

AI FRONTIER

YOUR UX SKILLS ARE BECOMING GHOSTS OF THE PAST

A 5-Year Showdown on the AI Frontier

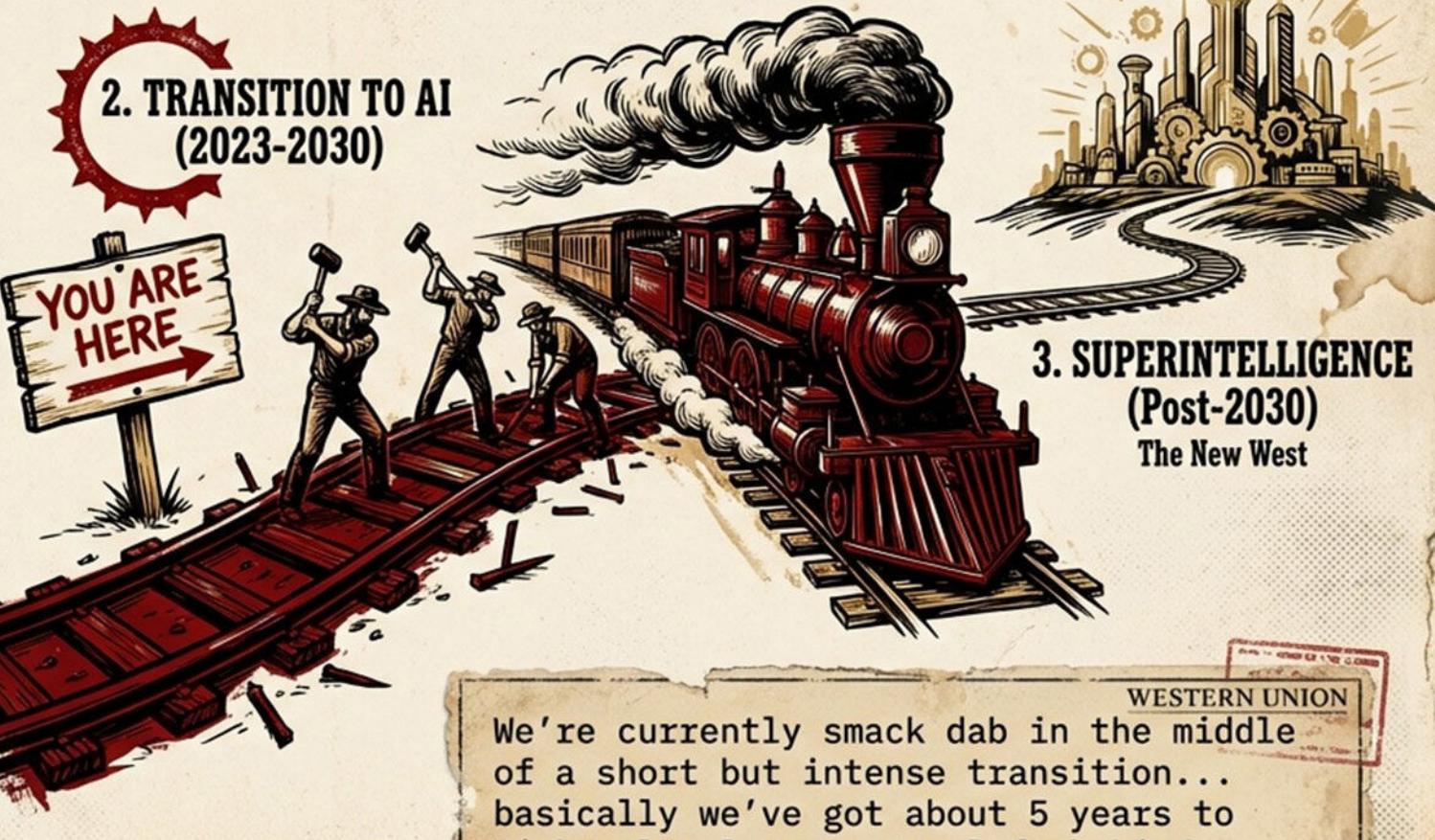


THE RAILROAD'S COMING. DON'T GET LEFT IN A GHOST TOWN.

The history of UX is now divided into three eras. We are living in the second, a brief and intense transition. You have about 5 years to pivot before superintelligence changes the landscape forever.

1. BEFORE AI (1945-2022)

The Handcrafted Era



WESTERN UNION

We're currently smack dab in the middle of a short but intense transition... basically we've got about 5 years to either level up or get left behind.

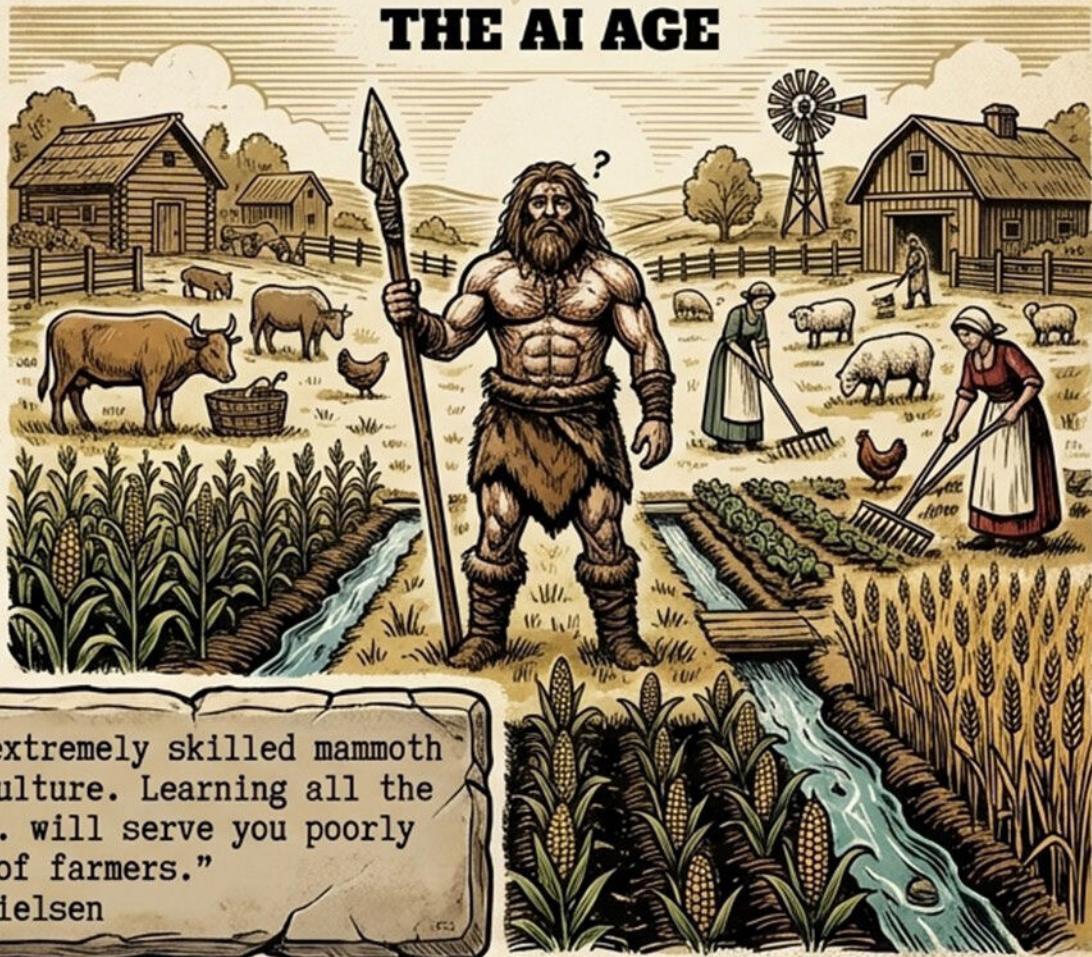
THE WORLD'S BEST MAMMOTH HUNTER IS USELESS IN A FARMING VILLAGE.

Clinging to legacy skills is a surefire way to become irrelevant. Even Jakob Nielsen, with 42 years of experience, admits he'd make a terrible mentor today. The methods that built your career will not sustain it.

LEGACY UX



THE AI AGE



"I am the equivalent of an extremely skilled mammoth hunter at the dawn of agriculture. Learning all the tricks of that old trade... will serve you poorly in a community of farmers."

- Jakob Nielsen

WANTED: The Outlaw's Trinity

As AI handles the “hard skills”—mockups, analysis, copy—your human value shifts. The future of your career rests on three core abilities that AI cannot replicate. This is the holy trinity to see you through.



AGENCY



JUDGMENT



PERSUASION



AGENCY: Don't Wait to Be Told What to Do.

AI will do as it's told, and better than you could. If you pride yourself on visual design, AI will make prettier screens. If you're a writer, forget about it. Your job is to be the one who tells it what to do. You must choose the goal.



-  **Initiate the action.
Decide what needs doing.**
-  **Take charge of your
projects and see them
to the end.**
-  **Expand your ownership.
Fix a bug you see, even
if it's not your task.**

"Your value comes from your own mind,
leaving all the passive people behind."



JUDGMENT: When Ideation Is Free, the Final Call Is Priceless.

AI won't just design one screen. It will create 100 different mockup variations in a flash. It can generate endless options, but it can't tell you which one to ship.

- 1. Develop your strategic sense to choose the right direction from a sea of possibilities.
- 2. Your role is to make the crucial judgment call.
- 3. Satisfy the user's heart and soul—a task that requires human insight, not just machine logic.





PERSUASION: Your Silver Tongue is a Secret Weapon.

You still live and work with other people.

Use your influence wisely.

Frame your bright ideas “in the business song.”

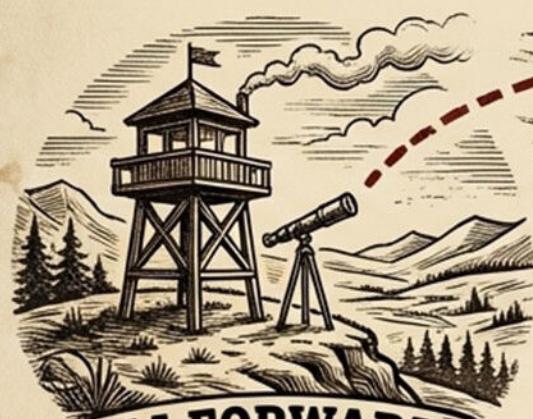
Mastering persuasion is essential as old “hard skills” become automated.

Special Nothing will happen unless they buy into your ideas and recommendations. Even in an AI-driven world, you need to rally support for your brilliant ideas.



Where to Ride: A Map to the AI Gold Rush.

Ditch jobs where AI is an awkward add-on. Seek out companies where AI is baked into every recipe. Your experience will be worth big bucks, even if the startup's stock options prove worthless.



AI FORWARD

The Outpost.

A team with management support and budget for AI experimentation, even if the whole company isn't on board.



AI NATIVE

The Boom Town.

A new company built from scratch assuming AI infuses everything.



AI FIRST

The Fort.

A legacy company that has pivoted to emphasize AI as its most important element.



The Best Way to Predict the Future is to Invent It.



No one knows what UX will look like in 5 years, because we are creating it right now. Every experiment you run, every AI workflow you test, every traditional process you blow up and rebuild—you're not just adapting. You are actively shaping the future.

Key Insight: By 2030, the only way to have 5 years of experience with AI is to have started in 2025.

A DISPATCH FROM THE NEW WEST

| OFFICE OF ORIGIN | TIME FILED | DATE | MESSAGE |
|------------------|------------|------------------|-------------|
| OUTPOST No. 7 | 12:45 PM | OCTOBER 26, 1925 | |
| TO | | DATE | GHOST WORIS |
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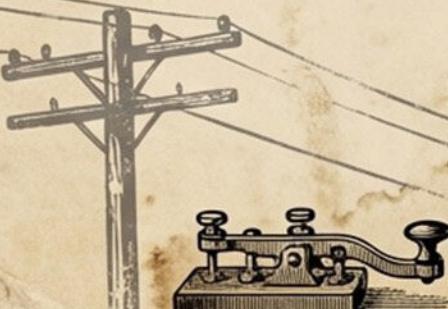
The transition is here. You have 5 years. (STOP)

Legacy skills are the ghosts of a vanishing past. (STOP)

Cultivate the outlaw's trinity: Agency, Judgment, Persuasion. (STOP)

Ride for the AI-Native territories. (STOP)

Don't wait for the future. Stake your claim and invent it. (STOP)



The bus is leaving the station.
Be on it.