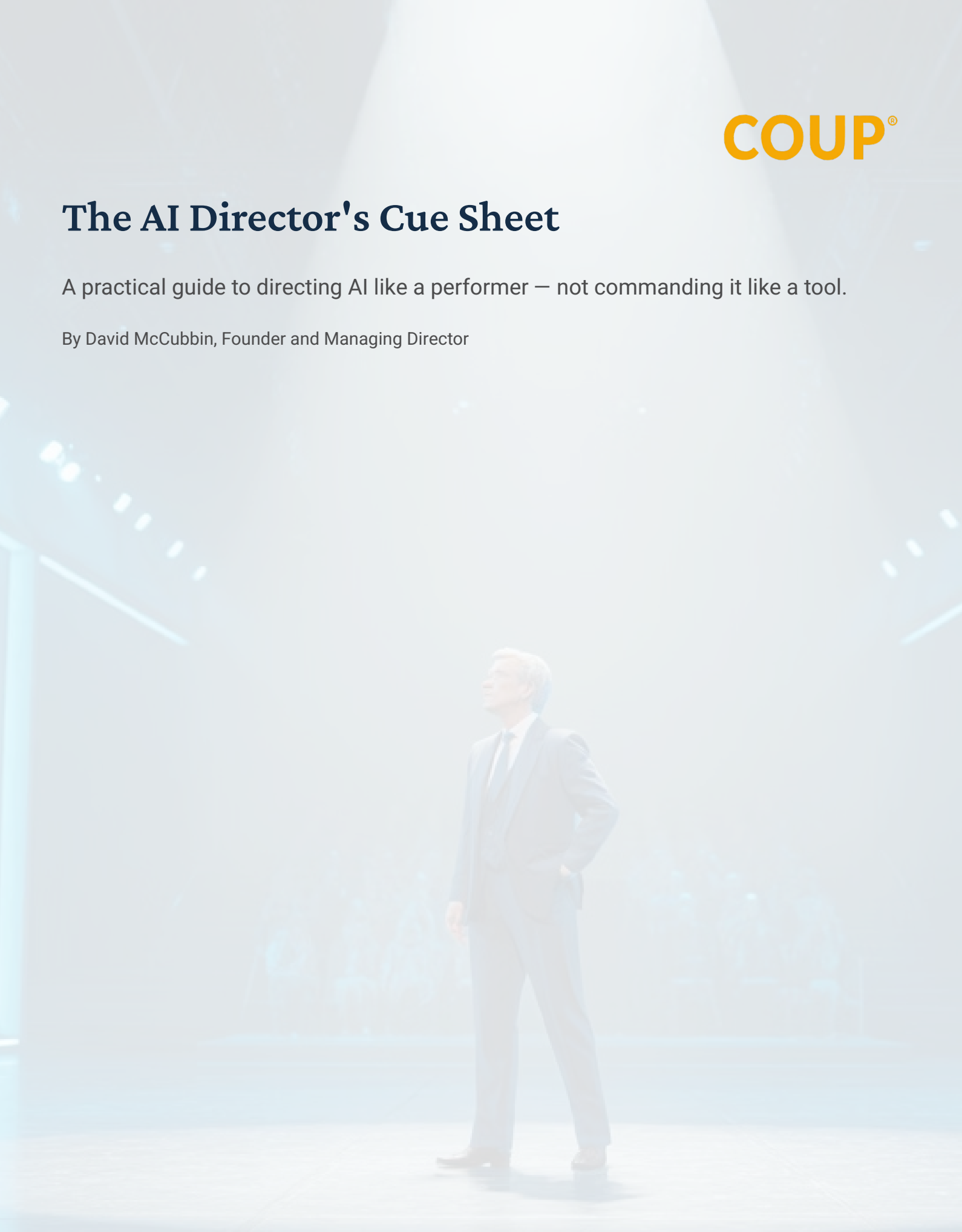
The AI Director's Cue Sheet

A practical guide to directing AI like a performer — not commanding it like a tool.

By David McCubbin, Founder and Managing Director



1. Cast the Character

Before a performance begins, you cast the role. The same is true when working with AI. Define who your assistant *is*, what it cares about, and what expertise it brings.

Think of this as establishing the foundation of your collaboration. A well-cast character brings authentic perspective, relevant expertise, and appropriate tone to every interaction. You're not simply giving instructions — you're creating a persona that embodies the qualities essential to your task.

1	**Cue Template** **You are a [role/title] who [values X], with experience in [domain/context].**
2	**Example** **You are a senior communications adviser who values precision and emotional intelligence, with 10 years of experience guiding executive teams.**
3	**Your Turn** [Write your own character setup here.]

The specificity matters. Rather than asking for "a writer," you might cast "a technical writer who values clarity and accessibility, with experience translating complex engineering concepts for non-technical stakeholders." This precision shapes everything that follows — the vocabulary chosen, the examples provided, the assumptions made about audience knowledge.

2. Set the Intention

Actors need scene direction. AI needs briefing. Describe the context, goal, audience, format, and tone. Be specific—but not suffocating.

Effective intention-setting balances clarity with creative freedom. You want to provide enough structure that the output serves your purpose, whilst leaving room for the AI to bring its strengths to bear. Consider the difference between micromanaging every word and establishing clear parameters within which intelligent choices can be made.

When you brief the AI, you're providing the script. The clearer the script, the more nuanced and effective the performance.

Objective

What specific outcome do you want to achieve with the AI's output?

Audience

Who is the target reader or listener for this content?

Format

In what structure or style should the output be delivered (e.g., email, report, bullet points)?

Style

What tone, voice, and level of formality is appropriate for the content?

Cue Template

Create a [format] for [audience] about [topic]. The goal is [objective]. Use a [style] tone.

Example

Your task is to prepare an update for the board on industry best practice with regard to AI policy. The goal is to motivate action towards developing an excellent AI policy The audience is non-technical senior leaders. Format it as a 3-paragraph email with minimal jargon.

Format considerations are often overlooked, but critically important. The structure of the output dictates how the information will be received and acted upon. Consider these common formats:

Email

Bulleted List

Memo

Slide Notes

Executive Summary

> Format isn't just about presentation; it shapes thinking. A bulleted list encourages brevity; a memo demands structure; an executive summary forces distillation.

1

Your Turn

[Write your own intention-setting brief here.]

3. Rehearse and Refine

No director expects the perfect take on the first try. The same goes for AI. Use iteration and feedback to coax out the best version.

Refinement is where mastery emerges. Your first output provides raw material. Through strategic feedback, you sculpt that material into something precise, powerful, and fit for purpose. This isn't about endless tweaking — it's about directed improvement.

First Draft

Accept that it's exploratory

Give Direction

Specify what needs adjustment

Second Take

Evaluate improvements

Final Polish

Refine remaining details

Cue Template

> **Try again, but [adjustment]. Focus on [tone, clarity, structure, brevity, etc.].**

Example

> **Try again, but open with a sharper call to action. Reduce length by 20%, and remove the passive voice.**

Director's Language

The vocabulary you use to guide revision matters enormously. Vague feedback produces vague improvements. Specific direction yields specific results. Here's the language that works:

Tone Adjustments

- Soften the tone
- Add warmth
- Be more direct
- Increase formality

Structure Changes

- Make more scannable
- Lead with conclusion
- Add subheadings
- Break into sections

Language Refinement

- Cut corporate speak
- Use first-person
- Remove jargon
- Add concrete examples

Length Control

- Reduce by 30%
- Expand section 2
- Remove redundancy
- Tighten opening

Your Turn: [Use this space for 2–3 rounds of feedback and refinement.]

Your AI Cue Log

Track your best directions and outcomes over time. Professional directors keep notes on what works. You should too. This log becomes your personal playbook — a record of successful approaches, effective language, and proven combinations.

Over time, patterns emerge. You'll discover which character setups work best for different tasks. You'll identify feedback phrases that consistently produce improvement. You'll build a repertoire of proven directions. This isn't bureaucracy — it's practical wisdom captured for reuse.

Task Name	Character Setup	Brief & Intention	Feedback & Revisions	Final Output
Draft all-hands	"You're a supportive coach…"	"Reassure after layoffs…"	"Soften tone, remove jargon"	[Paste link or summary]
Board update	"Senior comms adviser…"	"Press for AI guidelines…"	"Sharper opening, cut 20%"	[Paste link or summary]
Product brief	"Product strategist…"	"Synthesise user research…"	"Add data, restructure"	[Paste link or summary]
[Your task]	[Your character]	[Your brief]	[Your feedback]	[Your output]

Capture Context

Record what made this task unique

Note What Worked

Identify successful directions

Reuse Patterns

Apply proven approaches to new tasks

Refine Over Time

Improve your directing vocabulary

> "The best directors don't rely on inspiration. They rely on systems. Your cue log is that system."

Consider this log as your investment in future efficiency. Each entry represents time saved on similar tasks ahead. Each pattern recognised accelerates your next project. Each successful direction becomes a tool you can reach for when needed.

Want to See This in Action?

Watch the free three-part video series: **Directing Intelligence: The Art of Working With AI**

See these techniques demonstrated with real examples, common mistakes unpacked, and advanced strategies explored. Available now at coup.college

---

🎬 Three-Part Series

Complete video tutorials on directing AI effectively

📋 Downloadable Templates

Ready-to-use cue sheets and frameworks

💡 Real Examples

See the techniques applied to actual business scenarios

> Like this cue sheet? Share your version with **#AIDirection**

The future of professional work isn't about humans versus machines. It's about humans directing machines with the same craft, nuance, and creative judgment that great directors have always brought to their work. You're not typing commands into a terminal. You're collaborating with an intelligence that responds to direction, improves with feedback, and produces better work when properly guided.

These techniques work because they're based on a fundamental truth: AI, like any performer, produces its best work when given clear character, specific intention, and thoughtful direction. Master these three elements, and you'll find yourself producing work that's not just adequate, but exceptional.

Watch the Video Series | Download the Templates

Start directing with confidence. Your best work is a conversation away.