STRATEGIC STACK: OVERCOMING AI SLOP

TRAVIS ARNDORFER · CIRAS AI SUMMIT 2026

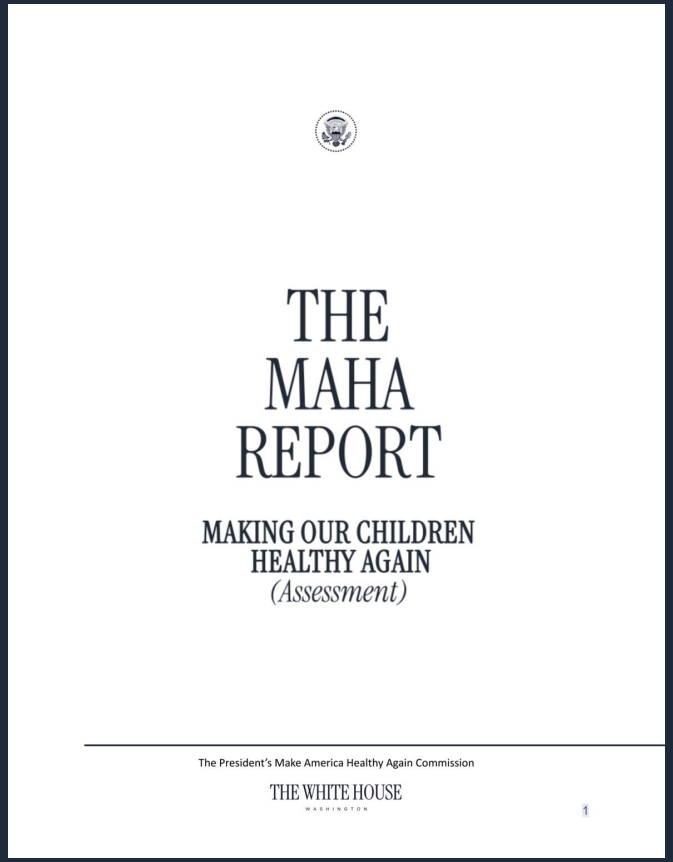
AI SLOP IS
EVERYWHERE.

… IN BIG BRAND ADS.

Coca-Cola Christmas Ad
Broken physics, objects morphing mid scene

McDonald's Netherlands Holiday Spot
Uncanny faces, broken physics

Marvel Fantastic Four Poster
Same-face crowd, four-fingered hands



… IN CRITICAL PUBLICATIONS.

1,350+ court cases marred by fake citations

300+ peer - reviewed articles retracted

Countless articles full of expert quotes, sources and people that don't exist

Charlotin, AI Hallucination Cases, 2026
Sridharan & Sivaramakrishnan, Frontiers, 2026

… IN OUR OWN BACKYARDS.

Small business logos

Over half of LinkedIn posts > 100 words

Mounds of internal memos and decks

Originality.ai, 2024 –2025

IT'S THE PROCESSED FOOD OF CONTENT.

High in contextual structure and syntax

Low in substance

Heavy on verbal ornamentation and filler

AND IT’S NOT CHEAP.

Workslop’s dispersed inefficiency

Search penalty for weak E -E-A-T

Brand credibility and connection

Denser competitive clutter + higher bar

MOST SLOP WASN'T MEANT TO BE SLOP. SO WHAT'S DRIVING IT?

BUILT FOR THE BEATEN PATH.

Models are designed to predict the most likely next word.

The math privileges the safe and common and suppresses the rare and surprising.

THE COST OF PLAYING IT SAFE.

Models are tuned for safety and to avoid producing offensive content.

Single cluster rates (homogenization) can go from a base of $\leqslant 1\%$ to $28.5\%-79\%$.

Liu et al., 2026

NONE OF THAT MAKES SLOP INEVITABLE.

79.8%

of AI users exhibited cognitive surrender, following faulty AI logic.

Shaw & Nave, Wharton, 2026

DRESSED TO IMPRESS.

Fluency bias
Our brains read polish and structure as accuracy.

LOOKS LIKE
YOU'VE GOT THIS.

Cognitive surrender
We start treating the tool as an authority. And our confidence in it increases.

THE SUBVERSIVE POWER OF EASY.

Effort justification
We value what we struggled for. AI removes the struggle, creating less intrinsic value in our minds.

WHY BOTHER?

Metacognitive laziness
Without value and ownership cues, our brains don’t dispatch the internal resources necessary for meaningful refinement.

THE RISE OF TASK TURDUCKENS

The cognitive cascade and LLM tendencies converge to collapse tasks, which compounds and amplifies everything working against producing unique, high-quality outputs.

EXAMPLE: PROMPT

We’re a small manufacturer producing fasteners that make assembly easier, faster and better in the long term. Plus, our product helps automate fabrication. Sales have been trending flat to possibly down, and the sales team wants to get in front of more people faster. We need to drive demo requests from a list of 8,000 subscribers. Create a nurture series to drive requests for a demo. Use a professional tone. Highlight our key benefits and include a clear CTA in each email.

EXAMPLE: UNPACKING HIDDEN TASKS + INPUTS

Create a nurture series to drive requests for a demo.

This ask has two primary sub-tasks:

1. Determine the architecture
2. Write each email

Deciding the architecture has several other sub-tasks:

1. What does this audience need to hear?
2. How does our product address audience needs?
3. What's the best way to deliver the full message?

Each of these further breaks out into several nested tasks requiring inputs and decisions.

EXAMPLE: COMPLETE UNPACKING FOR ONE CORE TASK, ARCHITECTURE

Dozens of decisions and inputs can fall under a single task.

Who's on the list. How they got there. What they thought they signed up for. The lead magnet they grabbed. The thank-you page promise. What they expect next. The trigger event that pushed them to sign up. The dream state. The hell state. The workaround they're using right now. Their internal jargon for the problem. Their skepticism level. Their #1 fear about a demo. The ego benefit. The cost of inaction. Their emotional state when our email lands. What they already think they know. What competitors have told them. Sub-segments hiding inside the 8,000. List health and engagement history. Voice. Words we use. Words we don't. Credibility position. Point of view on the category. The right "from" to engage them. Other emails they're already getting from us. Whether sales is reaching out manually. What pauses, what overlaps. What the product does in plain language. Key benefits. The "aha" feature. Time-to-value. The differentiators. The weaknesses. Proof we can bring. Case studies by industry. Case studies by title. Implementation lift. Price point. How that shapes the conversation. The top three competitors they're researching right now. Their nurtures. The generic category message everyone else is using. What we don't want to sound like. Whether they've demoed a competitor recently. Is "demo" a small ask or a big one. Sales cycle length. Demo involvement. What the demo actually is. Perceived risk. Stakeholders involved. Whether there's a smaller hand-raise that warms them faster. Pre-demo homework. Rational barriers. Emotional barriers. Political barriers. Inertia. Trust gap. Which strengths address which barriers. Which barriers we don't address. What hooks first. What builds. What closes. Strengths that should never lead because they raise objections too early. Number of emails. Narrative arc. Shape of the arc. Email one's job. Time delay from signup. Cadence. Single track or branched. Window length. Trigger to start. Stop trigger. Suppression list. Exit path for non-converters. Exit path for mid-series converters. Where humans step in. Sales capacity to handle response volume. Budget constraints. Existing email performance benchmarks. Success metrics. Post-conversion handoff sequence.

EXAMPLE: COMPLETE UNPACKING FOR ONE CORE TASK, ARCHITECTURE

Even with good supporting inputs – a brief, audience profiles, CRM data, product messaging house, and a brand voice and tone guide – Dozens of decisions and inputs can fall under a single task.

What they expect next. Their #1 fear about a demo. The ego benefit. Their emotional state when our email lands. What they already think they know. What competitors have told them. What pauses, what overlaps. How that shapes the conversation. The top three competitors they're researching right now. Their nurtures. The generic category message everyone else is using. Is “demo” a small ask or a big one. Perceived risk. Stakeholders involved. Whether there’s a smaller hand-raise that warms them faster. Pre-demo homework. Political barriers. Inertia. Trust gap. Which strengths address which barriers. Which barriers we don’t address. What hooks first. What builds. What closes. Strengths that should never lead because they raise objections too early. Narrative arc. Shape of the arc. Email one’s job. Single track or branched. Window length. Trigger to start. Stop trigger. Suppression list. Exit path for non-converters. Exit path for mid-series converters. Post-conversion handoff sequence.

THE STRATEGIC STACK PRINCIPLE.

Take small, human -aimed and -gated passes. Rinse. Repeat.

THE LOOP

AIM → WORK → REFINE → RECALIBRATE

Every pass imparts more of your sensibilities and increases the output’s uniqueness.

EVERY MOVE COUNTERS KEY FAILURE POINTS.

Small passes prevent task collapse

Aiming counters cognitive surrender

Refining prevents unfocused outputs

The work builds ownership and vigilance

GOOD INPUTS EASE DECISION FATIGUE.

Personas

Messaging houses

Project briefs

Brand voice and tone guides

Content examples / frameworks

ATTENDING TO TOOL MARKS

Techniques to explore:
Constraining outputs to reduce filler

Verification -focused prompting strategies

Prompting for diverse or unlikely answers

THIS IS CRAFT.

The marketers getting consistently better work aren’t using better tools. They’re using the tools better.

DON’T SURRENDER.
START STACKING.

Only you can prevent AI slop.

Task collapse + passive rubber - stamping are key, failure points.

Stacking small human - gated passes increases authenticity and quality.

THANK YOU.

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