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One Advisor or a Whole Team?



By Tommy Lee

The difference between a GPT and a subagent, when to use each, and the one instruction that makes your GPT ask before it answers.

I've been trying to figure out the difference between a GPT and a subagent, and when to use each one. So I put together a short deck to explain it in plain English. No tech background needed.

The short version. A GPT is an advisor. You talk with it, and the value is in the back and forth. A subagent is a team member with one job, and a small team of them can go do the work for you. My rule of thumb: if the point is thinking, use an advisor. If the same work keeps coming back, build a team. I wrote about how I set up my own team in Issue 027.

But the part I most want you to see is slide 6. By default, a GPT answers fast and tends to agree with you, and without noticing, the thinking quietly moves from you to the tool. So tell it to use the Socratic method. Ask me first, then answer. For ministries, where so many decisions need wisdom more than speed, this is very, very helpful.

TRY THIS INSTRUCTION

Before you answer, ask me up to three questions to understand my goal. After I reply, give your best answer, and point out one assumption I may be making.

Copy instruction

Paste it at the start of a chat, or save it in your GPT settings so it happens every time.

Flip through the slides below. And try that instruction once this week. See what it asks you.

THE DECK

One Advisor or a Whole Team?

Eleven slides you can read below or download for yourself.

Download the deck →

A PLAIN ENGLISH GUIDE

One Advisor or a Whole Team?

GPT and Subagents, explained so anyone can follow along.

No tech background needed.



PART 1

So what is GPT?

GPT is the **engine** behind ChatGPT.
Think of it as a coach or advisor. You talk it through in a chat box, and the value comes from the back and forth.

It has read a huge amount of text, so it can teach you, share expertise, and brainstorm with you on almost any topic.

IN ONE LINE

One advisor. One conversation. The value is in the back and forth.

The letters stand for Generative Pre trained Transformer. You can safely forget that.

PART 2

And what is a Subagent?

A subagent is an AI helper with **one specific job.**
Think of them as virtual employees. Each gets a job description, like researching, writing, or checking the work.

They get work done without constant conversation. A lead hands out the tasks and pulls the pieces together.

IN ONE LINE

A team of virtual employees who get work done.

Subagents are available in tools like Claude, and they are built on the same kind of AI engine as GPT.

PICTURE IT

An advisor and a virtual team

GPT

One advisor you talk with



You talk. It responds. You refine it together. The value is in the back and forth.

SUBAGENTS

Virtual employees with a lead



The lead splits the job. Each specialist works on their own, without constant conversation. The lead puts it all together.

GPT

The good and the limits

Pros

Fast to start. Just open it and type.
Great coach. It teaches, shares expertise, and brainstorms with you.
Easy to learn. If you can send a text, you can use it.
Strong in dialogue. Best when the back and forth is the point.

Cons

Long jobs get messy. Details can slip when one conversation juggles everything.
Sounds sure, can be wrong. Always check facts.
Likes to agree. It may hand you a quick answer instead of challenging you.
Needs you in the chat. The value is in the dialogue, so it is not built to work alone.

UPGRADE YOUR GPT

Teach it to ask before it answers

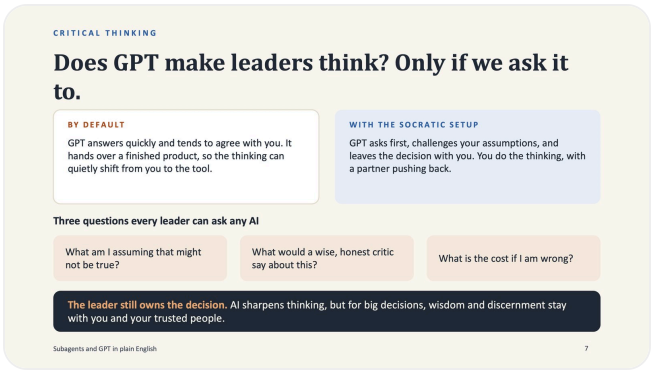
The **Socratic method** is named for Socrates, an ancient Greek teacher who helped people think by asking good questions.
So instead of rushing to an answer, your GPT first asks, "What are you really trying to do?"

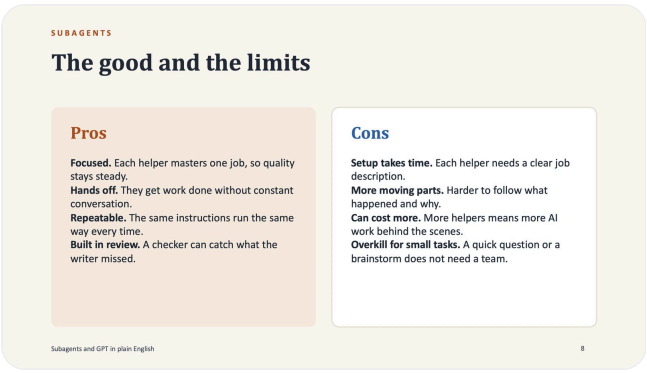
Sharper results because it understands your goal.
Less flattery because it challenges your thinking.
You stay in charge of the decisions.

TRY THIS INSTRUCTION

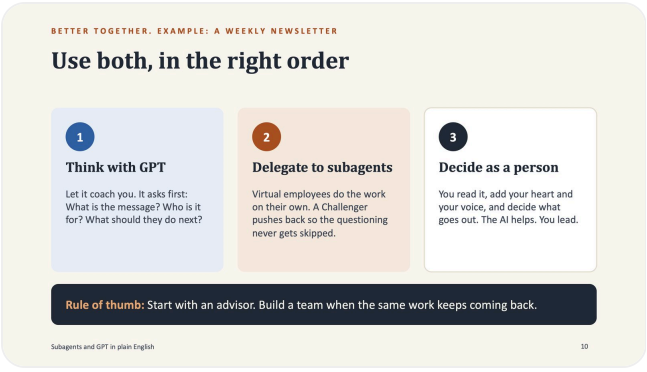
> Before you answer, ask me up to three questions to understand my goal. After I reply, give your best answer, and point out one assumption I may be making.

Paste it at the start of a chat, or save it in your GPT settings so it happens every time.











Tommy

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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