AI and the Gift of Freedom

We have a gift today. AI tools are increasingly taking over the mechanics of doing the work. They write code, take care of administration and can track progress in any way we choose. AI alongside touch screens and voice recognition means we barely need a keyboard or mouse any longer to generate good software products. Such powerful tools must be handled with care, of course, but when we learn to do that we find ourselves freed up for the actual work. Yes, the actual work is not writing code. The actual work is *thinking*—specifically thinking collaboratively, putting our minds and hearts together to solve complex business problems, or offer new experiences to users.

When I learned to become a software developer, starting in the mid-1990s, I was taught that a pencil was the one vital tool I needed, not a computer. With each new assignment I learned to design, to consider test cases, to imagine outcomes, long before I wrote a line of code. That pencil is still a vital tool, but today I'd be sure to teach that dialogue precedes even the pencil.

Don't ever be satisfied with receiving written instructions. You will quickly find yourself building the wrong thing. Start by talking, by collaboratively and collectively exploring. Think in outcomes, not functionality. Imagine the future. Only then start playing with code. Never leave the ending until the end, but let it be your guide once the coding begins.

While AI can take care of the mundane, be careful not to demote it to an admin assistant. Your AI companion should be an active partner in the creative process. The gift I mentioned is the speed at which you can generate and test solutions, allowing you plenty of time to engage with one another, human to human. Ultimately, reclaiming Agile in the age of AI means using this freedom to foster an exciting, supportive and innovative environment, one where people don't just build software, but truly care for the work and for one another.

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Tobias Mayer, October 2026