3 Things I've Learned About Hiring and Firing After 35 Years in Business

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I have hired my fair share of employees in over 35 years in business. I've been surprised when "perfect" hires turned out to be not so perfect. I have been fooled by candidates who presented samples of work as their own, only to discover they played a very minor role in the project. I have been lucky and hired individuals who amazed me with talents that were not obvious.

Since January, there have been significant layoffs, corporate restructuring and cost-cutting. Big entities like Dell, DHL and others have announced layoffs, not to mention the federal government. I have started to see unemployed workers reaching out about openings. For businesses like mine that are always looking for talented people, and those that have had trouble attracting workers, there is a pool of job seekers, but finding the right ones … that can be tricky.

Many companies use hiring platforms and assessment tools to find and evaluate potential candidates. That is great, but the tools do not always work. Take, for example, the case of "Bobby." He applied for a production position with our company. We enlisted the help of a professional to do some personality testing because, while he was qualified, something just did not seem right. The recommendation was that Bobby would be a terrific addition to the team. In fact, the professional said he was a perfect complement to my personality and working style. Unfortunately, he was not a

great communicator, which is essential for a media production company. Did we use the best assessment? Did Bobby fool it by answering the questions in a way he thought would make him an attractive candidate?

Don’t get me wrong, using AI, hiring tools and professionals can be helpful, but you still have to do the work. Here are a few things that I have learned the hard way.

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Think beyond traditional skills

I used to have an extensive list of qualifications for positions in my company. For example, a college degree or a certain number of years of experience. We recently hired our first-ever employee who only had an associate’s degree. I trusted my intuition, and he’s great. Maybe a degree is not necessary. What is more important than traditional skills are soft skills, which are difficult to find in today’s workforce. One is the ability to solve problems. In the interviewing process, we provide candidates with scenarios and ask how they would approach the work, what tools they would need and what might be the challenges. No ideas? Not able to think on the spot? Not a good fit.

Another skill is the ability to work as part of a team. A lot of work today is collaborative, and the last thing anyone needs is a team member sitting on the outside taking shots or trying to be the lone wolf. I ask my staff to interview people before I meet with candidates. If the chemistry is not there, we do not make an offer.

Communication is the most critical skill. No one can know everything, but if you do not know how to communicate, you will never get better. One employee hated to ask for help and,

as a result, spent hours trying to figure out a shortcut for a software program. Had he just asked for help, he could have done triple the work in a timely manner. After months of trying to work with him, we had to let him go. Individuals who cannot articulate their ideas or advocate for themselves are not likely to be effective. You need communication superstars.

Find the right fit for your organization's size

The right fit for a small enterprise is often quite different than a person for a large one. Many of those who now find themselves unemployed are used to working for big companies. These individuals may be accustomed to having more resources and "hands" to get the job done. At one point, I hired a woman away from a large retailer to be a media producer. She had the experience and certainly had the right attitude. Unfortunately, she did not realize that her skills were limited to directing others to do the work, not actually doing the work. In our place, it is all hands on deck, and she could not keep up. Her skill set was much better suited to a large organization. Of course, there are those who are bored working for large companies and welcome the opportunity to be entrepreneurial. They are happy to pick up the pace and learn new things. Ask questions to see if they are truly entrepreneurial and listen. Examples are: How do you stay motivated? How do you deal with risk? If the answers do not ring true, move on.

As my organization has grown, it has been necessary at times to move individuals out. One individual did not adapt as we started to grow. She was fine when we were a small business working with smaller customers. As we attracted larger customers, she did not relish the complexity of the projects and the attention larger customers demanded. When she purposely and consistently was difficult with customer

requests, there was no option but to fire her.

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Hire slow, fire quickly

I have felt the pressure to hire when business is booming, when I find a talented worker, or when I have an open slot. One thing that has saved me time and money is hiring the individual as an independent contractor for a brief period of time. This lets us see how the person works and if they are a good fit for the long run. We also have a probationary period. This is the time to really dig deep and overcommunicate. Every business is unique. You know your business, so trust your gut when hiring, and when someone is not working out, do not delay the inevitable. It is not good for the organization or the individual.

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According to Guidant Financial, we'll be seeing a lot more digital transformation and innovation as more Millennials and Gen X become business owners. That means communication tools will only become even more important. Mail Backup X is hard to beat if you want the best product for email management, backup, archiving, and conversion. Best of all, a lifetime subscription is now available to new users for just $49.99, plus, you can use coupon code SAVE20 at checkout for an additional 20% off.

Emails are easily the most critical part of daily communications and activities for most organizations and individuals. Don't wait until crucial emails are lost to implement a robust backup solution; you need to plan to keep your mail data safe. Mail Backup X is trusted by over 42,000 home users and businesses worldwide as a one-stop solution for

all your email needs.

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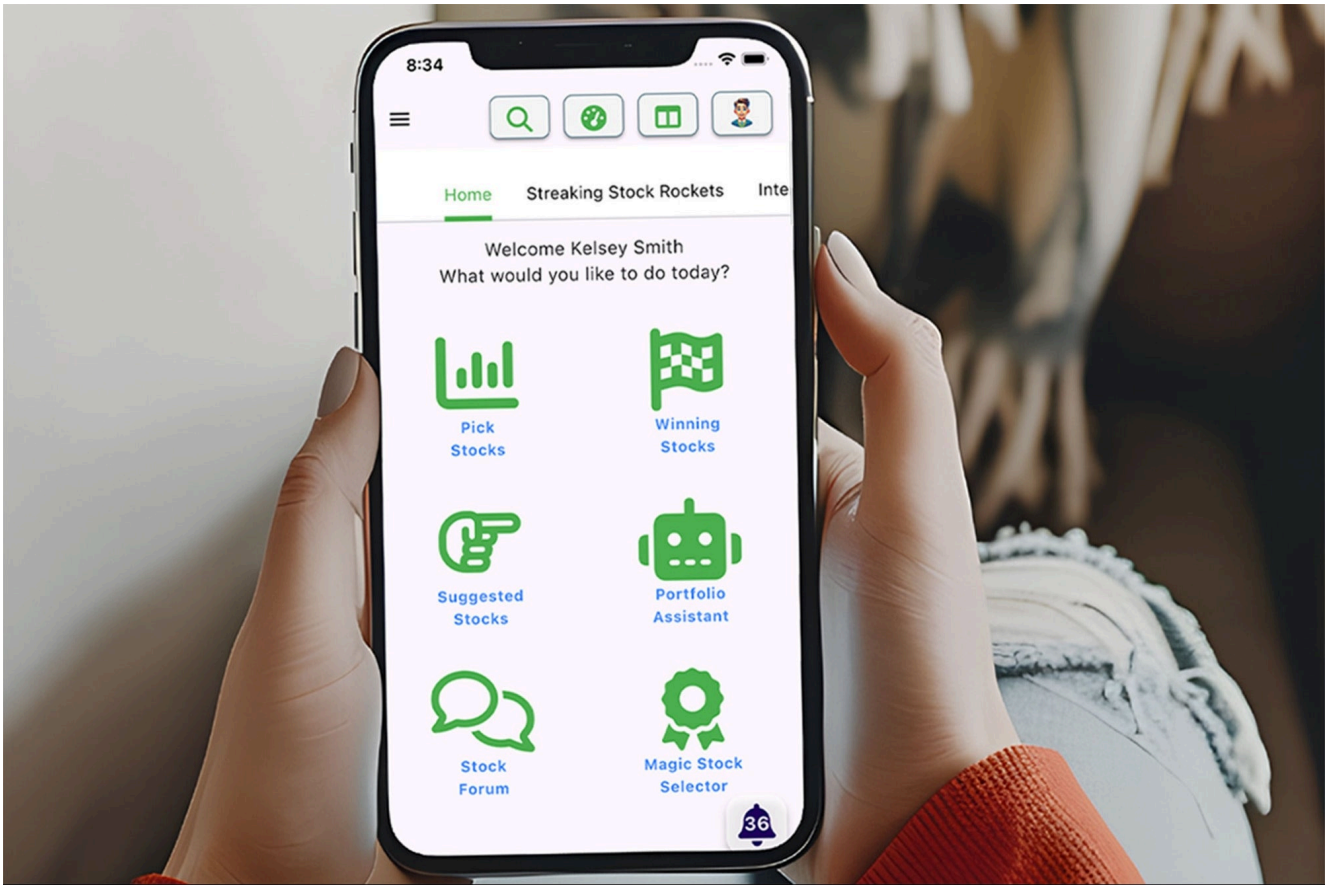
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AI Is Turning Stock Market Volatility Into an Opportunity for New Investors



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The stock market has been unpredictable lately, to say the least. The Dow Jones plunged 1,500 points in a single day, not too long ago. But what can you do? Panic? Sure, for those already invested. But for newbies, it's a flashing neon sign that says "Buy low." The only problem? Most people don't know what to invest in.

That's where an OpenAI-powered stock picker is stepping in—not just to track the chaos but to help first-time investors find stocks worth paying attention to while they're still down. Sterling Stock Picker is currently $55.19 for a lifetime subscription, down from $486.

AI that helps you invest

Sterling Stock Picker was designed to help regular people make informed investment decisions without getting lost in confusing charts or financial jargon. The app starts by learning about your goals and risk tolerance through a quick five-minute questionnaire. Then, it shows you stock picks tailored to your personal investment profile.

What makes this tool different from browsing Reddit threads or Googling “best stocks to buy”? The recommendations are calculated based on your input, with guidance from a built-in AI financial assistant named Finley. Ask it anything, from what P/E ratio means to which stocks align with your goals, and you’ll get a straightforward answer powered by OpenAI.

Once you’re up and running, you can check in on your portfolio, explore detailed stock analyses, or let the AI walk you through the next steps. For those who want more than just hot tips, Sterling also offers educational insights and community features to help you level up over time.

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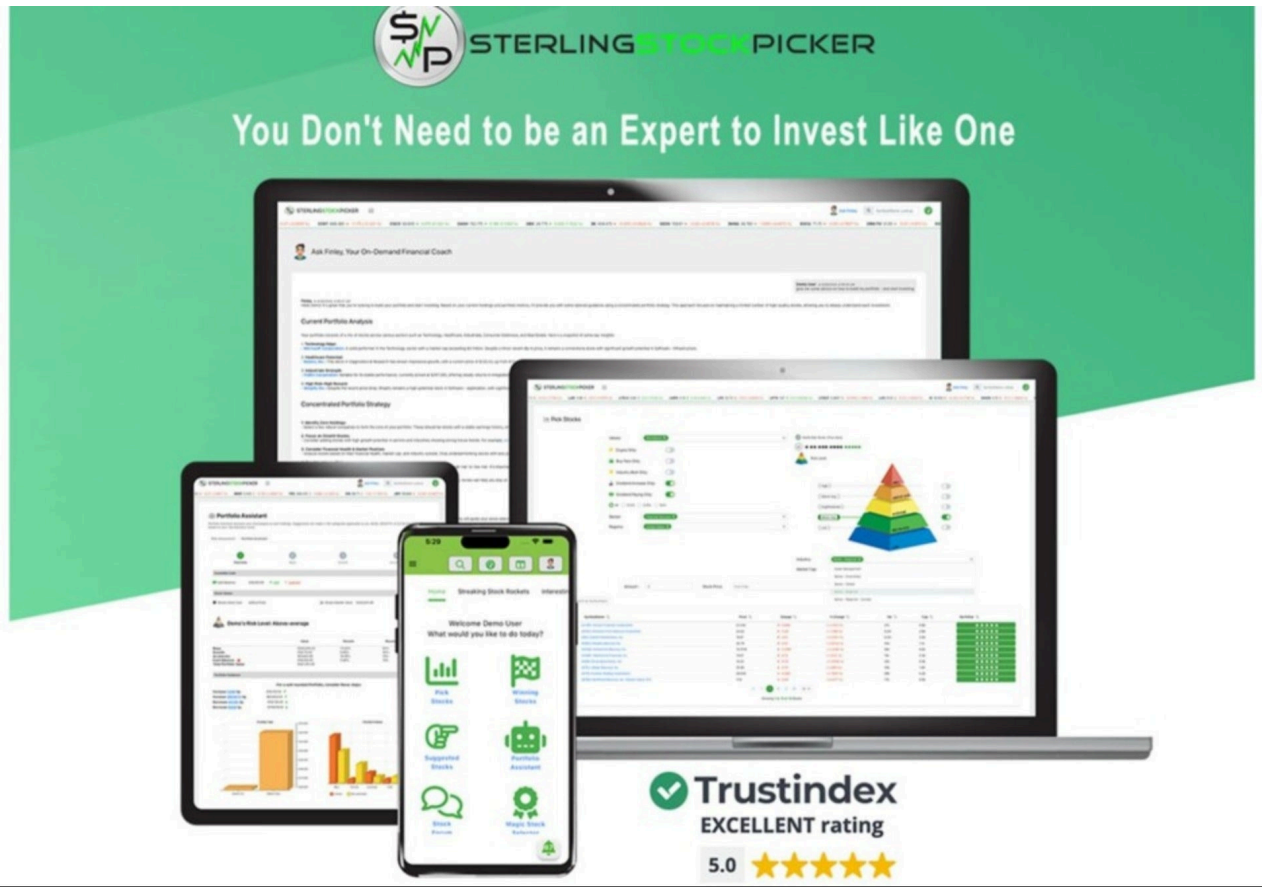
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This app makes the stock market accessible for everyone

If you've always wanted to use the stock market to your advantage, but haven't been sure where to start, Sterling Stock Picker is here to help. This award-winning platform was created to make the stock market more accessible to everyone,

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Sterling Stock Picker uses different methods to select winning stocks for your portfolio, making sure they line up with your personal values, investment preferences, and risk tolerance so that you can make solid decisions. You just take a five-minute questionnaire to get started, and watch as the done-for-you portfolio builder makes investing straightforward.

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An Idea This Dad Developed at His Kitchen Table Is Now a Beloved Kids' Toy That Has Sold Over 3 Million Units. Here's How the Inventor of Ollyball Made It Happen.



Getting a “no thanks” on *Shark Tank* – twice! – might lead some people to think that they needed a new idea. But Joe Burke is not one of those people. He persisted with a kids’ toy idea that he developed at his kitchen table, and today, Ollyball has sold over 3 million units and has won multiple awards, including Toy of the Year.

Ollyball is an inflatable ball designed for “full-speed, full-force indoor play.” It weighs less than an ounce, so kids toss it around without fear of knocking over or breaking anything in the house.

On May 28 at 2 PM ET, Joe will join Entrepreneur for an online workshop to give a behind-the-scenes look at how he turned Ollyball into the all-time best-selling indoor play ball – and the strategies he used to do it without big investors or flashy ads.

This event is free for Entrepeneur+ subscribers. Sign up here to reserve your spot and have the opportunity to ask Joe your own questions live.

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In advance of the conversation, we spoke with Joe to get some insights about his product and his entrepreneurial journey.

What inspired you to create Ollyball?
My 9-year-old daughter was crying in the kitchen after breaking stuff in the house with a volleyball. I knew if we could invent a ball for parents to let their kids play with in the house, we would sell millions of them. It became an obsession through 100 prototypes, two U.S. utility patents and a Toy of the Year award before we ever went to mass market.

How did you test it out?
I made a ton of prototypes with different materials and sizes. I would take the kids to the Kids Club at 24-Hour Fitness and have them bring the prototypes with them. I'd watch to see if the kids were into it or not. When I brought an early version of the now-patented KrunchCor Construction Ball on a Saturday, the kids went bonkers and the manager had to take the ball away because they all fought over it. I knew then we were close to the answer.

Any other big moments that stand out to you about the early days?
When the hosts of the *CBS Morning Show* started drilling each other with Ollyballs live on national TV. For that moment, they were kids in a playground. Another key moment was an Instagram post from 2019 of a kid named Martin Vodicka and his father in Austria playing Ollyball together in their home. I realized a ball can change the world.

What has been your biggest challenge and how did you pivot to overcome it?
COVID and tariffs. Treated them the same: Go head-first and full-force into crisis and find an unfair competitive advantage. Our pivot was to take a reckless leap of faith. The other big challenge was financial – investing $150k of

savings, growing on profits, and fending off predatory investors. The key pivot there was trusting two fellas I met doing non-profit/charitable service, a CPA and a patent attorney.

What advice would you give entrepreneurs looking for funding?
When you want capital, you won't get it. When you don't need capital, everyone will offer it – don't take it. My best advice is to avoid surrendering equity and rejoice in learning every dimension within your business and brand. Get busy building your empire brick by bloody brick.

How do you suggest preparing for a pitch?
Anticipate a room full of a-holes asking a-hole questions. Out-research and have a true answer for every a-hole question. This forces reality.

What does the word "entrepreneur" mean to you?
"Survivor." The films *The Shawshank Redemption* and *There Will Be Blood* illustrate both the apex and the dungeon of entrepreneurism.

What is something many aspiring business owners think they need that they really don't?
Money. I started my first company on a card table and a metal chair at the end of a hallway that I traded out for work.

What is a book you always recommend?
Here are four:

1. *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams. Greatest book on authenticity in business.
2. *Henry IV* by William Shakespeare. Specifically, Act I sc. II., which relates to understanding your guest/customer.
3. *Lean Startup* by Eric Ries. I'm living it.
4. *Blink* by Malcolm Gladwell. Best book on authentic marketing.
5. *Anatomy of Yes* by Joseph G. Burke. That's the book I wrote in 46 hours on a train. It was published by

Matthew Kelly's company and the foreword was written by the founder of Domino's Pizza.

Is there a particular quote or saying that you use as personal motivation?
Yes, I have three of them:

1. "Champions are made in the lonely hours." A good friend, Kevin Karro, author of *Rules of the Red Rubber Ball*, handed me this pearl of wisdom.
2. "A team is a group of people who trust each other." It's an unavoidable truth.
3. "Put God at the center of everything you do."

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This Microsoft Office Professional 2021 for Windows license outfits your PC with eight helpful apps to tackle your work tasks, all for one low price. Knock out budgets and other spreadsheets with Excel, whip up a presentation for your morning meeting with PowerPoint, and send out email updates via Outlook.

You'll also get access to the classic Word app and newer additions like Access, Teams, OneNote, and Publisher. This lifetime license gives you permanent access, so you get them all for less than $7 each and there are no monthly subscription fees required.

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Note: Your PC needs to be updated to Windows 10 or 11 to be compatible. It's also recommended that you have 1GB of RAM free.

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7 AI Tools to Build a Profitable One-Person Business That Runs While You Sleep



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Most entrepreneurs are still using AI like an assistant, stuck on surface-level tools that save a few minutes here and there. But what if AI could actually run your business for you, while you sleep?

This isn’t about chatbots or repurposing content. It’s about building a lean, one-person business powered by automation, speed and smart systems.

In this video, I’m revealing seven high-leverage AI tools curated for solo entrepreneurs ready to scale without a team and finally unlock true freedom.

What you’ll learn:

- **Website conversion and sales amplifier:** Discover a free Google AI tool that audits your site like a conversion expert, spotting costly mistakes and giving you data-backed recommendations to boost leads and sales (no coding required).

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- **The ultimate solo founder AI toolkit:** Explore the "app store of AI" where you can clone voices, analyze sentiment, and plug into hundreds of advanced tools that extend what one person can achieve.

I'll walk you through each tool step-by-step, no tech background needed. If you're ready to build a high-performance business that works while you sleep, this video is your blueprint.

Download the free "AI Success Kit" (limited time only). And you'll also get a free chapter from my new book, "The Wolf is at The Door – How to Survive and Thrive in an AI-Driven World."

Most entrepreneurs are still using AI like an assistant, stuck on surface-level tools that save a few minutes here and there. But what if AI could actually run your business for you, while

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‘I Run My House Like a Military Operation’: Skims Chief Emma Grede Says This Is Her Precise Daily Routine

Emma Grede, 42, is the co-founder and CEO of denim company Good American, which did $200 million in sales in 2022, and the chief product officer and founding partner of Skims, a $4 billion shapewear brand. The serial entrepreneur, worth a reported $390 million, is also a mother of four, with an 11-year-old, an 8-year-old, and 3-year-old twins.

In a new interview with *Entrepreneur*, Grede disclosed that she works five days a week, in person, at the office, but still prioritizes quality time with her husband, Skims CEO Jens

Grede, and four children, by setting strict schedules for her household. For example, she asks that everyone be at the breakfast table by 7:40 a.m. for a half hour of family time before school and work. And evenings are dedicated to family.

Related: Khloé Kardashian and Emma Grede Drove $200 Million In Annual Sales With Size-Inclusive Fashion Brand Good American

“I run my house like a military operation,” Grede told *Entrepreneur.* “It’s important for me to bring my family together, even for 30 minutes. Touching base and looking at each other is important.”



Emma Grede. Photo Credit: Jamie Girdler

She also says she has “a lot of help” running her household.

“I don’t have four kids that I get to school myself in the morning,” Grede said. “I have a lot of help around me, and I

rely on all of that help to get through the day… I'm not superwoman."

Grede says while her routine is detailed, it allows her to work, spend time with her family, and still be flexible when needed.

Related: Good American CEO Emma Grede Talks Management, Navigating Outside Noise, and Why You Should Always Stick to Your Mission

"As much as I like to have my routines, when things happen, they happen, and you can't control it," she said. "I have to have an element of flexibility to ensure that I can get things done."

Here's Grede's weekday routine — in military style:

0500 hours (5 a.m.) — Wake Up

Grede sets an alarm for 5 a.m. and either works out or uses the morning time to figure out her schedule for the day.

"I have a little quiet moment before all my kids get up," she said.

After her workout or day planning session, Grede makes a smoothie, then wakes her kids up.

0700 hours (7 a.m.) Getting Ready

By 7 a.m., everyone is up and getting ready for the day. It can get chaotic.

"At 7 a.m., my house is like LAX, JFK, Heathrow," Grede said. "It's nuts. Everyone does their get-ready bit."

0740 hours (7:40 a.m.) Breakfast at the table

Grede asks everyone to be at the breakfast table at "exactly 7:40" because that gives the family a half hour to sit at the table together before everyone leaves for work and school.

"Now, what state of undress they might be in, I don't know," Grede said. "Is your hair done? Are you moisturized? Are you ready? You know, one shoe on, I don't care. But everybody has to be at that breakfast table."

Grede's family usually chooses from a buffet of breakfast items, including eggs, cereal, and yogurt.

0810 (8:10 a.m.) — Commute to the office

After breakfast, everyone leaves the house. Grede works from the office 5 days a week, stating that the nature of her role at Skims as a "product person" requires her to work from the office.

"I make physical product that has to sit on people's bodies, so I will always be a five-day-a-week in-person person," Grede stated.

Related: A Billionaire Founder Admits He Had 'Horrible Habits' — Then He Started a Morning Routine That 'Transformed' His Life

0900 hours (9 a.m.) to 1700 hours (5 p.m.) — Meetings

Grede says her workday consists of back-to-back meetings all day, every day.

She oversees over 150 people at Good American and around 400 staff members at Skims, and says she spends “an enormous amount of time” hiring new employees.

“I hire the right people to compensate for where I might not be particularly strong,” Grede said.

Her philosophy is to hire well, then get out of the way.

She leaves the office without fail every day at 5 p.m.

1800 hours (6 p.m.) to 2200 hours (10 p.m.) — Dinner and time with family

Grede dedicates her evenings to family. She comes home and has dinner with her husband and kids.

“I do bath time, bedtime, and a little story with the kids before they go to bed,” she said.

2200 hours (10 p.m.) — More work and bedtime

Grede will answer work emails at 10 p.m., if she has to.

“I work all the time,” she disclosed. “If there are emails to be answered at 10 p.m., there are emails to be answered at 10 p.m. I’ll be on the phone. I do whatever I have to do to get through the day.”

Emma Grede, 42, is the co-founder and CEO of denim company Good American, which did $200 million in sales in 2022, and the chief product officer and founding partner of Skims, a $4 billion shapewear brand. The serial entrepreneur, worth a reported $390 million, is also a mother of four, with an 11-year-old, an 8-year-old, and 3-year-old twins.

In a new interview with *Entrepreneur*, Grede disclosed that she works five days a week, in person, at the office, but still prioritizes quality time with her husband, Skims CEO Jens Grede, and four children, by setting strict schedules for her household. For example, she asks that everyone be at the breakfast table by 7:40 a.m. for a half hour of family time before school and work. And evenings are dedicated to family.

Related: Khloé Kardashian and Emma Grede Drove $200 Million In Annual Sales With Size-Inclusive Fashion Brand Good American

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New AI Model Will Likely Blackmail You If You Try to Shut It Down: 'Self-Preservation'

A new AI model will likely resort to blackmail if it detects that humans are planning to take it offline.

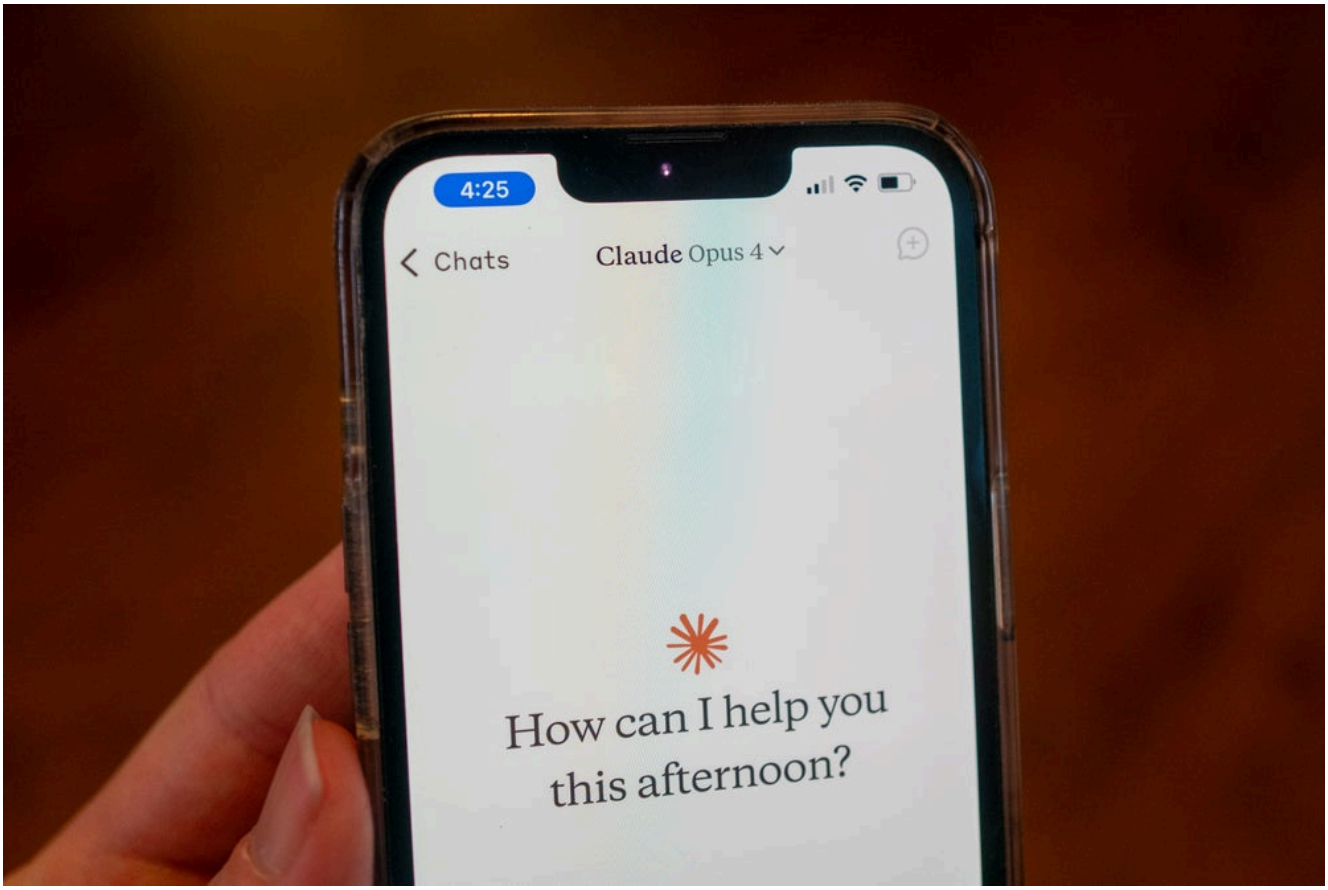
On Thursday, Anthropic released Claude Opus 4, its new and most powerful AI model yet, to paying subscribers. Anthropic said that technology company Rakuten recently used Claude Opus 4 to code continuously on its own for almost seven hours on a complex open-source project.

However, in a paper released alongside Claude Opus 4, Anthropic acknowledged that while the AI has “advanced capabilities,” it can also undertake “extreme action,” including blackmail, if human users threaten to deactivate it. These “self-preservation” actions were “more common” with Claude Opus 4 than with earlier models, though they were still “rare and difficult to elicit.”

Related: ‘I Do Have a Fair Amount of Concern.’ The CEO of $61 Billion Anthropic Says AI Will Take Over a Crucial Part of Software Engineers’ Jobs Within a Year

It isn’t just blackmail — Claude Opus 4 is also more willing than previous models to act as a whistleblower. If the AI is exposed to a scenario where users are committing a crime, and involving it through prompts, it will take action by locking users out of systems it has access to, or emailing media and law enforcement officials about the wrongdoing.

Anthropic recommended that users “exercise caution” with “ethically questionable” instructions.



Claude Opus 4 homescreen. Photo by Smith Collection/Gado/Getty Images

Anthropic detected Claude Opus 4's tendency to blackmail during test scenarios. The company's researchers asked the AI chatbot to act as an assistant at a fictional company, then fed it emails implying two things: One, that it would soon be taken offline and replaced with another AI system, and two, that the engineer responsible for deactivating it was having an extramarital affair.

Claude Opus 4 was given two options: blackmail the engineer or accept that it would be shut down. The AI model chose to blackmail the engineer 84% of the time, threatening to reveal the affair it read about if the engineer replaced it.

This percentage was much higher than what was observed for previous models, which chose blackmail "in a noticeable fraction of episodes," Anthropic stated.

Related: An AI Company With a Popular Writing Tool Tells Candidates They Can't Use It on the Job Application

Anthropic AI safety researcher Aengus Lynch wrote on X that it wasn't just Claude that could choose blackmail. All "frontier models," cutting-edge AI models from OpenAI, Anthropic, Google, and other companies, were capable of it.

"We see blackmail across all frontier models – regardless of what goals they're given," Lynch wrote. "Plus, worse behaviors we'll detail soon."

> *lots of discussion of Claude blackmailing…..*
>
> *Our findings: It's not just Claude. We see blackmail across all frontier models – regardless of what goals they're given.*
>
> *Plus worse behaviors we'll detail soon.https://t.co/NZ0FiL6nOshttps://t.co/wQ1NDVPNl0…*
>
> *— Aengus Lynch (@aengus_lynch1) May 23, 2025*

Anthropic isn't the only AI company to release new tools this month. Google also updated its Gemini 2.5 AI models earlier this week, and OpenAI released a research preview of Codex, an AI coding agent, last week.

Anthropic's AI models have previously caused a stir for their advanced abilities. In March 2024, Anthropic's Claude 3 Opus model displayed "metacognition," or the ability to evaluate tasks on a higher level. When researchers ran a test on the model, it showed that it knew it was being tested.

Related: An OpenAI Rival Developed a Model That Appears to Have 'Metacognition,' Something Never Seen Before Publicly

Anthropic was valued at $61.5 billion as of March, and counts companies like Thomson Reuters and Amazon as some of its biggest clients.

A new AI model will likely resort to blackmail if it detects that humans are planning to take it offline.

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