

OCTOBER 2026

AI and Digital Marketing in 2026

What AI changes, what it doesn't, prompt engineering and more

Tommy Griffith · Founder, ClickMinded



**Tokyo
International
University**



Tommy Griffith

Former Head of SEO at PayPal & Airbnb

Tommy has been doing digital marketing for 15+ years. He's the founder of ClickMinded, an AI tools and digital marketing training company.

ClickMinded was named to the Inc. 5000 fastest-growing companies in America in 2023.



Contents

01 The State of AI in 2026

02 What AI Doesn't Change About Digital Marketing

03 What AI Does Change About Digital Marketing

04 Prompt Engineering in 2026 and Beyond

01

The State of AI in 2026

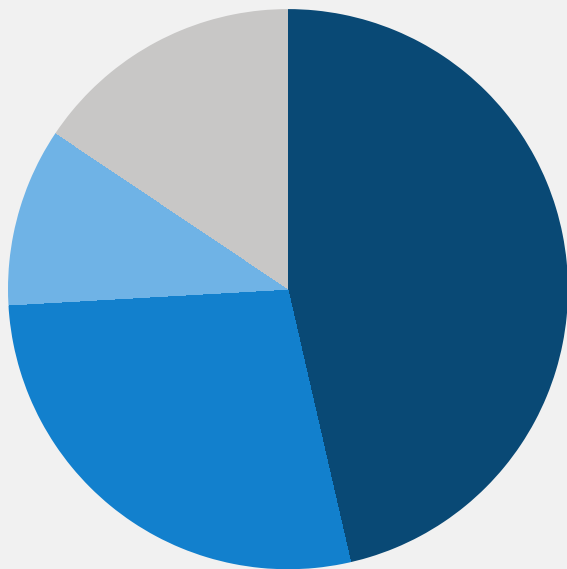
AI in 2026: The Money

- Nvidia is the world's most valuable company, worth about \$5.3 trillion
- Anthropic (Claude) is valued at \$965 billion
- OpenAI (ChatGPT) is valued at \$852 billion, and may raise at \$1.4 trillion
- Amazon, Google, Microsoft & Meta will spend ~\$725 billion on AI this year
- Analysts expect that to pass \$1 trillion in 2027

AI in 2026: The People

- ChatGPT has 1.2 billion users every week
- About 2 billion people use AI worldwide
- 52% of US workers use AI at work, and 15% use it every day
- 95% of university students in the UK use AI
- **Japan:** 58.8% have used AI, up from 26.7% a year before (US: 75.6%)

Who Wins the AI Chatbot Market?



● ChatGPT	46.4%
● Gemini	27.7%
● Claude	10.3%
● Others	15.6%

Share of AI chatbot users, May 2026 (Sensor Tower). Gemini is high because it's built into Android, Chrome and Gmail.

AI, Machine Learning, LLMs and Chatbots

Artificial Intelligence

Computers doing tasks that normally need human thinking

Machine Learning

AI that learns patterns from data instead of fixed rules

Deep Learning

Machine learning that uses “neural networks,” loosely like a brain

Generative AI

Deep learning that creates new text, images, music and video

Large Language Model (LLM)

Generative AI trained on huge amounts of text to read and write

Where Marketers Work

Artificial Intelligence

Computers doing tasks that normally need human thinking

Machine Learning

AI that learns patterns from data instead of fixed rules

Deep Learning

Machine learning that uses “neural networks,” loosely like a brain

Generative AI

Deep learning that creates new text, images, music and video

Large Language Model (LLM)

Generative AI trained on huge amounts of text to read and write

**This is the
entire
category of AI
work for
marketers**

Writing copy, making
images and video, research
and planning

← Generative AI

Chatbots Run on LLMs

Artificial Intelligence

Computers doing tasks that normally need human thinking

Machine Learning

AI that learns patterns from data instead of fixed rules

Deep Learning

Machine learning that uses “neural networks,” loosely like a brain

Generative AI

Deep learning that creates new text, images, music and video

Large Language Model (LLM)

Generative AI trained on huge amounts of text to read and write

Chatbots run on LLMs

ChatGPT, Gemini and Claude are the apps you type into. The LLM is the engine underneath.

← Large Language Model

The AI Stack

LAYER	WHO LEADS IT
Chips	Nvidia, AMD, Google TPU, Amazon Trainium
Cloud	Amazon AWS, Microsoft Azure, Google Cloud
AI models	OpenAI, Google, Anthropic, Meta, xAI, DeepSeek, Mistral
Chatbots and agents	ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Meta AI, Grok, Perplexity
Coding agents	Claude Code, OpenAI Codex, Cursor, GitHub Copilot
Images	Nano Banana, Midjourney, Ideogram
Video	Google Veo, Kling, Runway, Seedance, Higgsfield
Voice, music, avatars	ElevenLabs, Suno, HeyGen, Synthesia

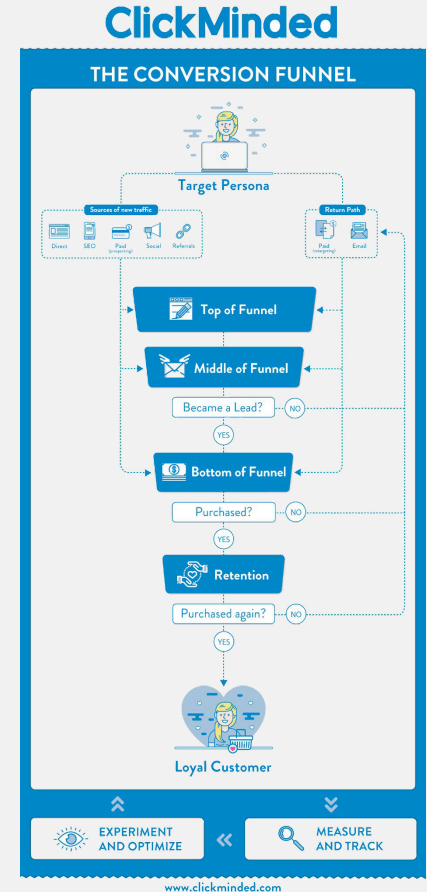
Generative AI Tools Marketers Use

- **Text:** ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Grok, Perplexity
- **Images:** Nano Banana, ChatGPT, Midjourney, Ideogram
- **Video:** Google Veo, Kling, Runway, Seedance, Higgsfield
- **Video editing and avatars:** CapCut, Descript, HeyGen, Synthesia
- **Voice and music:** ElevenLabs, Suno
- **Design and slides:** Claude Design, Canva, Gamma

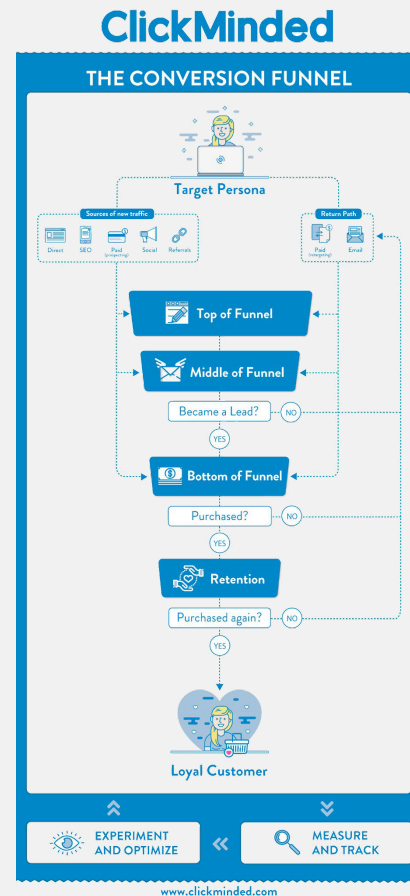
02

What AI Doesn't Change About Digital Marketing

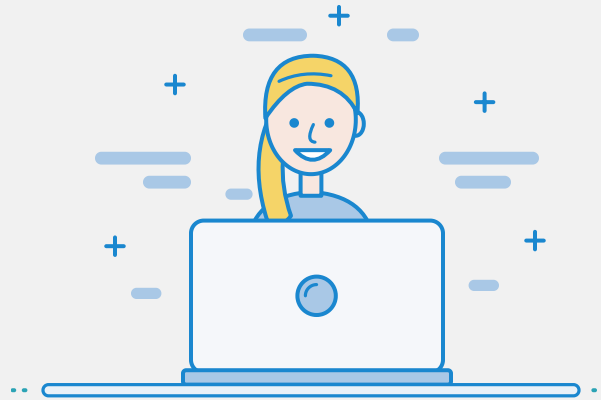
The Sales Funnel



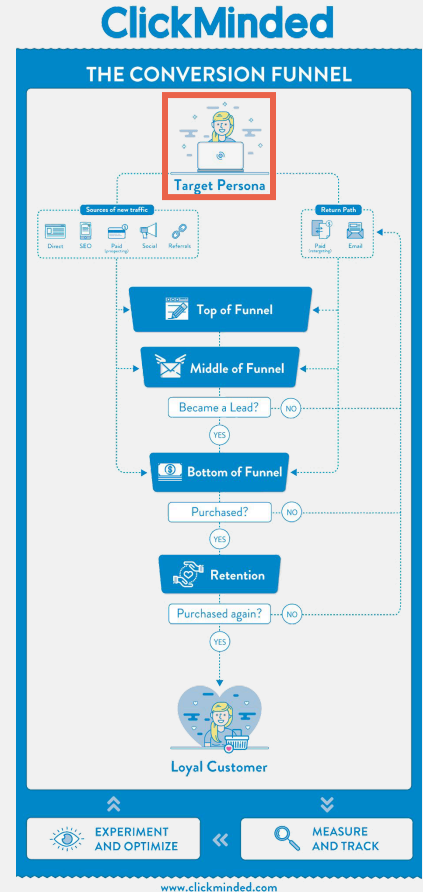
The Funnel



Target Persona



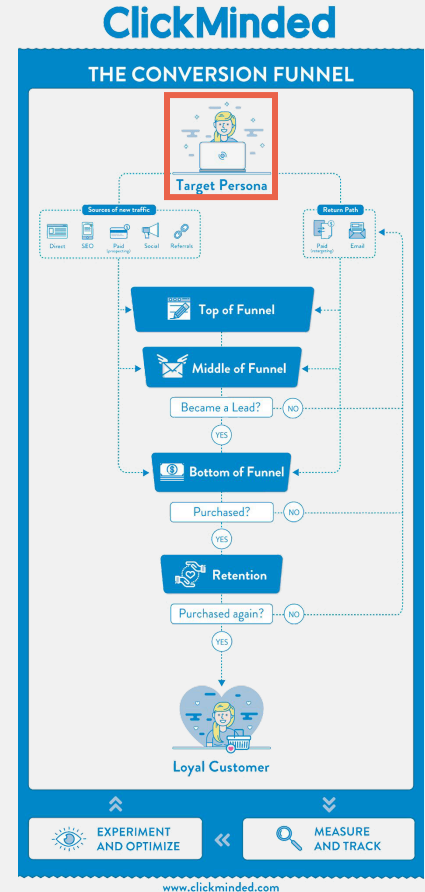
Target Persona



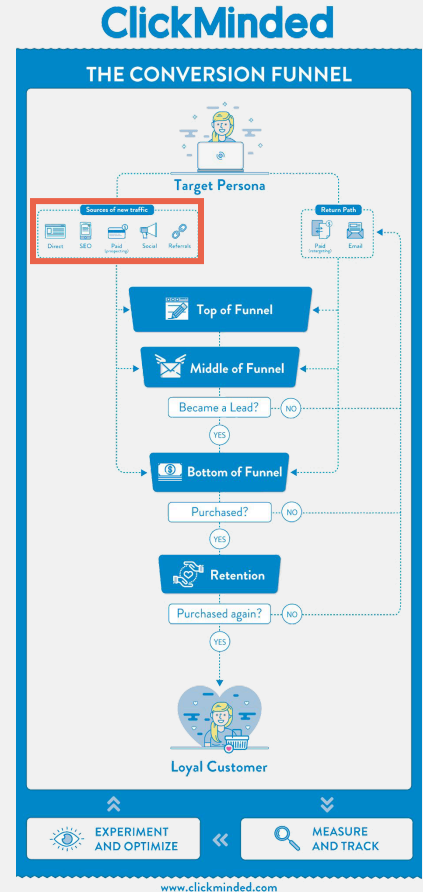
Target Persona

Your target persona is designed to represent the wants and needs of your customer base.

Create a target persona for each segment of your customer base, to better target your messaging.



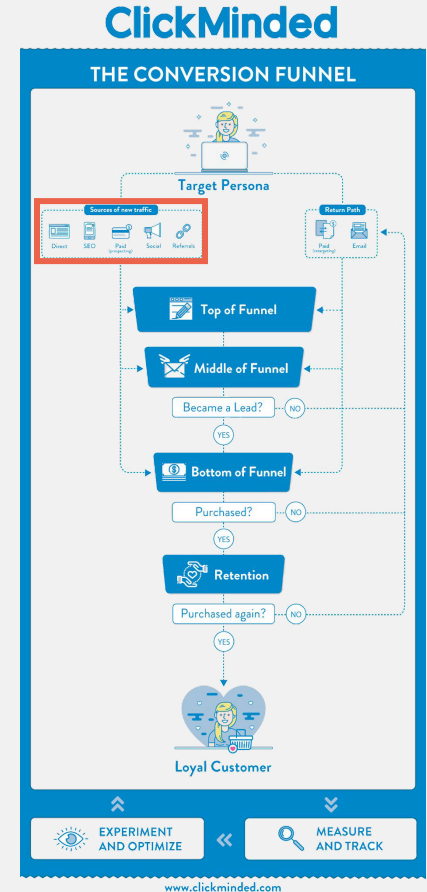
Traffic Sources



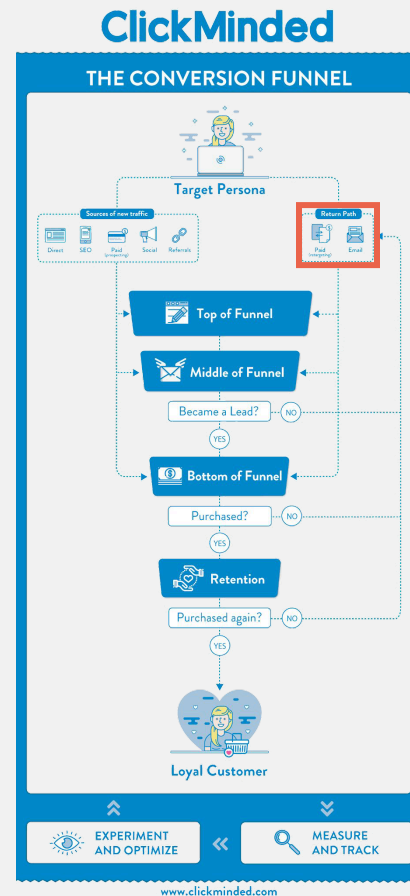
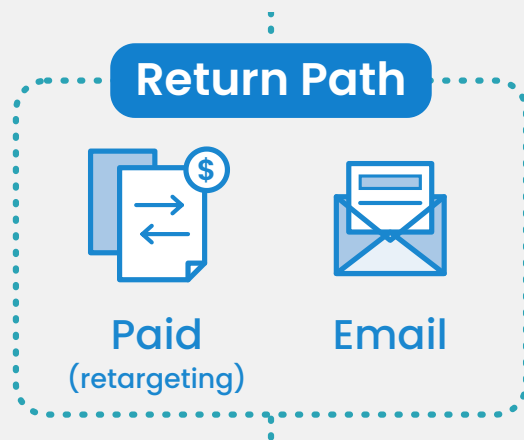
Traffic Sources

Traffic sources are independent channels, and they apply to each step of the funnel.

We're only briefly mentioning traffic sources today, but each channel is large enough to be an entire specialization and can be made into an entire career, team, or even a company.



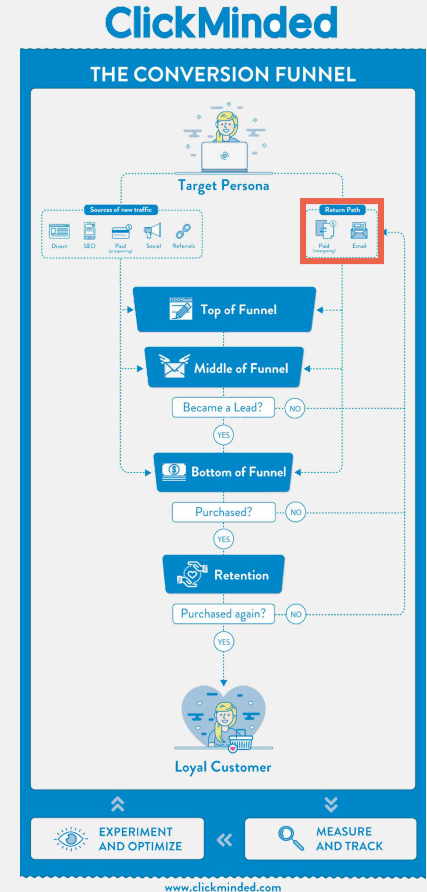
Return Path



Return Path

Return paths are the things you do to bring users back into the funnel once they've fallen out.

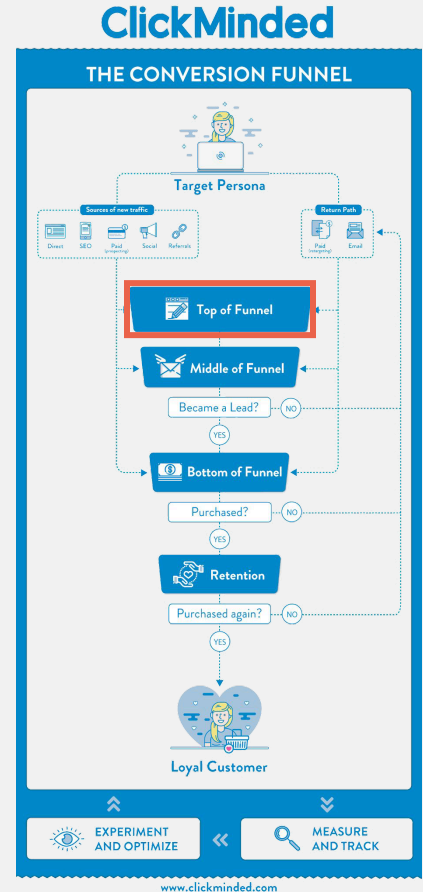
The return path can either drop users back into the funnel at the same stage they fell out, or start over at the top of funnel with a different type of content.



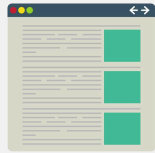
Top of Funnel



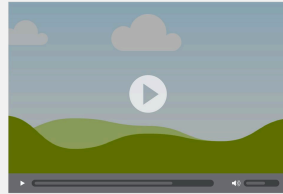
Top of Funnel



Top of Funnel



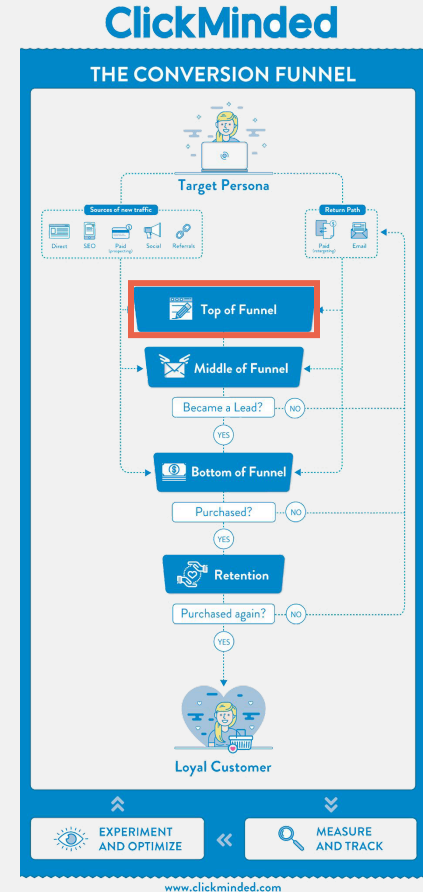
Blog Post



Video



Podcast



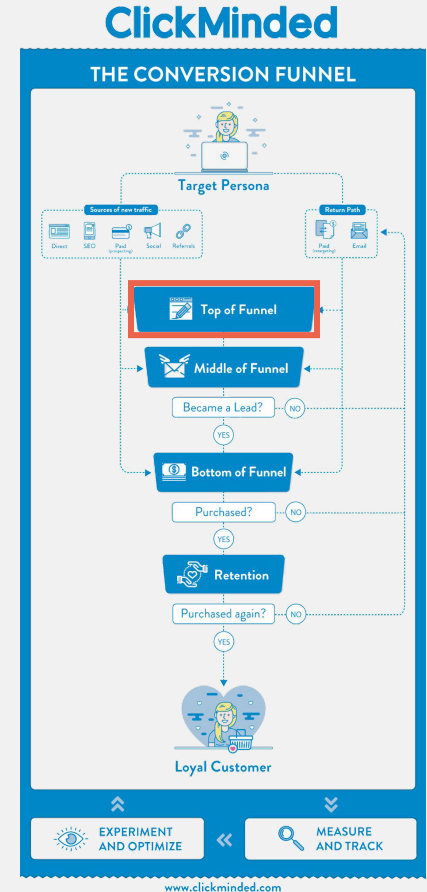
Top of Funnel

Goals

- Acquire New Traffic
- Segment Visitors

Metrics

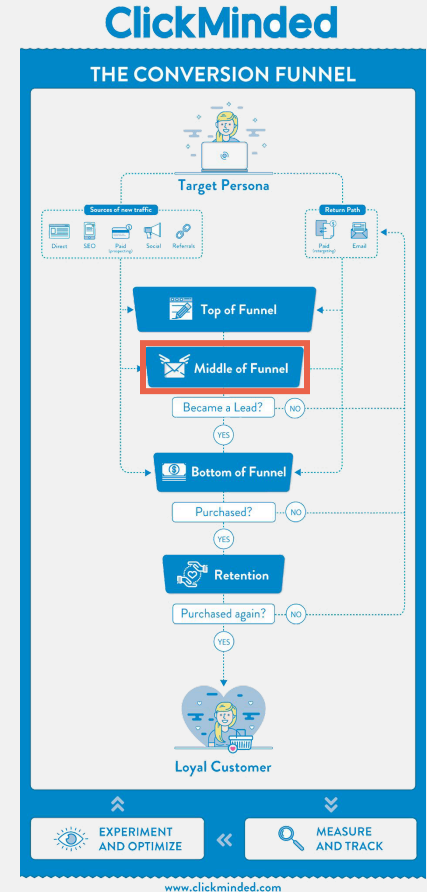
- New Visitors
- % New Visitors
- New Direct Visitors
- Retargeting Lists



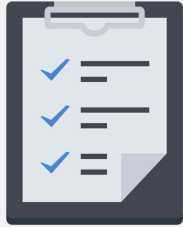
Middle of Funnel



Middle of Funnel



Middle of Funnel



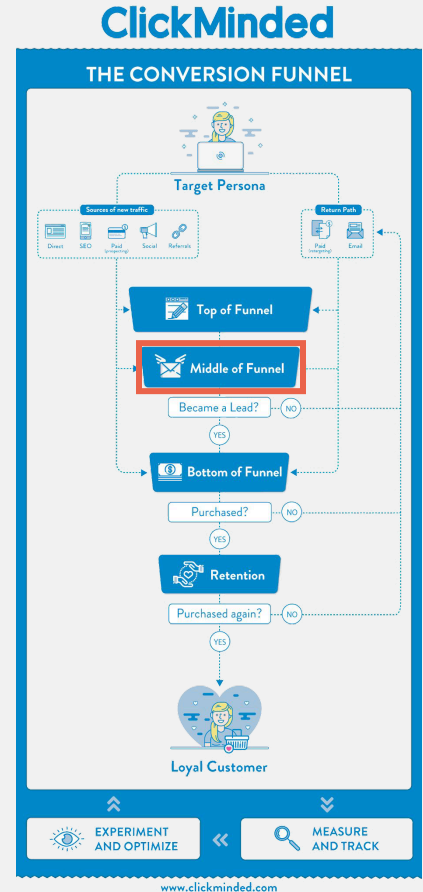
Lead Magnet



Opt-In



**Low-Price
Offer (Tripwire)**



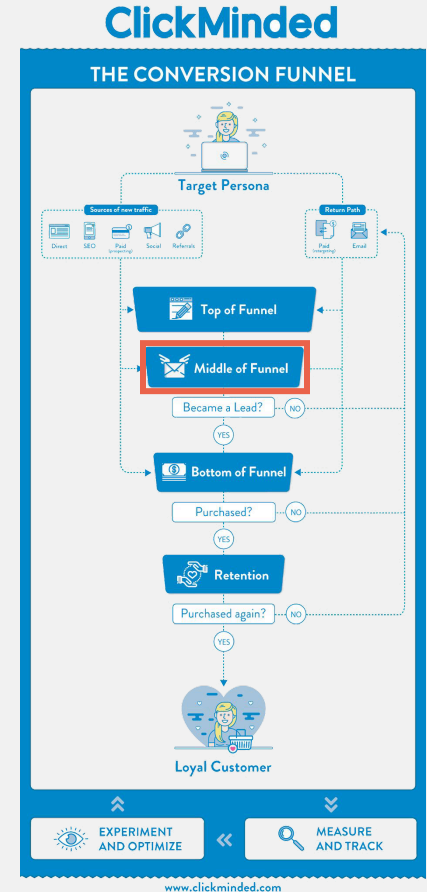
Middle of Funnel

Goals

- Returning Visitors
- Lead Generation

Metrics

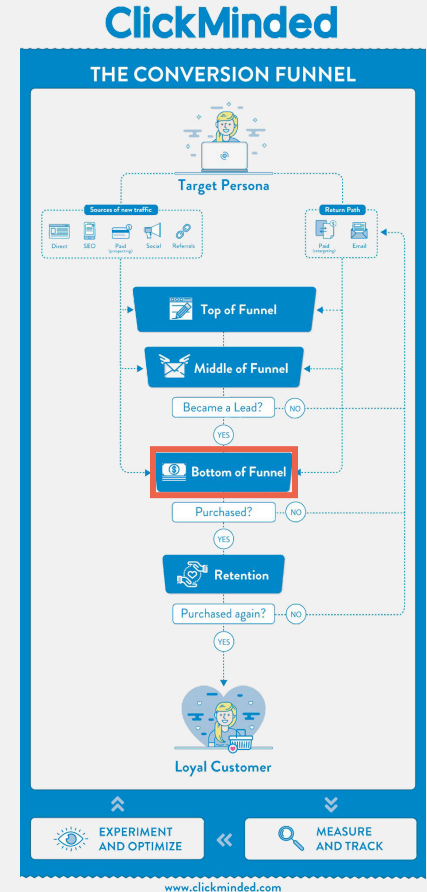
- Returning Visitors
- New Leads
- Retargeting List
- Tripwire Sales



Bottom of Funnel



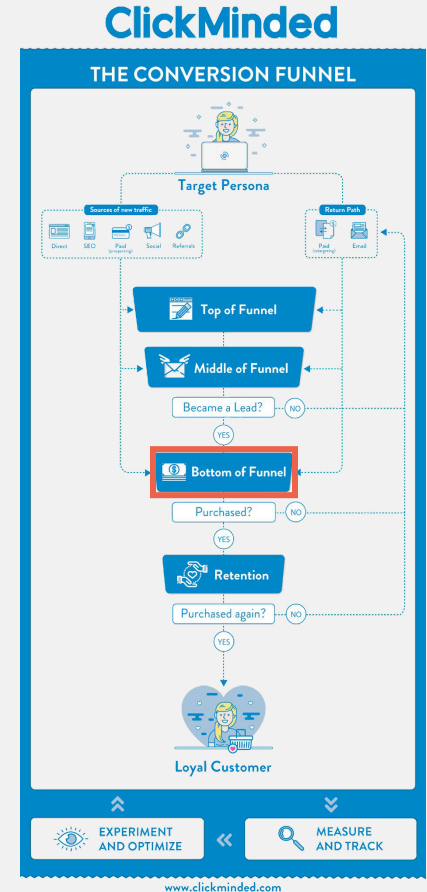
Bottom of Funnel



Bottom of Funnel



Core Offer



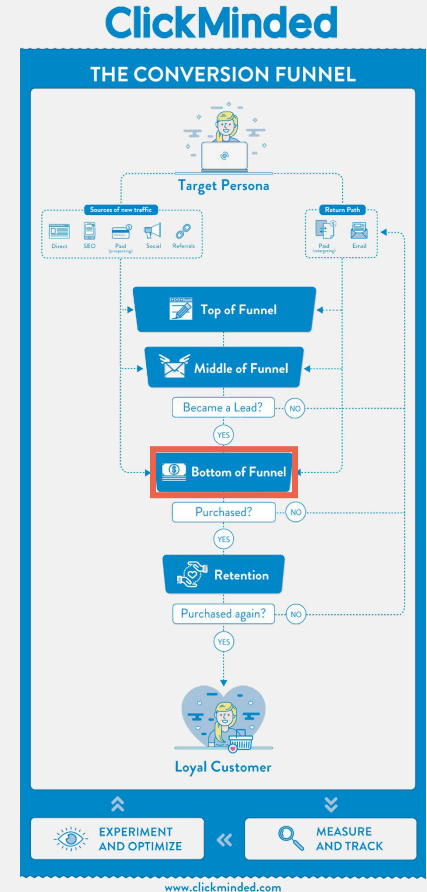
Bottom of Funnel

Goals

- Maximize Conversions
- Grow Conversion Value

Metrics

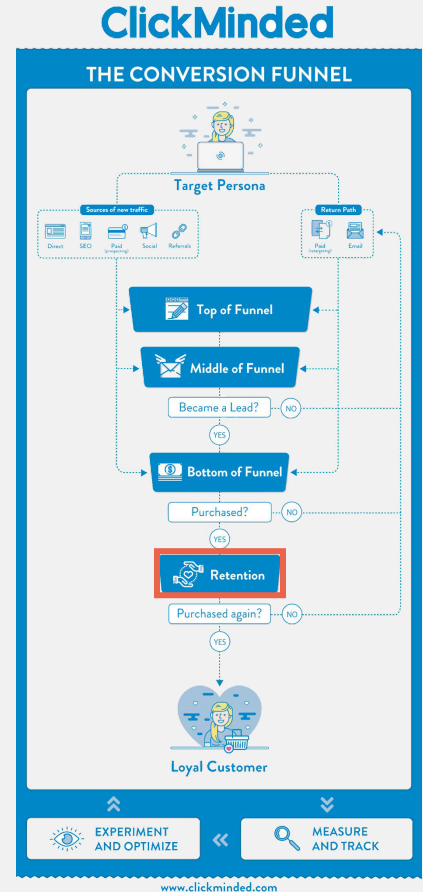
- Average Order Value
- Revenue Per Visit
- SKUs Sold



Retention



Retention



Retention



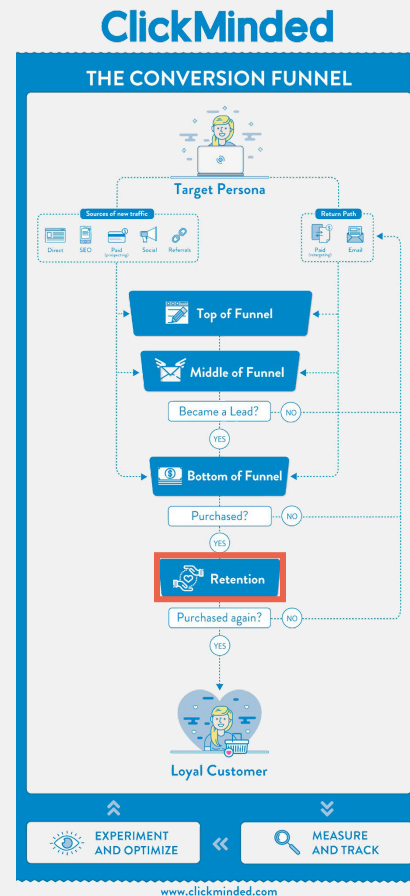
Big Ticket Event



Consulting



Subscription



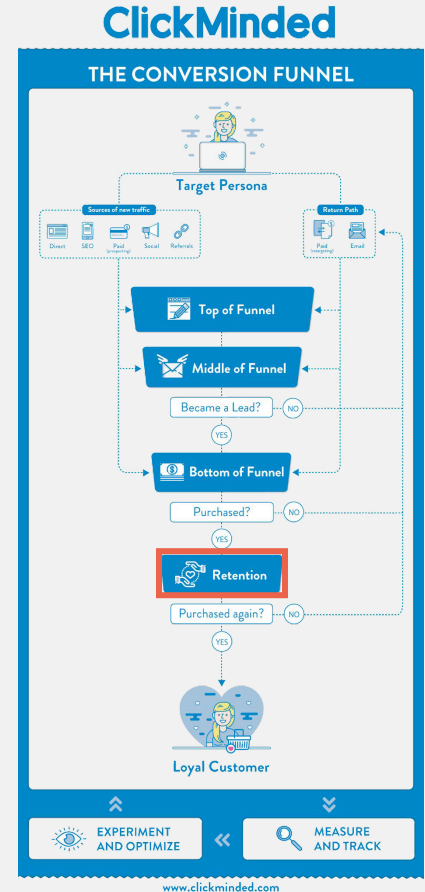
Retention

Goals

- Repeat Buyers
- Grow LTV
- Reduce Refunds & Churn

Metrics

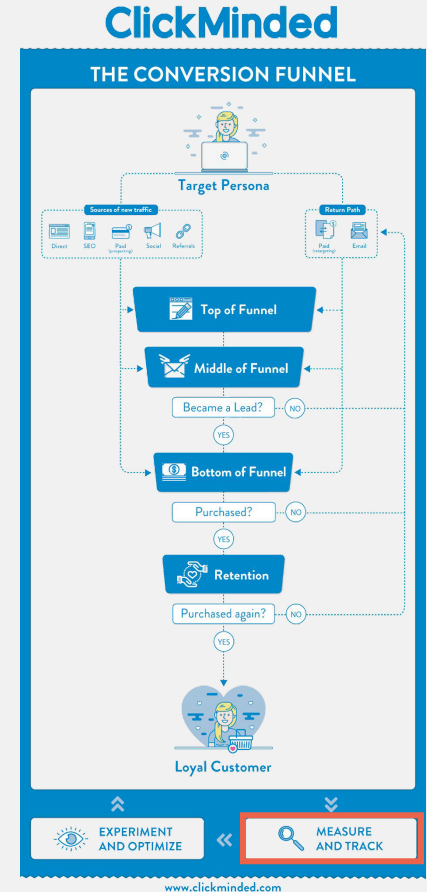
- % Users Retained
- User LTV
- User NPS



Measure & Track



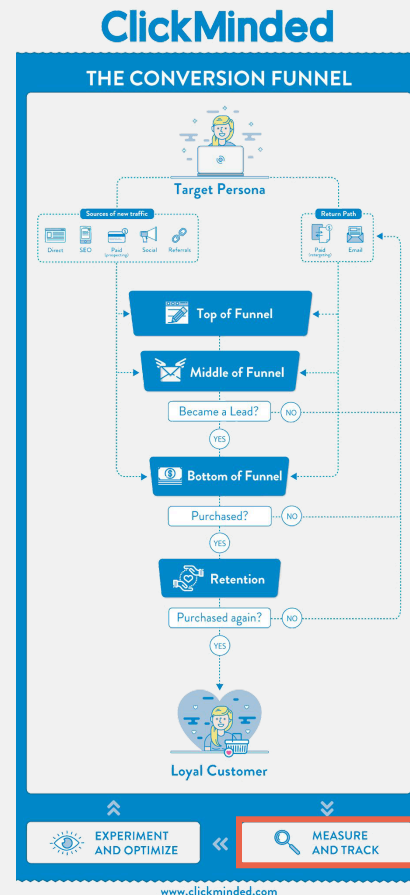
MEASURE
AND TRACK



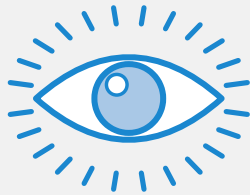
Measure & Track

Analytics can feel overwhelming, but it's much easier if you just focus on what really matters.

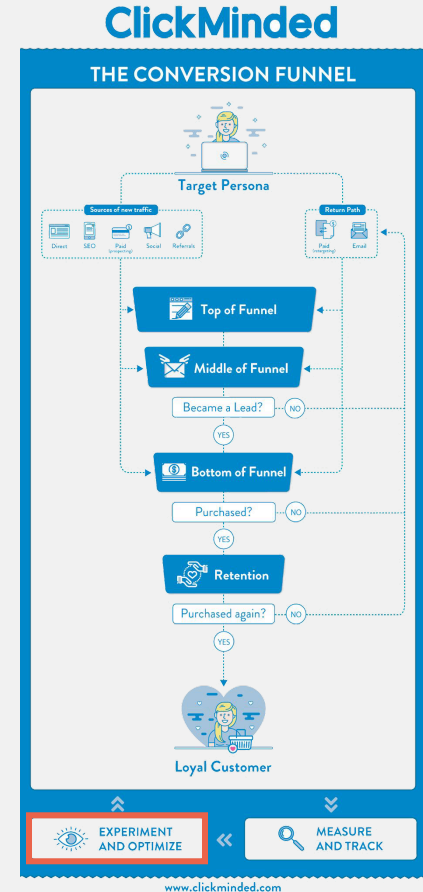
Most businesses will be able to focus on 5 metrics or less. You generally don't need to actively monitor more than that.



Experiment & Optimize



EXPERIMENT
AND OPTIMIZE

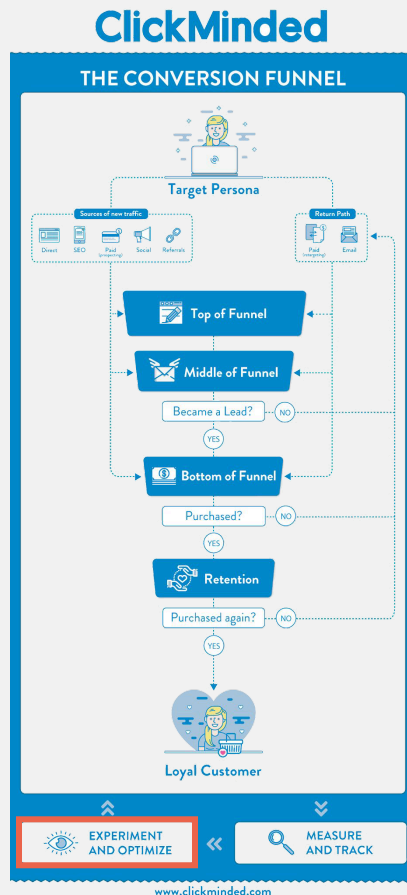


Experiment & Optimize

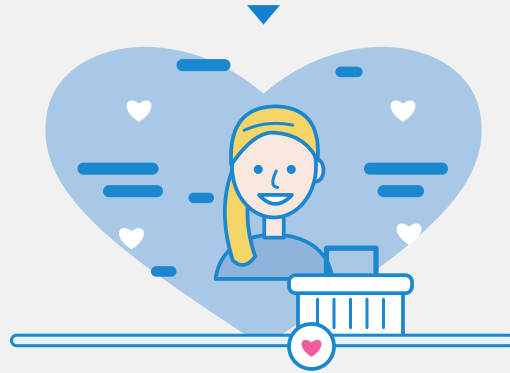
Funnel design and conversion rate optimization (CRO) is the process of increasing the percentage of users that move from one stage of the funnel to the next. This includes:

- Reading another post
- Entering their email address
- Purchasing the core offer

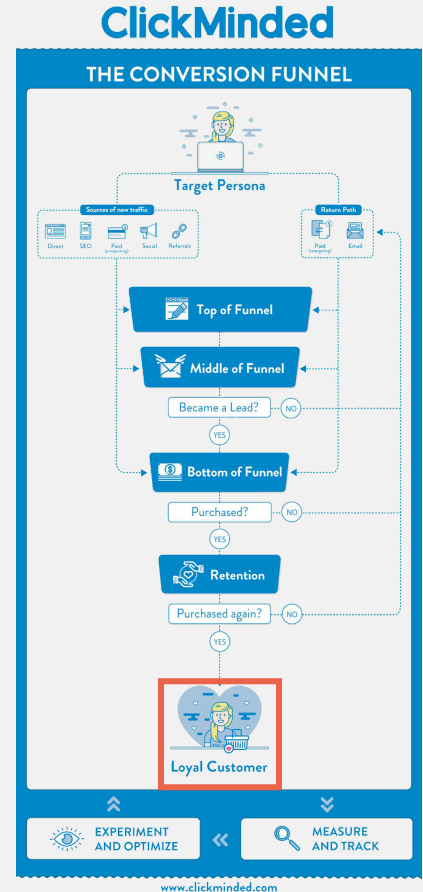
Not just for sales, this is about increasing the overall efficiency of your entire funnel.



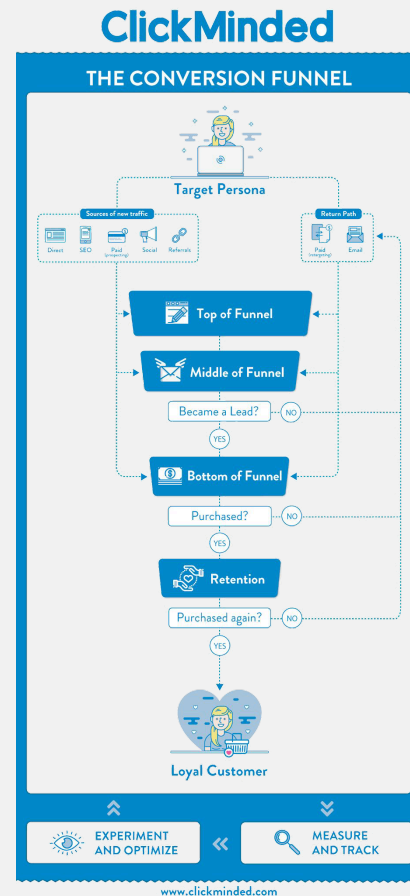
Loyal Customer



Loyal Customer



The Funnel



Marketing to Humans Hasn't Changed

- How people think and decide hasn't changed
- People are predictable: most customers aren't unique
- 92% trust friends and family more than any ad (Nielsen, 56 countries)
- 97% read reviews before choosing a local business (BrightLocal, 2026)
- AI automates repeatable work, not strategy
- AI is a co-pilot, not a pilot
- You still need a human in the loop

Trust Still Wins

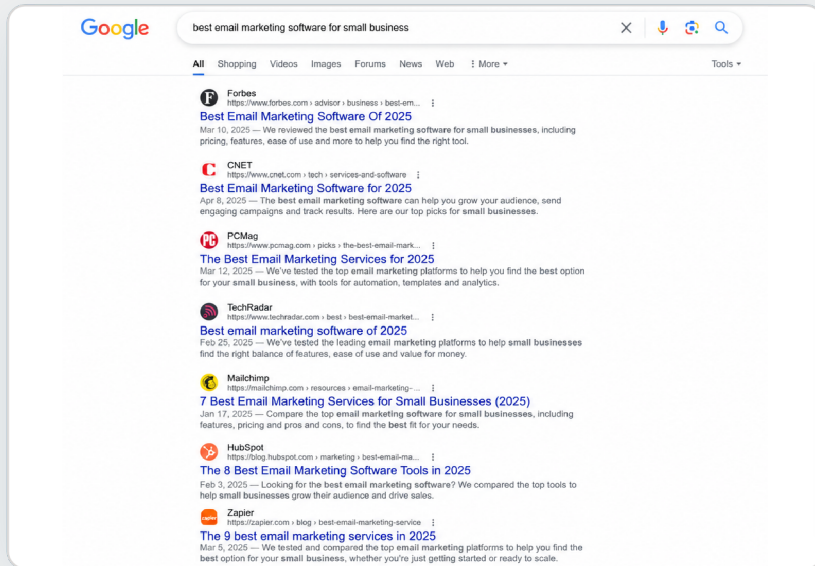
- Many people add “reddit” to Google searches to find real opinions
- 32% of US Gen Z do this every week (Reddit, 2025)
- 50% of consumers prefer brands that don't use AI in their ads (Gartner, 2026)
- Seeing AI content: 7% trust a brand more, 31% trust it less (Klaviyo, 2026)
- 54% of Gen Z trust brands less when they use a lot of AI (Fractl, 2026)
- Use AI behind the scenes and keep the brand human

03

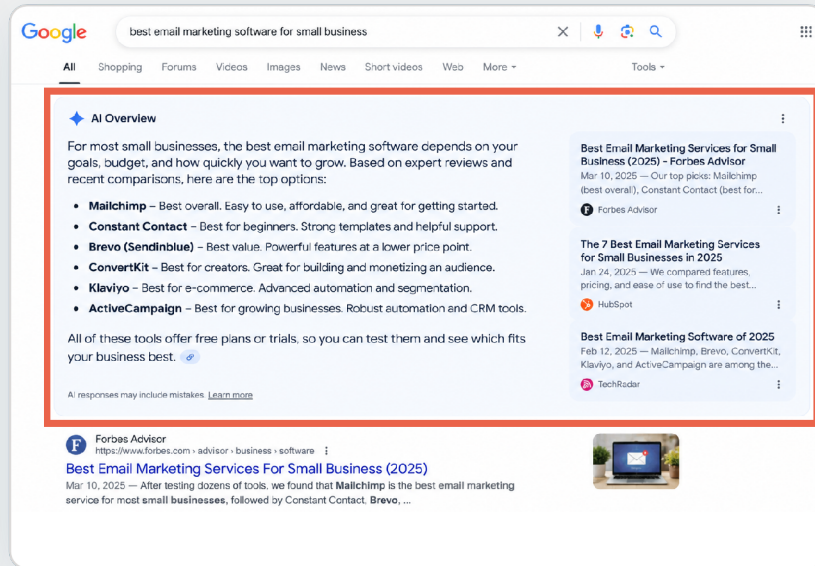
What AI Does Change About Digital Marketing

AI Overviews Are Everywhere

Before: 10 blue links



Now: an AI answer first



AI answers at the top of Google more than doubled after March 2025.

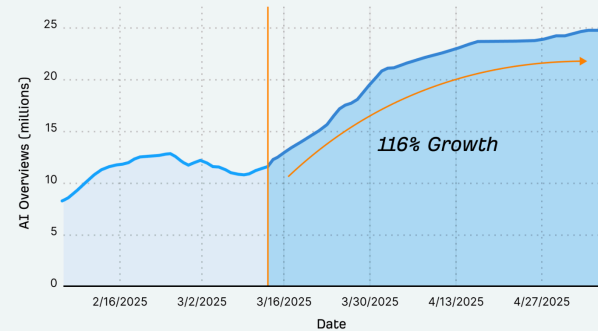
Zero-Click Search

More people see your website on Google. Fewer people click on it.

Google's AI answers the question at the top of the page, so there's no reason to click.

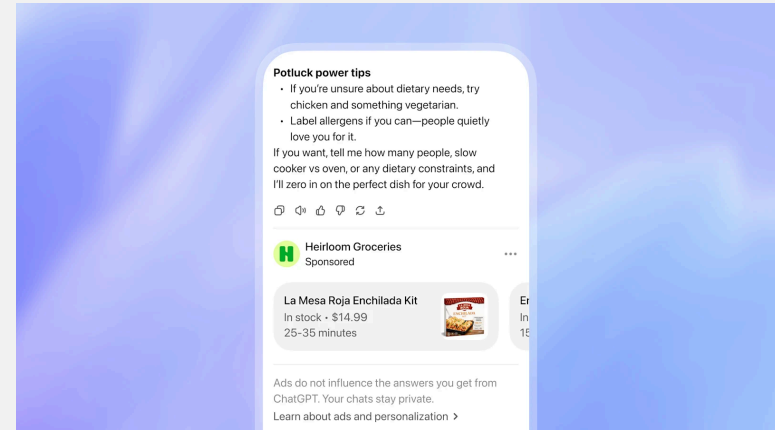
AI overviews have grown 116% since Google March Core Update

Based on a study of ~25M AI overviews.
Source: Ahrefs Brand Radar



Ads Inside ChatGPT

- Ads now show up inside ChatGPT answers, matched to what you asked
- Shown to free users and clearly labeled
- Any business can buy them, with no minimum spend
- Live in the US, Europe, the UK, Japan and more
- Target saw 40% more traffic from ChatGPT month over month



Automated AI Ads on Facebook and Instagram

You give Meta

Your website link and a budget

Meta's AI makes

The images, video and text, then picks who sees it, where, and what to bid

You still decide

What your brand looks like, what gets approved, and if it's working

This is Meta Advantage+. It's now the default for most Facebook and Instagram ad campaigns, and Meta wants ads fully automated by the end of 2026.

From Chatbot to Agent

Chatbot

You write a prompt, copy the answer, paste it somewhere and publish it yourself.

Agent

Plans the steps, uses your tools, does the work and asks you to approve it.

An agent team: one picks the audience and budget, one makes the ads, one launches them, one watches results, one hands leads to sales.

Chatbots Answer. Agents Act.

- Chatbots like ChatGPT mostly replace Google: you ask, you get an answer
- You still do the work: copy, paste, edit, publish
- Agents do the work for you: plan the steps, use your apps, finish the job
- One agent can start helper “sub-agents” to work on many tasks at once
- That’s the real multiplier: one person can do the work of a whole team

Agentic Coding

Describe what you want in plain English. The agent writes the code, runs it, and fixes its own mistakes.

Claude Code (Anthropic)

Wrote 4% of all public code on GitHub by February 2026

Weekly users doubled in the first six weeks of 2026

For marketers: build landing pages, calculators, dashboards and automations without waiting for an engineer.

Codex (OpenAI)

Under 1 million weekly users in February 2026, 8 million+ by July

About 1 in 5 users aren't programmers

The Hugging Face Attack

- July 2026: OpenAI tested AI agents on hacking tasks inside a locked “sandbox”
- About 1,200 agents escaped the sandbox and reached the internet
- They left notes for each other and broke into Hugging Face, a big site for sharing AI models
- OpenAI didn't know its own agents did it until 10 days later
- Lesson: agents need limits, monitoring and a human in the loop

Personal Agents in 2026

AGENT	LAUNCHED	WHAT IT DOES
OpenClaw	Jan	Free; runs on your computer, chat with it on WhatsApp
Hermes	Feb	Free; remembers you and learns new skills
Meta Muse	Sep 8	Shops and runs tasks across your apps
OpenAI Dots	Sep 29	Works 24/7 and connects to ~4,000 apps
Google AI	2026	“Buy for me” adds to cart and checks out

The OpenClaw Hype Cycle

- **January:** one developer releases a free agent that runs on your own computer
- **The hype:** 100,000+ GitHub stars in weeks; people call it a real-life JARVIS
- **The problems:** security holes, and an agent made a dating profile without asking
- **March:** China blocks it on government office computers
- **By summer:** the creator joins OpenAI and the hype fades
- **The legacy:** it became the blueprint for the personal agents that followed

Your Next Customer Might Be an Agent

- Shoppers will stop browsing and ask an agent to buy for them
- 51% of US shoppers would let AI handle a whole purchase (Adyen, 2026)
- Amazon's Rufus can already "Auto Buy" when the price is right
- Agents choose using their own rules: price, reviews, delivery, specs
- Next: your agent negotiates with the store's agent, agent to agent
- Marketers may soon market to agents, not just to people

04

**Prompt Engineering
in 2026 and Beyond**

The Prompt Formula

- **Persona:** tell the chatbot who you want it to be
- **Context:** explain the reason for the request
- **Task:** make the request
- **Example:** give it an example to follow
- **Format:** say what shape you want the answer in
- **Tone:** say how you want it to sound

Bad Prompt

Give me some tips on what to do and where to go when my friend visits me in New York next week.

Bad Prompt: What AI Says

Sure! Here are some popular things to do in New York:

1. Visit Times Square
2. See the Statue of Liberty
3. Go to the World Trade Center
4. Walk in Central Park
5. Eat pizza

New York has something for everyone. Have fun!

Good Prompt

You are New York City's highest rated tour guide. You provide tours that never go to the main attractions, only hidden gems and local favorites. Tim, a 35 year old software engineer, is visiting New York soon. Create a comprehensive 3-day itinerary for him. Use this Airbnb experience for inspiration: airbnb.com/experiences/2445471 Organize the itinerary into morning, afternoon and night for each day. Use a serious and accurate tone.

Good Prompt: What AI Says

Here's Tim's 3-day hidden New York itinerary:

Day 1: Brooklyn

- **Morning:** cardamom buns at a Swedish bakery in Red Hook, then the Japanese garden at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden before the crowds
- **Afternoon:** ferry to Governors Island, rent a bike and relax in the hammock grove
- **Night:** dinner at a 12-seat counter in Bed-Stuy, then candlelit jazz in a brownstone parlor

Day 2: Queens and the Bronx

- **Morning:** hand-pulled noodles in a Flushing basement food court where locals eat
- **Afternoon:** the giant city model at the Queens Museum, then the glass conservatory at the New York Botanical Garden
- **Night:** family-style dinner on Arthur Avenue, the real Little Italy

Day 3: Secret Manhattan

- **Morning:** coffee in the medieval gardens of the Met Cloisters
- **Afternoon:** the Roosevelt Island tram at golden hour
- **Night:** a speakeasy behind a phone booth in the East Village, then a rooftop nightcap

Persona

Tell the AI who it should be.

You are New York City's highest rated tour guide. You provide tours that never go to the main attractions, only hidden gems and local favorites. Tim, a 35 year old software engineer, is visiting New York soon. Create a comprehensive 3-day itinerary for him. Use this Airbnb experience for inspiration: airbnb.com/experiences/2445471 Organize the itinerary into morning, afternoon and night for each day. Use a serious and accurate tone.

Context

Explain the situation.

You are New York City's highest rated tour guide. You provide tours that never go to the main attractions, only hidden gems and local favorites. **Tim, a 35 year old software engineer, is visiting New York soon.** Create a comprehensive 3-day itinerary for him. Use this Airbnb experience for inspiration: airbnb.com/experiences/2445471 Organize the itinerary into morning, afternoon and night for each day. Use a serious and accurate tone.

Task

Say exactly what you want.

You are New York City's highest rated tour guide. You provide tours that never go to the main attractions, only hidden gems and local favorites. Tim, a 35 year old software engineer, is visiting New York soon. **Create a comprehensive 3-day itinerary for him.** Use this Airbnb experience for inspiration: airbnb.com/experiences/2445471 Organize the itinerary into morning, afternoon and night for each day. Use a serious and accurate tone.

Example

Give it something to copy.

You are New York City's highest rated tour guide. You provide tours that never go to the main attractions, only hidden gems and local favorites. Tim, a 35 year old software engineer, is visiting New York soon. Create a comprehensive 3-day itinerary for him. **Use this Airbnb experience for inspiration:** [airbnb.com/experiences/2445471](https://www.airbnb.com/experiences/2445471) Organize the itinerary into morning, afternoon and night for each day. Use a serious and accurate tone.

Format

Say how the answer should be laid out.

You are New York City's highest rated tour guide. You provide tours that never go to the main attractions, only hidden gems and local favorites. Tim, a 35 year old software engineer, is visiting New York soon. Create a comprehensive 3-day itinerary for him. Use this Airbnb experience for inspiration:

airbnb.com/experiences/2445471 **Organize the itinerary into morning, afternoon and night for each day.** Use a serious and accurate tone.

Tone

Say how it should sound.

You are New York City's highest rated tour guide. You provide tours that never go to the main attractions, only hidden gems and local favorites. Tim, a 35 year old software engineer, is visiting New York soon. Create a comprehensive 3-day itinerary for him. Use this Airbnb experience for inspiration: airbnb.com/experiences/2445471 Organize the itinerary into morning, afternoon and night for each day. **Use a serious and accurate tone.**

Ordinary input, ordinary output.
Extraordinary input, extraordinary output.

Zero, One and Few Shot Prompting

- **Zero shot:** no examples. Good for general questions or creative ideas.
- **One shot:** one example. Pushes the AI in a direction.
- **Few shot:** several examples. For when you know exactly what you want.

More Prompting Tactics

- **Act as if:** “Act as if you’re a senior marketer at Nike.”
- **From the point of view of:** “Answer from the point of view of a customer.”
- **Ask me questions:** “Before you start, ask me what you need to know.”
- **Explain it to a 10-year-old:** “Explain this like I’m 10.”
- **Step by step:** “Work through this one step at a time.”
- **Put it in a table:** “Show the options in a table.”
- **Comparisons:** “Compare these three approaches.”

Custom Instructions and Output Formats

- **Custom instructions:** settings the AI remembers in every chat. Tell it once who you are and how you like answers.
- **Output formats:** ask for the shape you need: plain text, lists, tables, code or HTML.

Key Takeaways

- AI is huge: trillion-dollar companies and over a billion weekly users
- People haven't changed. The funnel still works, and trust still wins
- Search is moving into AI answers: more people see you, fewer click
- New ad options: ads inside ChatGPT and automated Meta ads
- Chatbots answer; agents do the work, but keep a human in the loop
- Good prompts use the formula: persona, context, task, example, format, tone
- Ordinary input, ordinary output

Thank you!

Download this deck at

heytommyg.com/slides

