

Jim's Curated AI Resource Guide

This is my personal toolkit—tools that have genuinely connected with how I think and work. There are hundreds of AI tools out there, and things change daily! Rather than overwhelming you with an exhaustive list, I'm sharing a handful of resources that have made the biggest difference in my workflow.

You might find different AI partners speak to you better than my favorites. That's not just okay, it's exactly how it should be. The goal isn't to replicate what I use, but to find what works for YOU.

I try new stuff regularly, and when something really connects, I dive deeper. If not? I move on without guilt. That approach has helped me get real value without being overwhelmed by all the noise.

My Go-To AI Tools (and why they're worth paying for)

Platform	Why I Use It
Claude (Anthropic)	Warm, natural, nuanced responses. Most often my first stop for creative collaboration. I pay \$20/month for Pro. I use its project feature and am still only scratching the surface of agentics here.
ChatGPT (OpenAI)	Super versatile. Great for brainstorming, images, translations, multi-purpose. I pay \$20/month for Plus. I've built some GPTs and use the Project feature to keep me more organized and efficient.
Perplexity	Fast, sharp research. Checks facts. Helps me find gaps in my thinking. Step by step tech help. This has replaced Google searches for me at about 95%. I pay \$20/month for Pro.

My total AI toolkit? About \$900+ a year. (Yes, less than what I spend at Starbucks! Don't judge!) The return? In terms of my output and speed, I did the work of two.

Have I checked out other models? For sure! But none have stolen focus away from my three best buds, listed above. Of course, the way things are moving, that could change tomorrow!

Other Tools That Make My Work Better

Tool	What It Does For Me
Gemini (Google)	Gemini has come a long way, but my top three (above) haven't changed—Gemini is available as part of Google Workspace packages, and part of many enterprise plans.
Notebook LM	Part of the Google family, this tool is amazing. I load transcripts, videos, reports, and data, and get lots of (nearly) hallucination-free output including custom deep dive podcasts. I need to spend more time here! Free so far.
Gemini's Nano Banana 2 and ChatGPT Image 2	I bounce between both of these for images. AI image makers have come so far in the last year, and I usually get strong, creative, and jaw dropping output. Part of Gemini and ChatGPT packages.
Midjourney	Next level image generation. I head here when I want more artistic, creative, and stunning images. Still learning how to leverage its considerable power. I pay \$8/month
Canva	Quick visual design. Brand-consistent slides, flyers, social assets. I use Canva all the time now for my projects that include design. I pay \$120/yr.
ElevenLabs	AI voice generation and cloning. Makes training voiceovers sound incredibly natural. I pay \$5/month.

Where I Learn and Get Inspired

Daily emails, newsletters	Fast tech summaries. These help me stay in the loop without feeling overwhelmed. I read/scan The Neuron every day. I also look at "Superhuman AI", "The Rundown AI" and others.
Jeremy Utley Stanford Adjunct Professor	Jeremy is disarmingly down to earth and plain speaking — which matters in a world where so much AI content feels intimidating. His "Beyond the Prompt" podcast and This Simple Shift Will 10X Your AI Creativity are the best entry points into his thinking. He's helped me articulate something I'd been living but hadn't fully named: that imagination — not technical skill — is the primary unlock with AI. He's not just someone I follow. He's someone whose thinking is actively shaping mine.
Jeff Su Toolkit and YouTube Channel	Light hearted, accessible, bite-sized tech and AI tips, Jeff's work is actually practical, especially if you're Google-centric. As of May 2026, Jeff rewrote his very helpful AI tool kit, which is available for free. Check out the link here: Jeff Su's Free AI Toolkit (updated April 2026)

Book	The AI-Driven Leader by Geoff Woods—smart, accessible, big thinking. Now a podcast too, for business success stories and process assistance. His CRIT framework will sound familiar to you!
AI for Humans, This Day in AI, The AI Daily Brief, AI and the Future of Work (podcasts)	I listen to almost all podcasts during drive time (or dinner prep time) and bounce all over the place. Some podcasts are more accessible than others, all are educational, insightful, some laugh out loud funny, with timely info on how AI is evolving. I feel like I have a finger on the pulse of what's generally happening in the world of AI, how much I don't know, as well as the areas I probably won't be diving into anytime soon. Fascinating nonetheless! And way better than listening to the news for me.

Value, Philosophy, and Voice

Value:

If you consider savings from possible deck creation, new project rollouts, ideation, analytics, and design, you could save upwards of \$75-\$100k/year in consulting and design fees with effective AI-use, based on comparable vendor rates.

My Personal Philosophy

- **Always learning, always growing.** I expect a lot of what I hear to be over my head.. That's a good thing. Some of it seeps into my brain anyway. I'm always checking out new podcasts. There's a lot out there and I like knowing about it, even if I don't fully get it. And sometimes I just change the channel!
- **Rabbit holes matter.** Enjoy the deep dives....just be sure to come up for air!
- **Tools change weekly. Mindsets last.** I care more about how I think, frame, and create than about chasing shiny new toys. Find your favorites and stick with them, until you find something new that really speaks to you.
- **There IS such a thing as a free lunch!** Don't buy till you try! Almost everything has a free trial or tier!
- **Stay dangerous.** Learn enough about emerging tech to be strategic — but don't waste your life trying to "know it all."
- **Cancel freely.** If a tool, newsletter, or podcast stops delivering value, move on without guilt.

Customize Your AI Voice: Upload Your Vibe

Train it like a teammate, not a tool.

Most platforms (ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity) let you create a custom profile. Here's how to capture your voice:

1. **Share examples of your writing** - I uploaded 10 representative documents and asked AI to analyze my style
2. **Create a voice profile** - Ask the AI to distill your communication patterns into key characteristics
3. **Use it as a guardrail** - Here's some of what mine revealed:

Jim's Writing Style and Voice:

- Overall tone: Conversational + professional, enthusiastic but grounded
- Key traits: Down-to-earth, authentic, encouraging, occasionally humorous
- Style markers: Clear directives, real-world examples, strategic questions
- Brand alignment: Warm, coach-like guidance that reflects company values

Pro move:

Include your voice profile in your prompts with: "Please use my XXXX voice as described here."

This approach ensures consistency across all AI-assisted communications while maintaining your authentic voice—no more generic AI outputs!

This is a living document — adding, pruning, evolving as my journey continues.

About Jim Rich

After 38 years leading training and culture for two of hospitality's most well-known and fast-growing brands — 27 at California Pizza Kitchen and 11+ at Mendocino Farms — Jim founded JimRichHospitality, a consulting practice helping hospitality brands scale culture without losing their soul. JimRichHospitality.com