



Local Enterprise Office Cork North & West

Management Development Programme

From Prompts to Profits: Using AI to increase sales

27^h May 2026

Course Summary

Prepared by The Marketing Crowd

This was created with the help of one of our AI colleagues 😊

Course Overview

This session was the first of a five-week Management Development Programme delivered via Zoom for participants registered with Local Enterprise Office Cork North and West. The programme covers the major AI tools relevant to small business marketing, and Week 1 focused entirely on ChatGPT — exploring what it is, how it works, and, critically, how to move beyond basic usage to extract genuinely expert, business-specific answers.

Evan opened by establishing the learning environment: participants were encouraged to ask questions at any point, to use the Zoom thumbs-up reaction for feedback, and to take notes at their own discretion, as detailed session notes and slides would be distributed after each session. A mid-session break was scheduled at 7.30pm, with the session wrapping up before 9pm.

A pre-session poll confirmed the range of experience in the room: the majority of participants rated themselves between 1 and 6 out of 10 for confidence in using AI tools for marketing. Almost all had used ChatGPT before, with roughly half on the paid version. Gemini, by contrast, was largely unfamiliar — 56% had not used it at all. These results shaped the pace and depth of the session. By the end of the evening, Evan had taken the group through a structured five-level framework for using ChatGPT, from the most basic usage all the way through to Projects — a feature very few participants had encountered.

Key Topics Covered

What Is a Large Language Model?

Evan opened the teaching content with a plain-English explanation of how AI tools like ChatGPT actually work. A large language model (LLM) is trained on an enormous dataset scraped from the internet — everything from cookery advice to academic papers — as well as millions of digital copies of books and magazines. The model does not look up answers like a search engine; it generates its own content based on patterns it has learned. This is why it is called generative AI. The implication for users is important: the AI can sometimes produce plausible-sounding but inaccurate information, because it is generating rather than retrieving.

The Instant Model vs the Thinking Model

ChatGPT defaults to its instant model, which prioritises speed and answers within a second or two. Around 18 months ago, OpenAI introduced a thinking (also called reasoning) model, which takes more time to weigh up a question before responding. The thinking model considers context, checks the internet where relevant, and produces more considered, comprehensive answers. Evan used a food analogy: the instant model is like a McDonald's quarter pounder — quick, because it is largely pre-prepared — whereas the thinking model is like ordering from an Italian restaurant, where you wait 20 minutes but the result is significantly better. For any question relating to business strategy, marketing, or sales, Evan strongly recommended always switching to the thinking model.

Free vs Paid Versions of ChatGPT

The free version gives access to ChatGPT's most powerful model (5.5) for the first handful of questions, after which it drops to a smaller model (5 Mini) until credits reset. The paid plan (approximately €23/month inc. VAT) provides unlimited access to the full model and all advanced features including image creation, file analysis, deeper memory, and a larger Projects allocation.

Prompt Structure: Context, Expert, Clear Ask

The core teaching was a detailed walkthrough of how to structure prompts. The framework has three components: context (tell it about your business so answers are tailored, not generic); ask it to act like an expert in the relevant area (which produces specialist-level responses rather than middle-of-the-road ones); and be specific about what you want, using action phrases:

- **Teach me** — for thorough, step-by-step explanations
- **Brainstorm** — for creative ideas lists
- **Analyze** — to critique a web page, competitor page, or piece of content
- **Summarize** — to extract key points from an article by pasting a URL
- **Write like me** — to produce content in your own voice after providing writing samples

Getting ChatGPT to Write in Your Voice

Evan demonstrated training ChatGPT to replicate a personal writing style by pasting in four or five examples of your own writing with an initial instruction not to analyse them, then asking it to describe and name the style and saving it to memory with the phrase "remember that." He flagged the risk of over-reliance on this for website and social media content: platforms are becoming flooded with AI-generated text, audiences are growing sceptical, and Google prefers human-written copy. The recommendation was to use AI-generated text as a draft and rewrite it in your own voice before publishing.

AI Content Detection and Website Copy

Evan demonstrated zerogpt.com, showing that the Macroom Woods story generated by ChatGPT scored 88% AI-written, while a blog post he had written himself scored approximately 1.4%. Google will rank human-written content above AI-generated content of similar quality — so any AI-assisted web copy should be rewritten until a detector confirms it reads as predominantly human.

Accuracy and Fact-Checking with Perplexity

Because ChatGPT generates rather than retrieves, it can fabricate information convincingly. For business strategy questions this is rarely a critical issue, but for published content, Perplexity AI (perplexity.ai) was recommended as a fact-checking layer. Using a traffic light prompt — green for confirmed, orange for uncertain, red for unverified — Perplexity searches the web and cites sources to verify each claim in ChatGPT's output.

Privacy Settings

Under Settings > Data Controls, the option "Improve the model for everyone" is switched on by default. When enabled, anything typed into ChatGPT can potentially be fed back into OpenAI's training data. Evan recommended switching this off immediately. A second option, Temporary Chat, ensures individual conversations do not appear in chat history — useful for shared devices or shared accounts.

Memory

ChatGPT now has shallow cross-chat memory, retaining some key facts across separate conversations. Three memory mechanisms exist: the AI decides what is worth remembering; users can explicitly save information using the phrase "remember that"; and the AI references previous chats when answering new questions. Memory and privacy are separate settings — switching off data sharing does not disable memory.

Personalization

Under Settings > Personalization, two key areas allow context and instructions to be stored once and applied automatically. The "More About You" section holds business context (products, customers, marketing, goals, budget). Custom Instructions hold standing behavioural rules (always act like a digital marketing expert; write in my style; never use dashes; only suggest ideas affordable for a small business). The Base Style and Tone can be shifted from the default (sycophantic) to Candid, with individual sliders for warmth, enthusiasm, and emoji use.

The Five Levels of ChatGPT Usage

Level 1 — Using the default instant model with no personalisation. The vast majority of business users are here.

Level 2 — Personalisation is set up with half a page or more of business context. Answers become noticeably more tailored.

Level 3 — Personalisation is active and the thinking model is being used consistently. Answers are more considered and strategic.

Level 4 — Deep Research. Available on both free and paid plans, this feature takes 10–20 minutes and produces a 10–25 page research report by searching and synthesising 20–40+ sources. Evan demonstrated initiating deep research on Ivory Lane Boutique using only its web address, generating a report covering product range, pricing, customer profile, competitors, social media, and reviews automatically. Useful applications include: available grants for your business type; premium services in your sector; how AI will impact your industry over 20 years; competitor analysis.

Level 5 — Projects. A self-contained workspace where deep research reports and internal documents are attached as permanent context, project-specific custom instructions are set, and all conversations on that topic are stored together. Before answering any question within the project, ChatGPT reads all attached files and all previous chats. For agencies managing multiple clients, a separate project per client with its own deep research, writing samples, and custom instructions is the recommended approach.

Tools & Resources

ChatGPT (chat.openai.com) — OpenAI's flagship LLM. Free and paid (approx. €23/month) plans. Thinking model, deep research, and Projects available on both tiers.

Google Gemini — Google's equivalent of ChatGPT, covered in Week 2. Offers many paid ChatGPT features for free, including 5 deep research reports per month.

Perplexity AI (perplexity.ai) — AI-powered search and fact-checking tool. Searches the web in real time and cites sources. Evan uses it to verify AI-generated content using a traffic light accuracy prompt.

ZeroGPT (zerogpt.com) — Free AI content detection tool. Analyses text and returns an estimate of the human vs AI-written percentage. Useful for checking website copy before publishing.

ChatGPT Projects — Built-in feature (free on both tiers) for topic-specific workspaces with attached context files, custom instructions, and full chat memory within that topic.

ChatGPT Deep Research — Accessed via + button in a new chat. Produces comprehensive research reports in 10–20 minutes. Free on both tiers within daily limits. Also available in Gemini (5 free/month) and Claude (paid, noted by Evan as producing shorter but higher-quality reports).

Ivory Lane Boutique (ivorylane.ie) — Used as the demonstration business throughout the session with the owner's permission.

Q&A Highlights

Q: If I switch off the data sharing setting, does it protect what I have already typed in? **A:** No. The AI cannot unsee information already submitted. Switching off the setting protects future conversations only.

Q: I always ask ChatGPT not to use em dashes and it keeps doing it. How do I stop it? **A:** Add it permanently to Custom Instructions under Personalization. Once saved there, it applies to every future conversation automatically.

Q: I manage multiple client accounts. How would I handle that in ChatGPT? **A:** Create a separate Project for each client, with deep research on their business and industry attached, plus client-specific writing style examples and custom instructions. Each project is fully self-contained.

Q: We have been using Juma (an AI aggregator) at \$49/month. Is it still worth it? **A:** Juma's main benefit is team access and shared history. For a small team working on separate tasks, Evan suggested ChatGPT Projects covers most use cases, Google Gemini handles image generation for free, and Claude's paid tier is worth considering for its superior deep research output.

Q: Can deep research output be fact-checked in Perplexity? **A:** Yes, and Evan endorsed this, particularly for industry research where users cannot easily assess accuracy themselves.

Q: What is the difference between Personalization instructions and Project-level custom instructions? **A:** Personalization applies globally across all normal chats. Project instructions apply only within that specific project and can override or extend the global settings for that context.

Q: Can you delete chats or files from a Project? **A:** Yes. Hover over any chat in the project, click the three-dot menu, and select Delete. Attached files can also be removed individually from the Sources section of Project Settings.

Action Points for Participants

1. Go into ChatGPT Settings > Data Controls and switch off "Improve the model for everyone" to protect your privacy.
2. Go into Settings > Personalization, confirm memory is switched on, and review what has been stored — delete anything outdated.
3. Fill in the "More About You" section under Personalization with at least half a page of business context: products, customers, marketing channels, goals, and budget.
4. Add Custom Instructions covering how you want ChatGPT to behave by default: act as a digital marketing expert, write in your style, never use dashes, only suggest small-business-budget ideas.
5. Switch to the Thinking model whenever asking ChatGPT for business advice, strategy, ideas, or analysis. Free users: click + and select Thinking. Paid users: toggle from Instant to Thinking before submitting.
6. Run your first Deep Research report. Choose a topic such as your own business (using your website URL plus a SWOT request), your industry, available grants, or how AI will affect your sector over the next 20 years. Click + > Deep Research, submit, review the generated brief, and click Start.
7. Set up your first ChatGPT Project for the topic you use the AI for most often. Name it clearly, add custom instructions via the three-dot Project Settings menu, and attach your deep research reports as context files.
8. Go to zerogpt.com and check any existing website copy or marketing content you have used. If the AI score is high, prioritise rewriting those pages.
9. Practise the three-part prompt formula: context + act like an expert + specific action phrase (teach me / brainstorm / analyze / summarize / write like me).
10. Before Week 2, use Perplexity AI to fact-check a piece of ChatGPT output. Paste it in and ask for a green/orange/red traffic light assessment. Build the habit of treating AI output as a draft to verify, not a final answer.

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