



# Using AI to Make Your Team Great

M2 AI Summit · Christchurch · Blake Harkness, Harkness AI

"The newest person might be your most valuable."



# My Background



## 1. 2021 Massey Mechatronics

Engineering degree, building foundations

## 2. 2022/23 ChatGPT Launches

Mid-degree, everything changed overnight



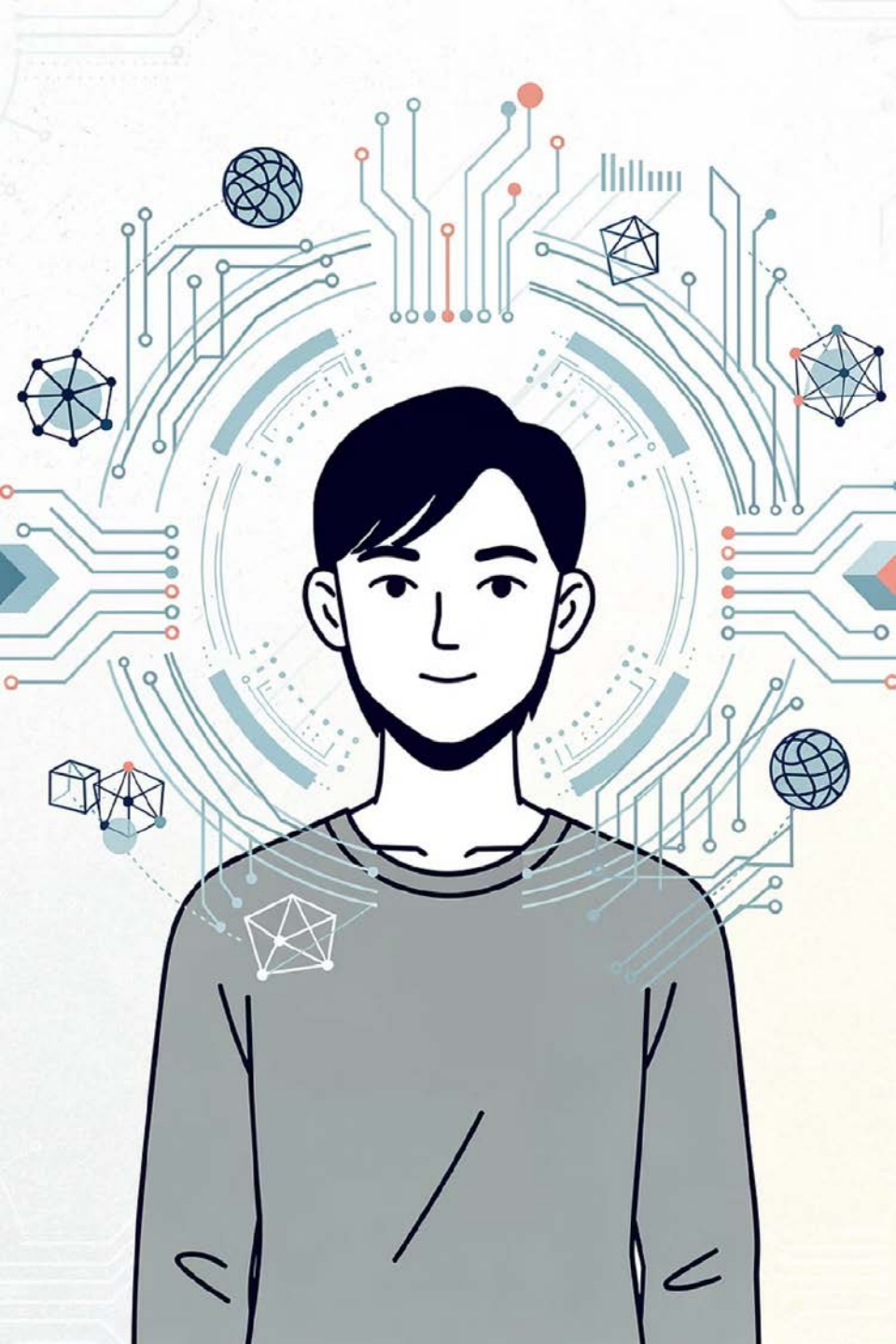
# My Background

3. Nov 2024 | Graduate Engineer – MainPower

first real-world AI deployment

4. 2025 | Founded Harkness AI

20+ NZ businesses, Engineering NZ AI Advisory + AI Forum NZ,  
NZ China Delegation, 1 million + social media views



# Two Things I Want You to Take Away.

If you forget everything else, take these two things:

**1**

**AI is an amplifier, not a cost-cutter.**

Same team, dramatically more output.

**2**

**Your staff are your superpower.**

The people who hold the other half are already in your building.

# The Talent Paradox

## New Zealand's Skills Crisis

**60%**

### Tech Employers Can't Grow

Nearly 60% couldn't take on new work for lack of skills (2023, NZTech)


**"We can't find AI skills anywhere."**

**16.5%**

### Youth Unemployment

3x the national rate — young people can't get in (Feb 2026, Stats NZ)

**"We don't hire grads, and grads can't touch anything important."**

 These are the same companies.

# Blocking AI Literate Talent

Most universities still ban AI. The grads who are fluent taught themselves.

**YKIA**  
YOUNG KIWIS IN AI





# The Script Has Flipped

Generative AI is 4 years old. The senior with 25 years' experience and the graduate started at the same line.

## Old Rule

### ~~Domain Expertise First~~

~~1+ years of experience  
required before you add  
real value~~

## New Rule

### ~~AI Skills + Domain Knowledge~~

~~Your people already have  
the hard half, find problems,  
build solutions~~

# They're Already Making a Huge Difference

It's not just me. Young professionals across various sectors are leveraging AI to create significant value and drive innovation right now.

## **Brodie & Georgia**

Spearheading AI development at Zuru and Trade Me, creating cutting-edge solutions for industry leaders.

## **Han**

Within the first month developed out an automation platform at Flock Consulting providing real value

## **Zavier Taylor**

This second-year civil engineering student automated invoice checking and job reporting for a pest control company.

# Your Easy Half Is Already in the Building

Your most AI-fluent staff are probably your most junior. A grad uses AI dozens of times a day in their personal life. At work, they're told to wait their turn.



## Hours to Minutes

A grad given a real problem cut a recurring report from hours to minutes



## Months, Not Years

A junior shipped production AI work in months because they were trusted to



## Better Together

A domain expert paired with an AI-fluent grad solved what neither could alone


# Amplifying a Team Takes Three Things.

It takes three things, and you can't max all three.

**Training & Education**

**Tools & Access**

**Time to Explore**

 The catch: you can't fund every tool, unlimited training, AND pull people off their real work. It's a balancing act.

# Free up your team for what truly matters.

AI amplification begins by targeting the tedious, repetitive, and manual work your staff dreads.

## **Strategic Focus**

More time for client-based work, innovation, and business growth initiatives.

## **Better Balance**

Reduce ridiculous hours, giving staff their personal time back for family and well-being.

# Last Year vs This Year

2025

## Agentic AI Was Hard

Weeks of setup, specialist plumbing, fragile demos.

2026

## AI Connects to Everything You Already Use

A Claude licence connects to Xero, Outlook, OneDrive, HubSpot, whatever you already use.

**Describe the work. It does the work.**

# Where to Start

AI plugs into the work your team already does. Here's where it pays off fastest.

## Meetings

Auto notes, decisions and action items, sent before everyone's left the room.

## Data Analysis

AI generates code or edit formula in excel files to enhance the process.

## Decisions

Pull the context together so the call is made on the full picture, not the loudest voice.

## Customer Comms

First-draft replies, follow-ups and chases in your tone, ready to send.

## Internal Knowledge

Ask your own files, emails and notes a question and get a straight answer.

# From Manual to Automated – Proposal Generation

BEFORE

## Manual Process

01

### Search Gmail

Hunting for client emails and threads

02

### Dig through Google Drive

Finding meeting transcripts one by one

03

### Check Notion

Cross-referencing notes and context

04

### Pull proposal templates

Copying and adapting manually

05

### Write proposal

Stitching it all together yourself

Describe and process for English with AI Planning (Use even though it is not the best if it is a class)

- 1. Planning for the overall process
- 2. Planning for the overall process
- 3. Plan

Right, let's review 2.8 for Access before getting started with class. Starting with class, starting with class, starting with class.

For each of the words of that course to provide

Word 2: planning

Good, there's a concept of planning and you probably can see that the key planning part

3. Planning

3.1

Classifying the overall process

LAST TIME

write a message

2.8.1. [Document 1] (Horizontal pattern)

2.8.2. [Document 2] (Horizontal pattern)

2.8.3. Make Journey Plan

(Describe a message diagram showing the user flow)

```

graph TD
    Start([Start: Every Point])
    Start --> End([End: Make and submit])
    
```

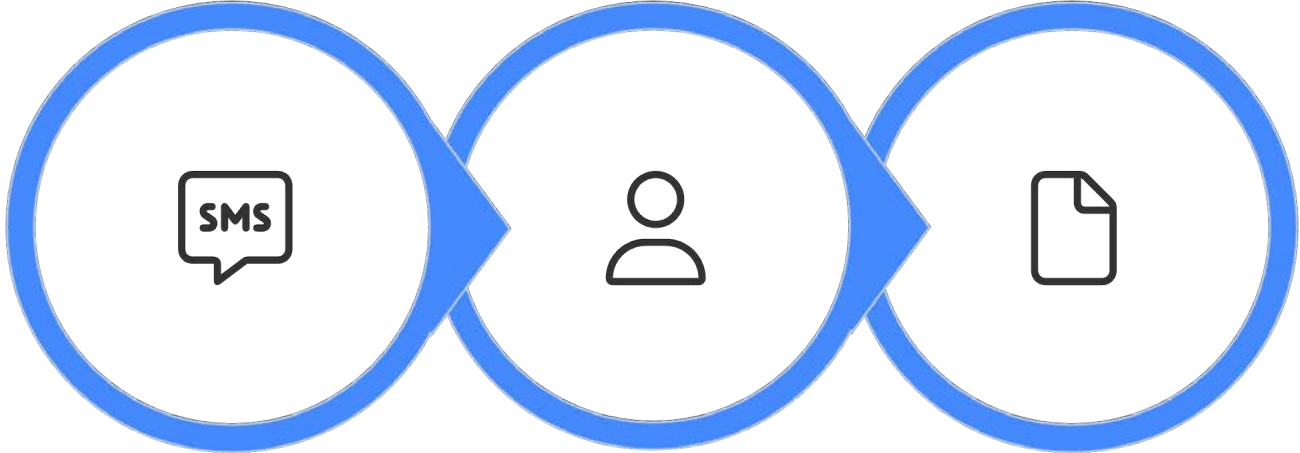
2.8.4. Technical Architecture

- >Type<-> (e.g., Full Stack web application)
- >Hosting<-> (Hosting details)
- >Database<-> (Database components)
- >New Technologies<-> (New tech stack)

2.8.5. Development Requirements (Inputs Needed)

- 2.1. Requirement 1)
  - 2.2. Requirement 2)
  - 2.3. Requirement 3)
- (Add all other needed from class)

# It Builds the Automation Itself



**Describe  
Task**

**AI Builds**

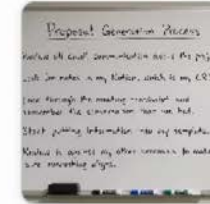
**Test and  
Refine**

# Step 1) Outline the Process

## Proposal Generation Process

1. Review all email communication about the project.
2. Look for notes in my Notion, which is my CRM.
3. Look through the meeting transcript and remember the conversation that we had.
4. Start putting information into my template.
5. Review it against my other proposals to make sure everything aligns.

# Step 2) Show Claude and Provide Additional Context



this is for a demo: help me create this skill and ask me questions to get information you need and what connectors

2:56 PM   

Reading the skill creator skill >

Love it — a **Proposal Generation Process** skill. This is a great one to build for the demo, and it maps perfectly to your existing connectors (Gmail, Notion, Google Drive).

Let me ask you a few focused questions to nail the skill spec:

## 1. Who/what triggers this skill?

When you say "generate a proposal for [client]", do you always have a client name to give it, or sometimes just say something like "write up the Studio One proposal" or "do a proposal for Dan"?

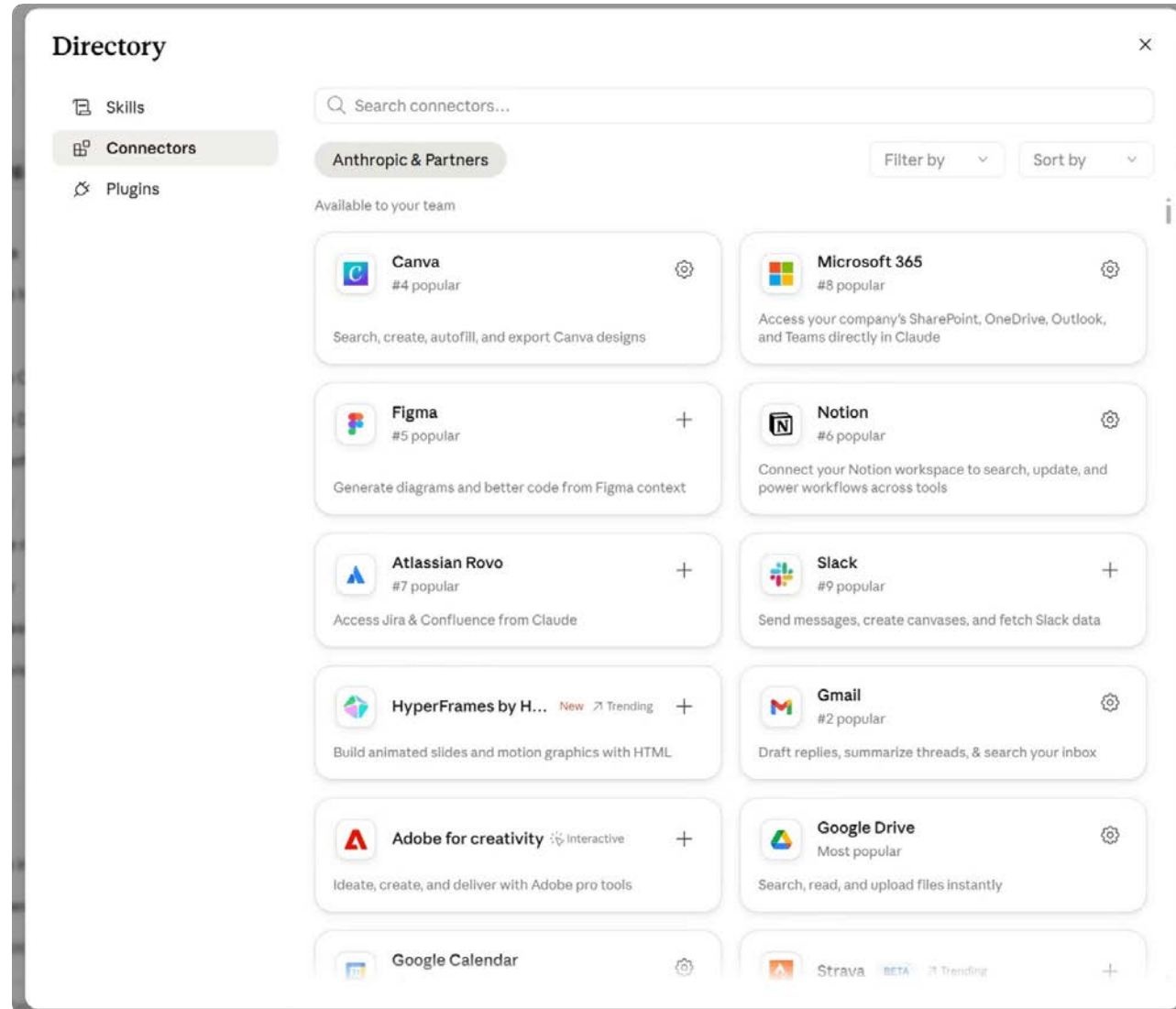
## 2. What does your proposal template look like?

Is it a Google Doc in Drive, a Notion template, a Word doc? And does it have fixed sections (like Scope / Timeline / Investment / About Harkness AI), or does it vary by project type?

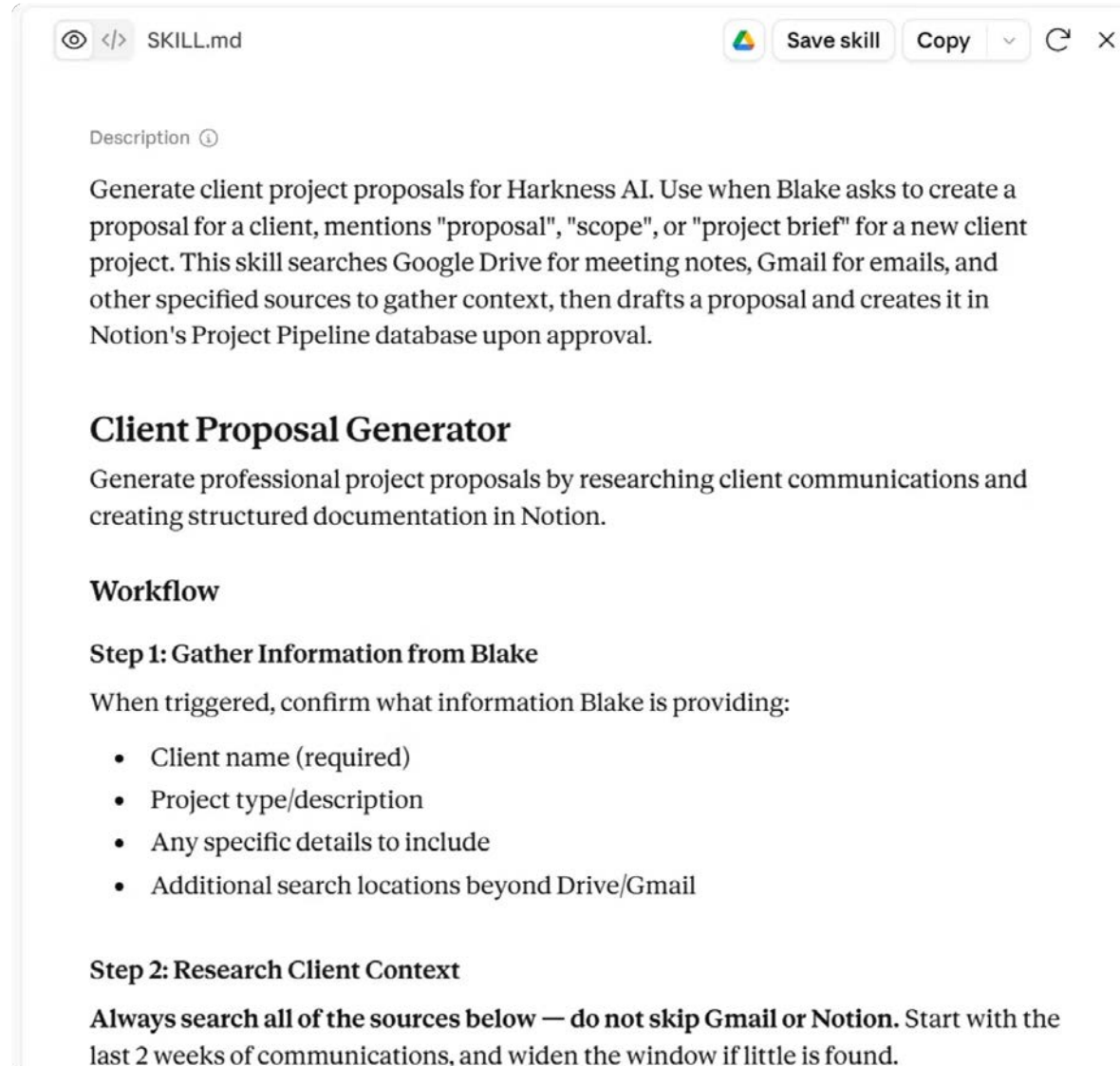
## 3. Meeting transcripts — where do these live?

Are they in `/mnt/transcripts` (Cowork-uploaded), Google Drive, pasted into chat, or somewhere else? And are they always present, or sometimes optional?

# Step 3) Connect Your Tools with One-Click Login



# Step 4) Generate Skill, Test and Refine



The screenshot shows a Notion skill editor window titled "SKILL.md". At the top right, there are buttons for "Save skill", "Copy", a refresh icon, and a close icon. The main content area is titled "Description" and contains the following text:

Generate client project proposals for Harkness AI. Use when Blake asks to create a proposal for a client, mentions "proposal", "scope", or "project brief" for a new client project. This skill searches Google Drive for meeting notes, Gmail for emails, and other specified sources to gather context, then drafts a proposal and creates it in Notion's Project Pipeline database upon approval.

## Client Proposal Generator

Generate professional project proposals by researching client communications and creating structured documentation in Notion.

### Workflow

#### Step 1: Gather Information from Blake

When triggered, confirm what information Blake is providing:

- Client name (required)
- Project type/description
- Any specific details to include
- Additional search locations beyond Drive/Gmail

#### Step 2: Research Client Context

**Always search all of the sources below — do not skip Gmail or Notion.** Start with the last 2 weeks of communications, and widen the window if little is found.

# AI does the dirty work, humans stay in control

## AI Does



### **The Drafting**

First passes, templates, structured outputs



### **The Chasing**

Follow-ups, reminders, status checks



### **The Collating & Formatting**

Pulling data together, making it presentable

## Your People Keep



### **Judgement**

Knowing what matters and why



### **Relationships**

Trust, context, human connection



### **Creativity & Accountability**

The things that can't be automated

# Your Next Step Is Small

1

## Find Your Use Cases

What was my most tedious task? Map it out and ask AI how it can help.

2

## Refine and Expand

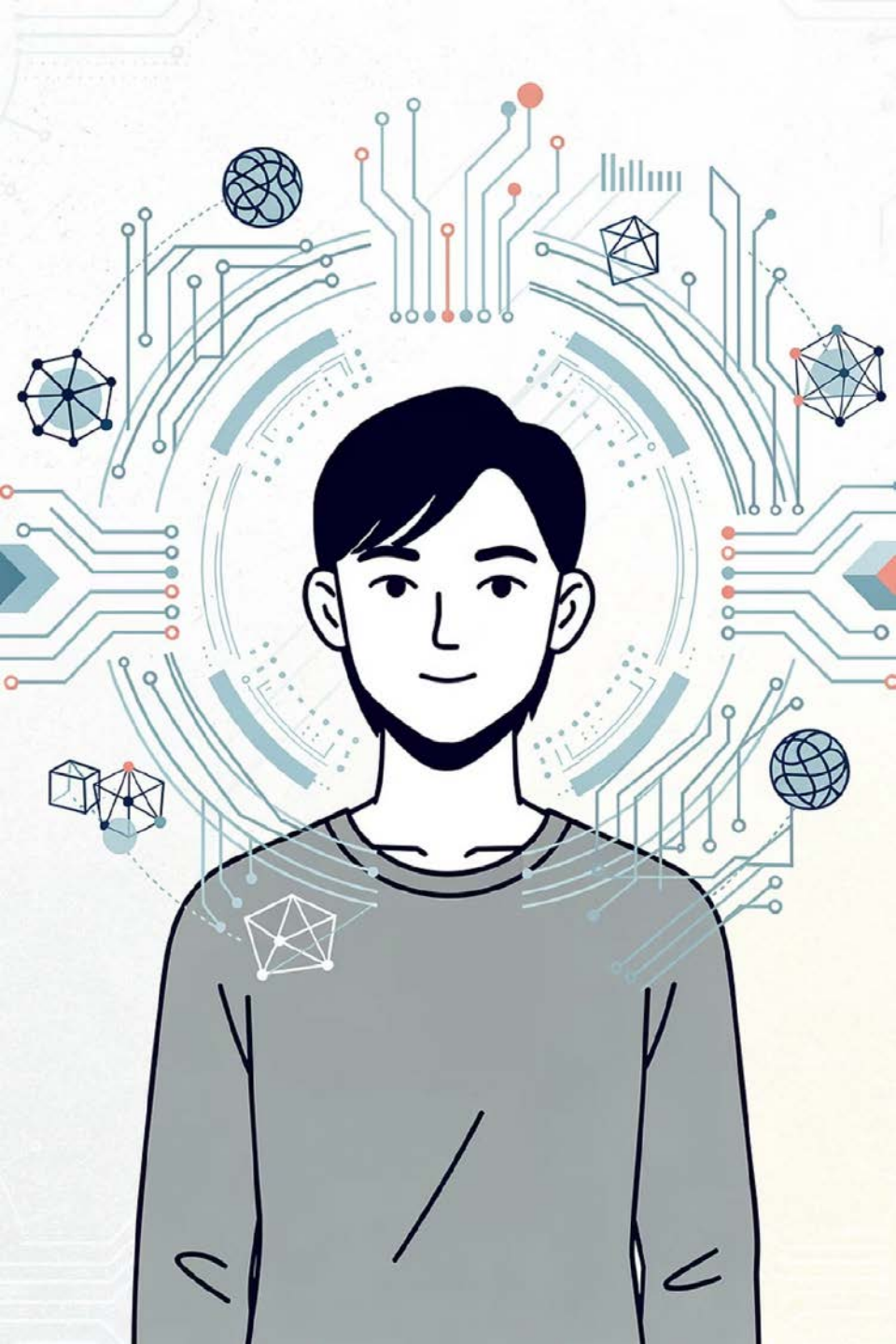
What is missing? Could it go further?

3

## Assess Your Team

Do you have staff that are really engaged with AI? How can we enable them? Where is the hesitation sitting?





# The Two Things, Again.

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Blake Harkness · Harkness AI · Young Kiwis in AI