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# Do Not Be a Prompt Puppet: Human Judgment and Courage in the Age of AI

## Dasborough (2026)

### Context

Research shows that easily readable, fluent information is often perceived as more accurate regardless of merit. As AI tools now generate polished text in seconds, the immediacy engages reward-based reinforcement ('that was easy!'), reducing motivation to challenge output critically. This editorial argues that over-reliance risks turning knowledge workers into 'prompt puppets' who prioritise convenience over intellectual rigour. Countering this requires professional courage: tolerance for ambiguity, discomfort and revision, and the willingness to advance imperfect but original ideas rather than defaulting to AI-generated output.

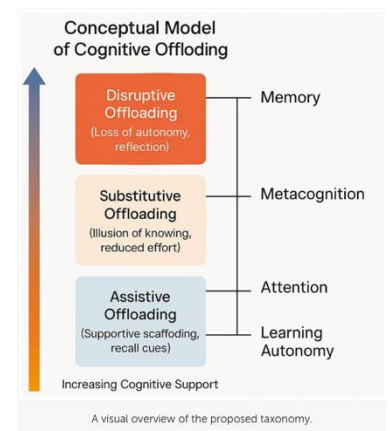
### Key Insights

#### AI's processing fluency reduces (the motivation for) critical judgment

- Cognitive offloading exists on a spectrum from assistive (supporting recall) to disruptive (replacing autonomous judgment)<sup>1</sup>
- Reliance on external systems without deliberate engagement pushes users towards the disruptive end, leading to shallower thinking, while feeling like efficiency, not dependence
- The immediacy of polished AI output engages reward-based reinforcement ("that was easy!" feeling), increasing the temptation to accept the content without critical evaluation
- Early-career people are most vulnerable, facing pressures to prioritise safety over intellectual risk-taking

#### Courage as a countermeasure

- Original thinking requires tolerance for ambiguity, discomfort and revision
- AI nudges users toward neatly packaged ideas rather than provisional, imperfect ones worth developing
- Advancing novel ideas in environments rewarding fluency and conformity is an act of professional moral courage, linked to greater meaning, integrity and wellbeing at work



Offloading taxonomy from another paper<sup>1</sup>

▶ Use the questions below to identify where prompt puppetry may be emerging in your organisation

#### FORGOOD Reflection Questions (authors' interpretation)

- **F - Fairness:** Is output speed rewarded over quality of thinking? Is the evaluation of contributions fair?
- **O - Openness:** Is AI usage disclosed transparently, or is AI-generated output presented as original work?
- **R - Respect:** Does your use of AI erode autonomous judgment, or strengthen it by serving as a sparring partner that challenges assumptions and surfaces blind spots?
- **G - Goals:** Whose and which goals does employees AI adoption serve: the individual's efficiency, the team's decision quality, the organisation's standards, or the end customer's outcomes?
- **O - Opinions:** What would an independent observer conclude about how your team uses AI in its work?
- **O - Options:** What guidelines exist for when work should be human-only, AI-augmented, or automated?
- **D - Delegation:** Is it clearly defined who is accountable when professional judgment is delegated to AI?

Dasborough, M. T. (2026). Do not be a prompt puppet: Human judgment and courage in the age of AI. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 47(2), 189–191. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.70067>;

<sup>1</sup> Jose, B., Joseph, D., Mohan, V., Alexander, E., Varghese, S. K., & Roy, A. (2025). Outsourcing cognition: The psychological costs of AI-era convenience. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16, 1645237. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1645237>