

BrainLifts and SpikyPOVs

Finding Hidden Insights in LLM Blind Spots

While large language models excel at capturing humanity's collective knowledge, their greatest value lies in helping us identify and explore the unexplored territories where consensus knowledge ends and new insights begin.



Learning Objectives

Today we'll explore how to leverage LLMs to uncover valuable insights that exist outside mainstream understanding.

1. Understand where LLMs shine and where they fall short in their knowledge and capabilities
2. Learn what consensus understanding means and why LLMs naturally gravitate toward it
3. Discover how to find valuable insights that contradict common wisdom (SpikyPOVs)
4. Learn the step-by-step process of building a brainlift to generate new insights
5. Practice using LLMs to reveal unexplored areas worth investigating



Understanding Consensus Views

Think of a consensus view as the "**common wisdom**" that emerges when you average out what most people believe about a topic.

For example, when people write about leadership online or in books, certain ideas seem to come up again and again:

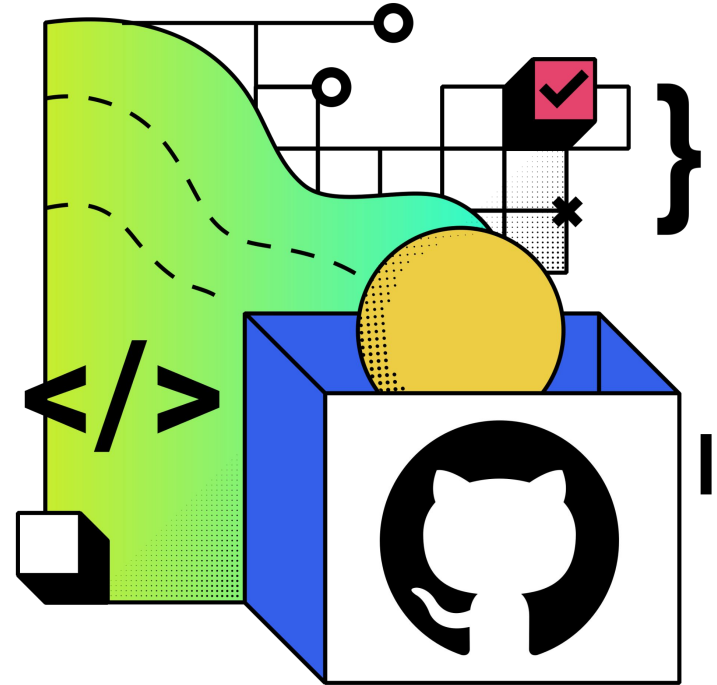
- *"Good leaders are strong communicators"*
- *"Leaders need to have vision"*
- *"Leaders should be decisive"*

Because LLMs are trained on massive amounts of human-written content, they naturally learn and reflect these commonly held beliefs. When you ask an LLM about leadership, it will give you this **"averaged out" perspective – the consensus view.**



Break the Consensus, Find the Insight

The most valuable discoveries often emerge when we dare to question widely accepted wisdom and explore the edges where consensus falls short.



Companies That Won By Breaking The Rules

Let's look at companies that won by questioning "obvious" truths:



On Retail: *"Customers need to see and touch products before buying."*

Then Amazon bet against this, focusing on convenience over physical presence. What other retail "truths" might be wrong?



On Car Manufacturing: *"Traditional dealerships are essential for selling cars."*

Then Tesla went direct-to-consumer and transformed the industry. What other automotive assumptions could be challenged?



On Social Media: *"People want to share content that stays online forever."*

Then Snapchat built an empire on disappearing messages. What other social media "rules" might be holding innovation back?



SpikyPOVs: Where Innovation Lives

A SpikyPOV is an insight that:

1. Directly challenges consensus thinking
2. Seems wrong at first glance
3. Creates competitive advantage because most people miss it
4. Is backed by real evidence or experience, not just contrarian thinking



Why SpikyPOVs Matter

Product Innovation: When you spot where consensus thinking falls short, you can:

1. Build features others dismiss
2. Solve problems others don't see
3. Find opportunities in "solved" spaces

Career Differentiation: While others follow the standard playbook:

1. You'll tackle problems differently
2. Make unique contributions to teams
3. Stand out in interviews with fresh perspectives

Strategic Thinking: By questioning consensus views:

1. You'll see market opportunities others miss
2. Identify better solutions to common problems
3. Make decisions based on insight, not just "best practices"



Where LLMs Fall Short

Think of LLMs as incredibly well-read experts who know everything that's been written, but can't challenge conventional wisdom.

They Excel At: Summarizing what most people think about any topic

For example: Ask about "startup success" and you'll get well-documented advice about product-market fit, strong teams, and raising capital

This makes them **powerful tools for understanding the current state of thinking**

They Struggle With: Questioning whether common wisdom might be wrong

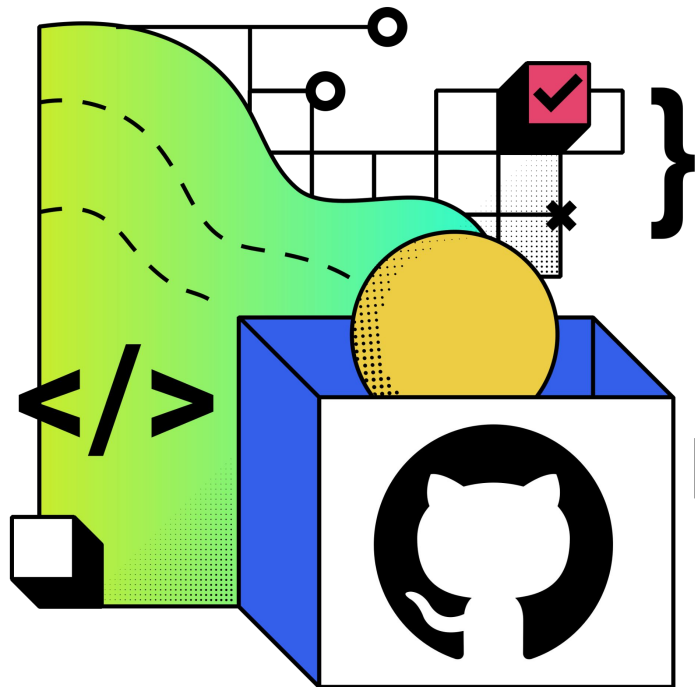
For example: They won't suggest that "product-market fit" could be a misleading goal, or that traditional startup advice does not work in your scenario

They **can't identify which specific "best practices"** are actually limiting success

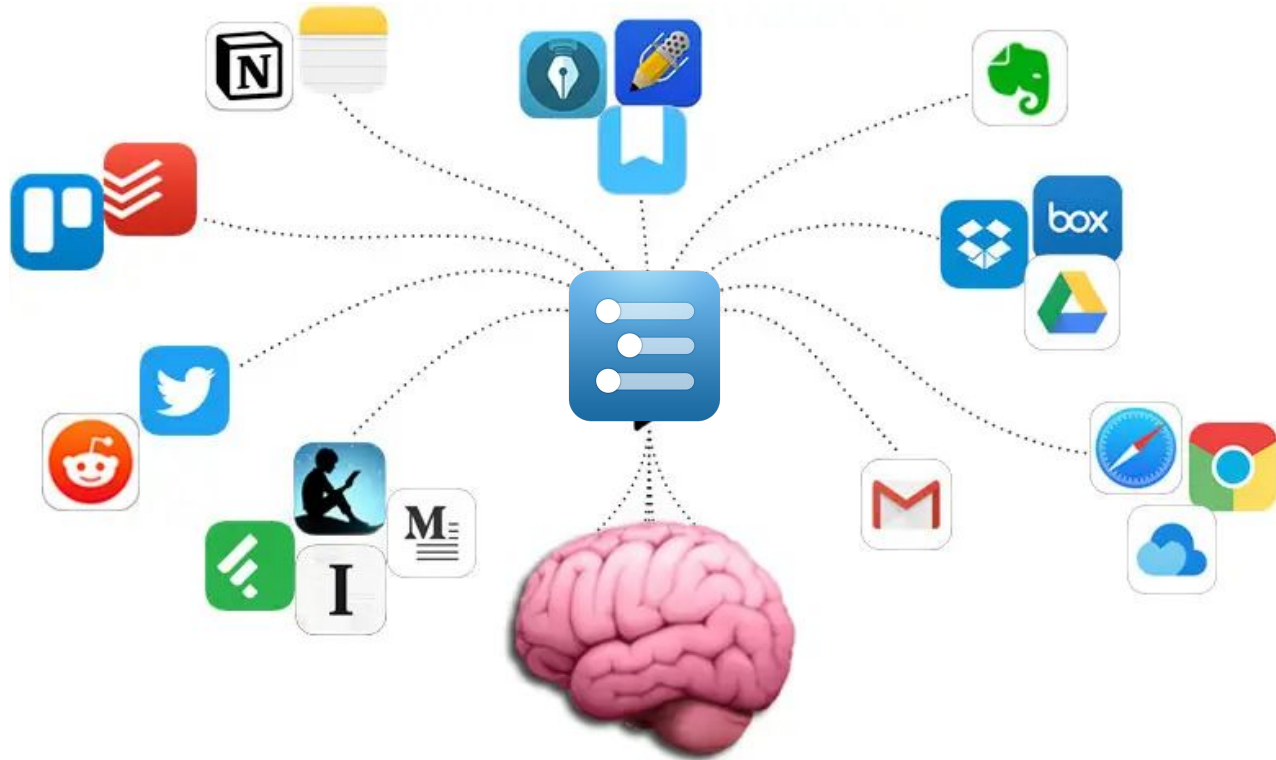


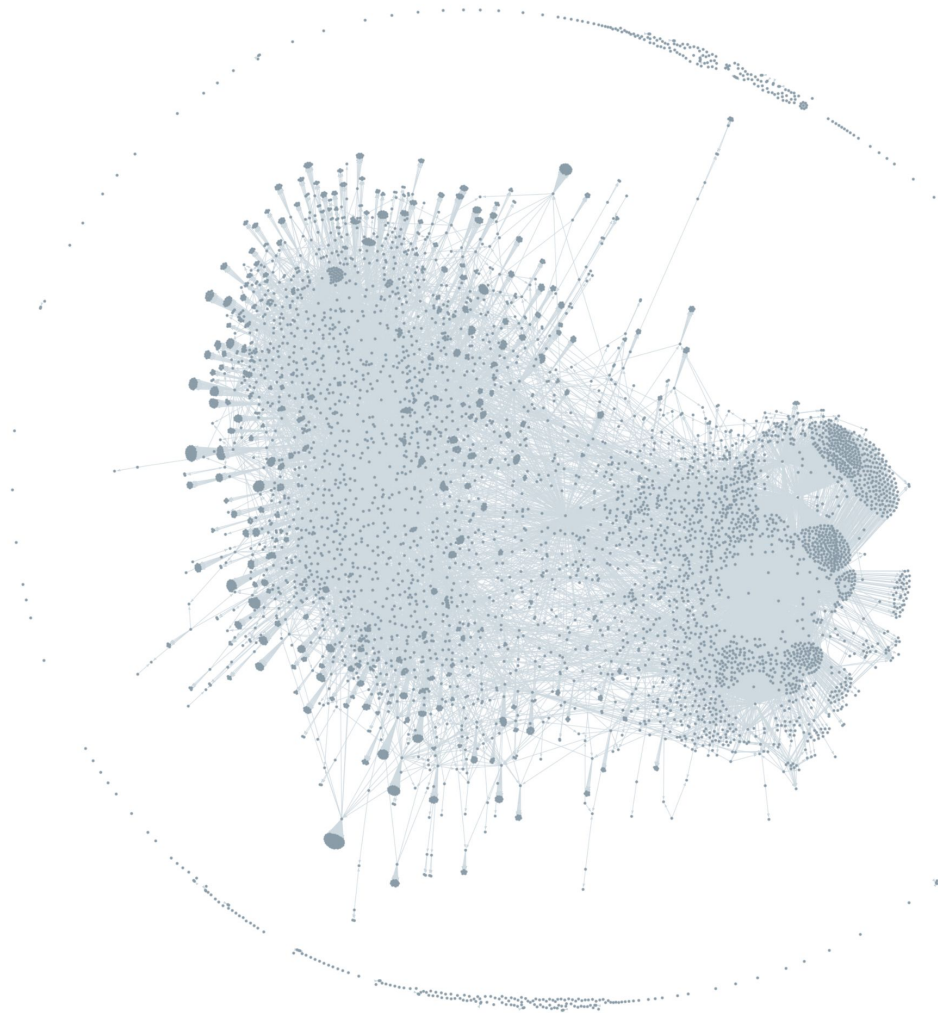
Finding Gold in LLM Blind Spots

The most promising opportunities for breakthrough insights often lie precisely where LLMs are most confident in their consensus-based answers.



Second Brains





Brainlifts: A Structured Second Brain

We use Workflowy

A lot of different software works; we've provided it for all of you (you can use your gauntletai.com email address to register).

What's a Brainlift?

A structured prompt that guides an LLM beyond consensus thinking to help identify potential SpikyPOVs. Think of it as "lifting" the LLM's thinking beyond its default patterns.

Let's look at an Example

[A BrainLift about BrainLifts](#)



Anatomy of a BrainLift

1

Purpose: A clear mission statement defining what problem you're solving and why it matters. This keeps your exploration focused and prevents scope creep.

2

Experts: The voices, research, and real-world evidence that will validate or challenge our assumptions. This ensures we're grounding our thinking in reality.

3

SpikyPOVs: The proven cases where conventional wisdom turned out to be wrong. This builds a foundation of counter-consensus thinking that's backed by evidence.

4

Knowledge Tree: The web of background context and considerations needed to understand the full picture. This helps identify blind spots and connections.



BrainLift Walkthrough

Vocabulary instruction for K-8 Learners: [See Example On Workflowy](#)

This brainlift explores how to teach vocabulary better to K-8 students, looking specifically at test prep for SSAT & ISEE exams. It brings together insights from language experts and researchers to build a smarter way to help students learn and remember new words.



Scope Your Problem

What's the Core Problem?

- What specific challenge are you trying to solve?
- Why is this important right now?
- What's the current impact of this problem?

What's Your Target Outcome?

- What does success look like?
- What measurable results are you aiming for?
- Who benefits from solving this?

Define Clear Boundaries:

- What's included in the scope?
- What's explicitly excluded?
- What adjacent problems won't you tackle?



Find Your Experts

For Each Expert, Answer:

- Who are they? (Title, role, credentials)
- What's their focus area? (Main expertise)
- Why follow them? (Relevance to your problem)
- Where to find them? (Public profiles, publications)

Group Experts By Category:

- What different perspectives do you need?
- How do different domains intersect with your problem?
- Who represents different schools of thought?



Generate SpikyPOVs

What's Already Proven?

- What counter-consensus ideas have evidence?
- Which myths have been debunked?
- What surprising truths keep showing up in research?

How to Format SpikyPOVs:

- State the consensus view first
- Present the contrarian insight
- Support with real evidence
- Link to practical implications



Building Knowledge Tree

Current State Analysis:

- What systems/tools are in use now?
- What are their strengths/weaknesses?
- What metrics matter?

Related Areas to Consider:

- Which adjacent fields impact this?
- What background concepts matter?
- What dependencies exist?



Using Brainlifts to Power Better Prompts

Use Expert Insights as Context

Start your prompt with "Based on [expert]'s research showing [finding]..."

This grounds the LLM's response in specific expertise rather than general knowledge

Lead with SpikyPOVs

Frame your question with "Given that [conventional wisdom] was proven wrong when [example]..."

This pushes the LLM to think beyond consensus views

Leverage the Knowledge Tree

Include relevant background: "Considering [these three related concepts]..."

This helps the LLM make connections across domains

Stay Focused with Purpose

Reference your scope: "Focusing specifically on [exact problem]..."

This keeps the LLM from wandering into general advice



Introducing Ephor

(Access coming tomorrow)

