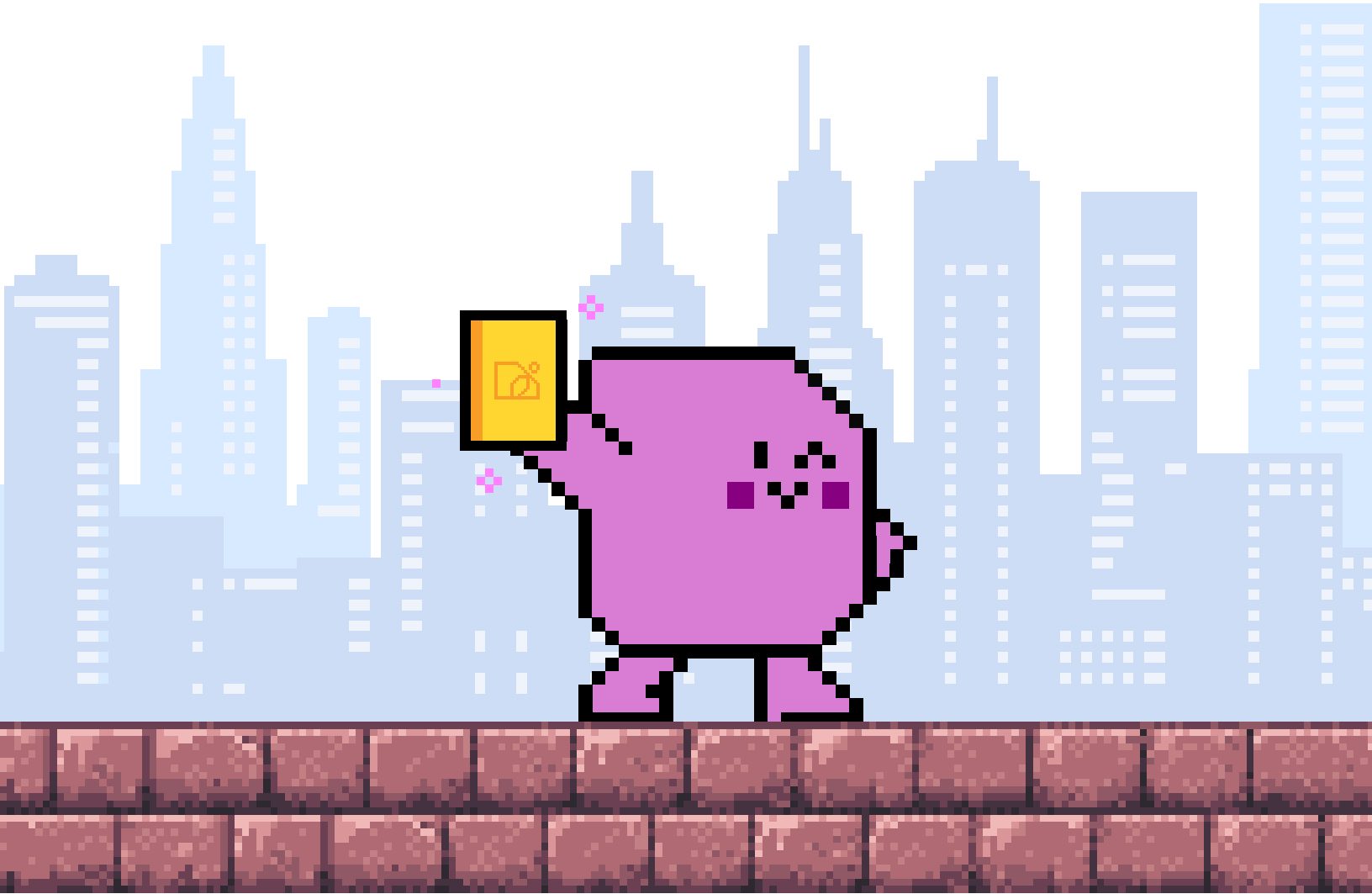
designerds®

The Power-Up Guide

AI cheat codes for creative leaders
doing more with less.



Press Start

The creative services game feels rigged right now with AI on the board, and you're not imagining it. Teams are smaller, the workload keeps growing, and leadership wants it all done with AI tools nobody has time to learn.

You don't need to master every new tool to win this level. You need to know where AI actually saves time, where it hurts quality, and how to keep your team's creative standards intact while you adapt.

This guide is the short version of what we've learned using AI in real creative work for leading brands in the tech and retail space. It takes about 15 minutes to read. Keep the cheat codes page handy; that's the one you'll use most.



Level 1:
Know Your Battles, and Strategize

Every level has its challenges. Here are the four most creative leaders are fighting right now, and one move that works in each.

Battle 1: The AI Mandate

The instruction is usually vague: "use AI." Trying to apply it everywhere at once leads to scattered experiments and nothing to show for them.

Your Move: Pick one or two workflows where your team loses the most hours to repetitive work, such as resizing assets or writing first-draft copy. Apply AI there first, measure the time saved, and report it. A clear win in one area buys you room to experiment carefully everywhere else.

Battle 2: The Doubling Workload

When the same team handles twice the requests, everything starts to feel urgent, and quality slips on the work that matters most.

Your Move: Sort incoming work into three piles. **Speed up** covers repetitive, rules-based tasks AI handles well. **Protect** covers strategic, high-visibility work that needs your best people. **Cut or push back** covers requests that won't move a business goal. Most teams find the third pile is bigger than they expected.



Battle 3: The Shrinking Team

Fewer people means fewer eyes on the work. Mistakes that a colleague would have caught now go out the door.

Your Move: Build review into the process instead of relying on spare capacity. A short checklist used on every AI-assisted piece (see the Gold Test in Level 3) catches most problems in minutes.

Battle 4: The Execs Who Don’t Get It

Leadership often assumes AI makes creative work instant. It doesn't, and the gap between expectation and reality lands on you.

Your move: Talk about AI in terms leadership already cares about: hours saved, risk avoided, and brand consistency. Share real numbers from your pilots, and be specific about where human time is still required and why. "AI cut our resizing time from two days to two hours, which freed the team up for the campaign concept" lands better than any general argument.

Demo Mode:

Creative leaders at two of the top three Fortune 500 brands faced a familiar mandate: adopt AI, protect quality, and deliver more with smaller teams. Designerds helped them choose the right tools, build AI into their workflows, and train their teams, so they could show leadership faster turnarounds without lowering creative standards.

Level 2: Power-Ups

AI is most useful in specific stages of creative work, not across the board. Here's where it can provide the most value.

Stage	Where AI helps	Typical time saved	Watch out for
Research and briefs	Summarizing audience research, scanning competitors, drafting a first brief	1–2 hours per first draft	Confident summaries that miss nuance; check sources
Inspiration kickstart	Rapid moodboards, alternative directions, dozens of headline options	4–6 hours per concept	Ideas that look like everyone else's; use it to widen options, not pick them
Production	Resizing for channels, versioning, background cleanup, localization drafts	Days to weeks	Off-brand details and errors at small sizes
Review	Consistency checks, typo and error spotting, brand guideline checks	1–2 hours	Treating an AI check as final approval

Demo Mode:

We've helped several clients save hours of production time by bringing AI optimizations into their day-to-day creative process. Using AI to resize and adapt graphic treatments across digital ad and social media specs, we sped up production and reduced manual work. This freed up our team to spend more time on creative strategy and ideation, while delivering a greater volume of creative assets in less time.

Research and briefs

AI can turn a stack of research documents into a usable summary in minutes, and it gives you a solid first draft of a brief to react to. The strategic call about what matters most stays with you.



Starter prompt:
"Summarize the attached research into the five insights most relevant to a campaign targeting [audience]. For each, note how confident the research is and what's missing."

Ideation

The biggest win here is volume. AI can generate 50 rough directions so your team can spend its time choosing and building on the three that are actually interesting.



Starter prompt:
"Give me 20 distinct creative directions for [campaign goal]. Make each one feel different in tone, from playful to serious. One line each."

Production

This is where most teams save the most hours. Repetitive, rules-based work like adapting one design into 30 formats is exactly what AI tools handle well.



Starter prompt:
"Rewrite this headline in five lengths: 3 words, 6 words, 10 words, 15 words, and 25 words. Keep the core message and tone the same."

Review

AI makes a good second pair of eyes, especially when your team is stretched. It catches inconsistencies a tired reviewer might miss, but it shouldn't sign off on anything.



Starter prompt:
"Check this copy against our brand guidelines below. List anything off-tone, inconsistent, or unclear, and explain why."

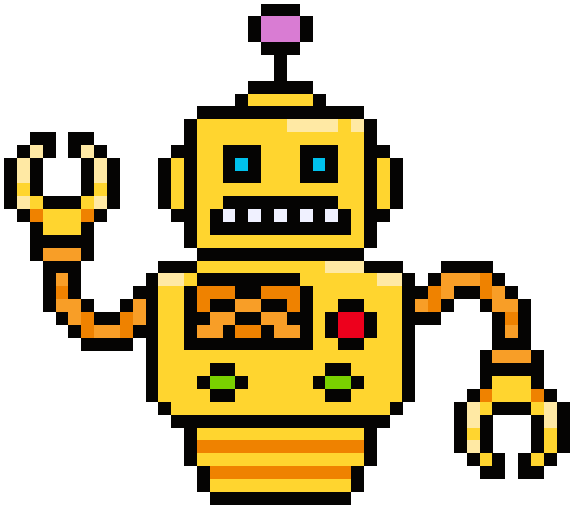
Level 3:
The Robot Needs a Player

AI on its own is capable and fast, but easily confused. It levels up when a skilled human is steering. These are the parts of creative work that still need a person:

- **The core idea.** AI remixes what already exists. The concept that makes a campaign feel new still comes from people who understand the brand, the audience, and the moment.
- **Brand judgement.** Knowing that something is technically on-brand but still wrong for *this* brand takes experience AI doesn't have.
- **Taste.** AI can produce a hundred options. Knowing which one is genuinely good, and why, is the job.
- **Cultural and emotional nuance.** AI doesn't have gut instincts; you do. Humor, timing, and sensitivity to what your audience is going through are easy to get wrong and expensive to fix.
- **Accountability.** When something goes out under your brand, a person needs to stand behind it.

Demo Mode:

When helping Twitter through their global brand refresh in 2019, Designerds was able to recommend a ranged approach to the brand tone and graphic execution depending on the subject matter at hand. The newly proposed brand elements were loud and splashy, but Twitter often deals with serious and newsworthy content that required more restraint. These are the judgment calls human thinking remains best at providing.

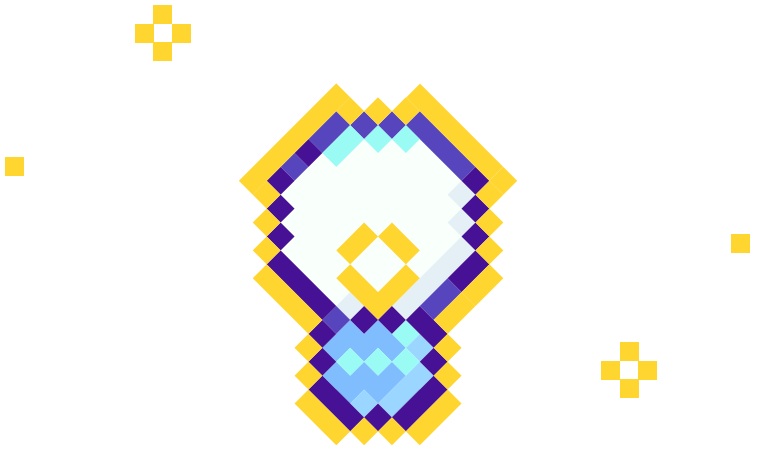


The Gold Test

Run every AI-assisted piece through these questions before it ships. It takes about five minutes.

- ☐ Does this sound like our brand, or like everyone else's?
- ☐ Would we be comfortable seeing this side by side with a competitor's work?
- ☐ Is the core idea ours, or did we accept the first thing the tool suggested?
- ☐ Have we checked the rights to every image, font, and piece of copy?
- ☐ Has a person checked every fact, name, and number?
- ☐ Does it hold up at every size and format it will appear in?
- ☐ Would we be proud to put our name on it?

If any answer gives you pause, the piece needs another human pass. Legal and brand teams at large companies are increasingly careful about AI-generated content, so the rights question deserves special attention.



Bonus Level: Cheat Codes

Copy these prompts, fill in the brackets, and adjust to fit. Each one works with most general AI assistants.

Use it for	Cheat code
Sharpening a brief	"Here's a creative brief. Point out anything vague, contradictory, or missing, then suggest a tighter version."
Breaking a creative block	"Give me 15 unexpected angles for [product or message]. Avoid the obvious approaches a competitor would take."
Stress-testing an idea	"Play a skeptical [target audience member]. React honestly to this concept and tell me what wouldn't convince you."
Writing for every format	"Adapt this message for LinkedIn, Instagram, email subject line, and a billboard. Keep the voice consistent."
Explaining work to execs	"Turn these creative rationale notes into a three-sentence summary for a senior executive focused on business results."
Giving clearer feedback	"Help me turn these rough notes into clear, kind, actionable feedback for a designer."
Checking for blind spots	"Review this campaign for anything that could be misread, feel insensitive, or land badly with [audience]."
Planning a project	"Break this project into tasks, flag which ones AI could speed up, and estimate time for each."

Need a Player 2?

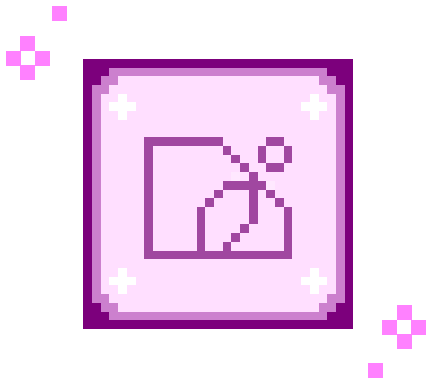
Some levels are easier with a teammate. Designerds works alongside in-house creative teams, using AI where it speeds things up and human thinking where it counts.

Teams bring us in when the workload outgrows their headcount, when they need fresh ideas from outside the building, or when they want help building AI into their process without losing what makes their work good.

We've helped brands like Linkedin, Avalara, CaptivateIQ, Twitter, Truecar, Niantic, Spotify, and so many more scale their creative work and implement smart processes along the way.

If a project on your plate could use a co-op partner, book a free 30-minute Player 2 session. We'll look at one real project with you and share how we'd approach it.
No pitch deck, no pressure.

Book a Player 2 session



Our Work:
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