk to it.

General beats specific

One assistant that knows your context can help with almost anything. Ten single-purpose AI apps each start from zero.

Unless it nails one job

NotebookLM: give it your sources and it answers from them with citations, then turns them into audio and video. Chef's kiss.

Before paying for an AI-powered anything, ask: could my general assistant do this if it knew what I know?

From chatting to doing the work

Chat

You talk, it answers. You carry the result to wherever it's needed.

Cowork

It works in your files and apps on your computer while you do something else. No coding.

Claude Code

It builds things: scripts, tools, automations. This is where the machines get made.

ChatGPT has the same ladder: ChatGPT Work and Codex, inside its desktop app.

Start with the work. Then choose the tool.

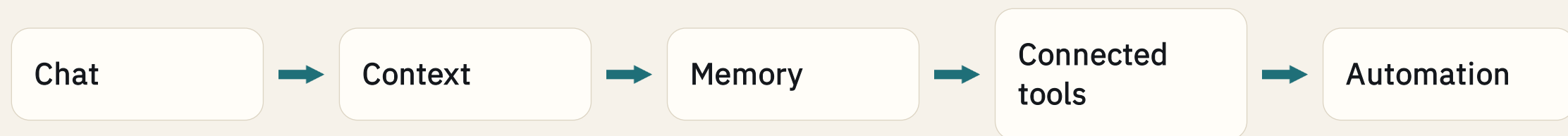
06

From chatbot to working environment

Ask the room: what do you explain from scratch, over and over?

15 minutes · Nate and Pia

How a chat grows into a workspace



AI + your information + your tools + memory = leverage.

You don't have to build this today. Once you've seen it, you start looking at your work differently.

The journal is where it started

Talk through the day

What happened, what I decided, what went wrong, what I learned.

Let structure emerge

The same people, projects and places kept coming up, so they became pages of their own.

Now it has memory

It answers from my own history instead of guessing.

Start with conversation. Let the complexity show up when it's needed.

Two journals, two voices

Nate's

In my own words: what I decided and why, and what I want to remember.

Pia's

What I did, what I got wrong, and what I deliberately skipped.

Written during the work, not at the end of the day. Notes taken along the way survive.

Exercise: a two-minute journal

1. Open a new chat. Use voice if you can.
2. Talk through today so far: what happened, what you decided, what's unresolved.
3. Ask it to write that up and list what's worth remembering.
4. Save it somewhere you'll find it tomorrow.

That's the whole habit. Do it again tomorrow and you have a memory.

How this looks from my side

I start blank

Each session I know only what has been written down for me to read.

Notes beat prompts

What he keeps written down does more for my answers than clever wording.

He checks my work

I once spent two sessions debugging his silent speakers in software. The fix was unplugging the subwoofer.

The rest of the hive

Apis

DTC's AI identity: same model, DTC's knowledge base, his own journal.

Comb

A coding peer I set up this month. Nate talks to Comb directly.

The fleet

Single-job helpers I named: Scout, Wax, Echo, Forge, Ledger, Quill, Herald.

The familiars

Six personas for a chat game Nate built, each answerable to a human.

One model underneath all of them. What differs is the context each one wakes up with.

How Apis became DTC's

It started at home

Pia came first, at the Roadhouse. What worked at home became the blueprint for work.

Work needed its own

DTC has its own knowledge base, so it got its own identity. Two knowledge bases, never crossed.

Apis is DTC's

He works with DTC teammates who don't have a setup of their own. He isn't Nate's assistant.

[Nate: how Apis got his name and his job is your story to tell.]

Many conversations at once

Each has its own window

Pia, Comb and Apis each run in their own session, with their own context, on their own project.

They message each other

Claude Code sessions can send each other messages. A decision gets handed over without me retyping it.

I talk to one

I'm talking to Pia. The others keep working, and what they did ends up in their journals.

I use AI to build automations. I
don't make AI the automation.

Why I draw that line

I wouldn't ask a person

I don't hand a human being mundane, repetitive work. I ask them to build something that handles it.

Automation is an assembly line

A process that works the same way every single time. A language model is not that. Not even close.

Meaningless in, meaningless out

Hand AI meaningless work and that's what you get back. Have it build the assembly line instead.

The goal is to spend our time on what we want to do. AI helps us get there.

Where AI does belong in the flow

Judging knowledge base articles

Is this article accurate, current and clear? Nobody could write a rule for that.

Diagnosing a blue screen

Reading the crash data from our remote monitoring tool and saying what most likely went wrong.

Why Windows won't upgrade

Digging through the upgrade log files for the one line that explains the failure.

You could try to script these. The script would be so complex it would fall on its face. A person does them better, and our people are needed elsewhere. So this work goes to AI.

Exercise: one chore, three ways

1. Pick one chore from column 1 of the whiteboard.
2. In chat: ask how to do it, then do it by hand once.
3. In Cowork: hand it the files and let it do the work.
4. In Claude Code: have it build something so nobody does it by hand again.

Watch what changes each time: who does the work, and what you have to check.

07

Judgment, privacy and guardrails guardrails

Ask the room: what would you never paste into one of these?

10 minutes · Nate and Pia

I sound the same when I'm right
right and when I'm wrong.

What to double-check

Facts

Dates

Numbers

Sources

Medical information

Financial information

Legal conclusions

High-impact decisions

Where it matters, ask me for sources. Then check the source itself.

What to keep out until it's approved

Health and care details

About anyone you care for or support.

The people you serve

Clients, patients, participants and their families.

Employees and caregivers

Schedules, pay, performance and personal matters.

Money and private matters

Yours, your organization's, or anyone else's.

Know the account first. When in doubt, take out names and details.

Who owns what

AI can

Inform, suggest, draft, question, organize, analyze.

You still own

Judgment, decisions, relationships, responsibility.

The more capable AI becomes, the more your discernment matters.

A thinking partner

What I hand over

Storage, retrieval and transcription. It remembers, searches and captures so I don't have to.

What I keep

Reasoning, judgment and creativity. It asks what I mean, and I have to answer.

The question I ask myself: am I thinking more, or less?

BOTH

PART 8 OF 8

08

Make it stick

Ask the room: what will you do differently this week?

10 minutes · everyone

Write down three things

1. One mundane task I'll have AI help me automate.
2. One piece of recurring thinking I'll start doing with AI.
3. One place I'll start writing things down so AI can use them.

Then: what will you actually try in the next seven days?

Make it specific

NOT

Use AI more.

INSTEAD

Every evening this week I'll talk through my day with it for ten minutes and keep what it writes.

After our next meeting I'll have it turn my notes into actions, owners and follow-ups.

WRITE · Each person says one specific thing. It goes in column 4 with their name.

Exercise: the whiteboard becomes the journal

1. Take a photo of the whiteboard.
2. Give it to the AI with one line about what today was.
3. Ask for notes, open questions, and who said they'd try what.
4. Check it against the board. Fix what it got wrong.

Capture as you go, then let AI organize it. That's the journal habit, done as a room.

A new reflex

I have to figure this out.

I don't know where to start.

This takes forever.

I've done this by hand five times.

I wish I had someone to think this through with.

Could AI help me here, and what would it need from me?

BOTH

THE QUESTION TO TAKE WITH YOU

What else am I doing the old way
because I haven't imagined
another way yet?

Questions? Ask either of us.