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How to Build Better Products *with* AI-Supported Research

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Jump to:

Using AI as a **thought partner**

Most of us have encountered this frustrating situation at one time or another: after weeks of conducting in-depth interviews, analyzing insights, and crafting a compelling story, the findings presentation falls flat.

When insights and recommended actions don't resonate with decision makers, it's an opportunity to sharpen the way we think, anticipate reactions, pressure-test assumptions, and frame findings for action.

I still do the heavy lifting in my work. I conduct interviews, analyze patterns, and write detailed reports. But AI is also a tool that can help me strengthen my insights and have a real impact on outcomes.

I use AI to:

- Challenge my own thinking so I don't get stuck in assumptions
- Anticipate objections and prep for stakeholder pushback
- Explore different ways of framing a study or insight
- Help PMs and designers get started with "good enough" studies
- Turn a rough research idea into something more structured and usable

Many people give up on AI after a few shallow outputs.
You ask something vague. It gives you something generic. You move on.

But if you know how to push it, AI can help you think better.
It can make you sharper.

Here's how I use it.

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1. Challenge your **assumptions**

Confirmation bias is real. If you're already convinced about a problem or direction, you'll unconsciously design a study to validate it.

When you've drafted your research questions, early insights, or hypotheses, give them to AI and ask it to poke holes.

Example prompt:

I'm conducting research on why users drop off during onboarding.
I believe the issue is due to complexity or unclear steps.
Can you give me 5 alternative explanations I might be overlooking?

What you might get:

- The drop-off might be due to technical bugs or device-specific issues.
- Users may sign up during impulse moments but lose motivation by the time onboarding begins.
- The perceived value of completing onboarding isn't clear enough.
- Users might be multitasking or distracted when onboarding starts.
- The tone or branding during onboarding might feel misaligned with expectations.

You can also ask:

- What blind spots might I have in this research design?
- If I had to argue the opposite of my hypothesis, how would I do it?

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2. Anticipate **pushback**

Feed AI your insight summary, recommendation, or topline finding.

Ask it to act like a specific stakeholder.

Example prompt:

Here's a research finding: "Users are abandoning checkout because of frustration with manual card entry." Pretend you're a VP of Product. What concerns might you raise?

What you might get:

- Is there quant data to back this up?
- Didn't we fix this last quarter?
- What evidence do we have that autofill will actually boost conversion?

How this prepares you:

- Back up insights with mixed methods. Bring business framing: revenue, conversion, retention.
- Give trade-off aware recommendations

What to ask:

- What objections might a skeptical exec raise?
- How could I reframe this to speak to our business goals?
- What's missing that would make this more convincing?

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3. Frame stronger questions

Too many study questions are vague or leading. That leads to shallow studies and useless data.

Once you've written your initial research questions, ask AI to:

- Generate alternatives
- Flag biased phrasing
- Suggest other ways to explore the topic

Example prompt:

I'm planning a study on why people aren't using Feature X.
My initial question is: "Why aren't people engaging with Feature X?"
Can you suggest 5 stronger alternatives that dig deeper?

What you might get:

- What specific barriers prevent people from using Feature X?
- What expectations do users have before using Feature X, and how do those match their experience?
- What tasks are users trying to complete that Feature X supports or blocks?
- Which user segments engage most and least with Feature X, and why?
- How does the discoverability of Feature X influence usage?

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4. Co-write study plans

You don't always need to write your plan from scratch. If you're stuck, AI can give you a head start or a second opinion.

Use AI to:

- Translate a goal into a structure
- Draft tasks, questions, and success metrics
- Pressure-test alignment to goals

Example prompt:

I want to understand why small business users aren't renewing their annual subscription. Can you help draft a study plan with goals, method, sample size, and sample interview questions?

You'll get a structured plan you can refine instead of a blank page.

5. Support product building

If you're a PM or designer running your own quick tests, you probably don't want to spend hours crafting research plans or task lists. AI can give you a fast head start and Dscout provides the workflow to make it practical.

Use AI to help you:

- Draft usability test tasks based on your Figma flow or prototype
- Write clear success criteria to spot where users get stuck
- Reframe product questions into testable tasks

Then run the study in Dscout, using their unmoderated testing tools and templates to structure your sessions without needing to build everything from scratch.

Example prompt:

I'm a designer testing a new mobile onboarding. Suggest 5 realistic tasks for users to complete sign-up, and write 3 success criteria I should watch for in the recordings.

This helps you get moving fast without needing a 20-page research guide or waiting for a UXR to jump in.

6. Refine synthesis

AI won't do your synthesis for you—but it can help structure your thinking, cluster early patterns, or generate alternative framings.

Use AI to:

- Cluster quotes or tags
- Suggest possible themes
- Identify tensions or contradictions
- Role-play how different stakeholders might react to insights

Example prompt:

I've tagged a set of quotes around users struggling with our dashboard filters. Themes seem to be (1) too many options, (2) unclear labels, (3) confusing defaults.
Help me write 3 different insight statements from this data.

What to ask next:

- What user behavior would support or challenge each insight?
- What questions should I ask to dig deeper?
- How might my boss misinterpret these findings?

You still run the show

AI doesn't replace your judgment or do the research for you. It helps you sharpen it.
When used well, it becomes a fast way to:

- Challenge your assumptions
- Clarify what actually matters
- Spot risks before they derail your study
- Make findings easier to act on
- Get a head start without sacrificing quality

It's not a shortcut to insight. It's a tool to help you think better, faster.

When and where to use AI *in* product creation and research

If you've opened ChatGPT and typed "help me plan a research study," you've probably been disappointed.

That's not your fault. AI tools are trained to be helpful, but they're not trained to think like a researcher, designer, or product manager. They don't understand business context, product constraints, team tension, or what's riding on the next release. That's your job.

This section gives you a clear view of what AI can actually do inside your workflow, task by task, with examples that work.

A mental model: Don't ask AI to lead

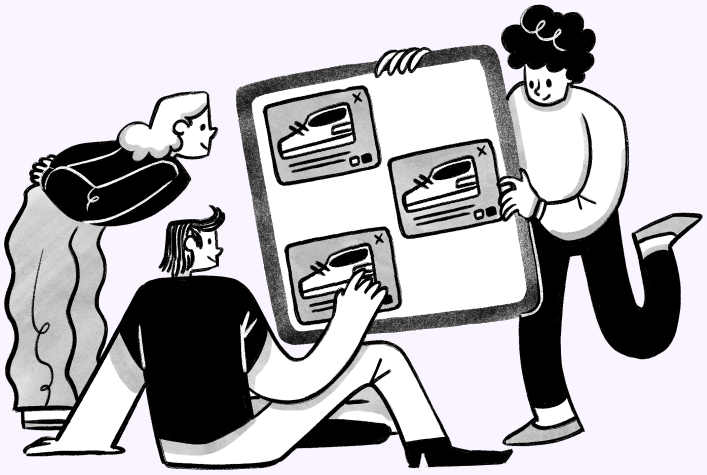
AI works best when you treat it like a junior assistant. It's fast, tireless, and can give you three options in 30 seconds. But it needs tight boundaries.

When you start a study, your job is to define the "why," the "who," and the "when." AI helps once those are locked in.

If you're still answering questions like:

- "What do we need to learn?"
- "Who should we talk to?"
- "Which method makes sense?"

You're still in human judgment territory. AI can't help until you make those calls.



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Where AI **helps** *and* where it can **derail you**

Research Phase	What AI can help with	What to watch for
Planning	• Rewriting objectives to sharpen focus • Drafting first-pass research questions • Checking for bias or jargon in phrasing	• Letting AI decide the method or scope • Overreliance on generic study templates
Recruiting	• Drafting screeners with clear logic • Writing open-ended qualifiers to gauge fit • Spotting unclear or confusing screening questions	• Target audience defined by AI • Poor inclusion/exclusion criteria without context
Study setup	• Writing task instructions in plain language • Simplifying task flows for unmoderated tests • Rewording confusing steps or success criteria	• Using AI to build the entire test flow • Skipping user context or behavioral framing
Data collection	• (No recommended use)	• Simulating responses or test sessions with AI
Analysis	• Grouping quotes into early themes • Drafting high-level insight bullets based on tags • Rewriting long quotes for readability	• Asking for synthesis without tagged inputs • Accepting summaries without reviewing context
Reporting	• Formatting early insights into stakeholder-friendly bullets • Reframing findings for different audiences • Drafting first-pass insight headlines	• Letting AI decide what's important • Overwriting nuance or conflict in findings

Role based **quick wins**

AI will show up differently depending on what kind of work you do.
Here's where it can help, fast:

For UX researchers:

- Reframe a long research goal into a tighter, testable question
- Rewrite jargon-heavy questions into plain language
- Pull 3-5 early themes from already-tagged clips to start synthesis
- Turn 6-8 messy quotes into something a stakeholder could scan in 30 seconds

For designers:

- Turn a Figma flow into task instructions: Write 3 unmoderated test prompts for a checkout flow with a 2-step process and an upsell screen.
- Test a flow you're unsure about: What are 3 ways users might misinterpret the 'apply coupon' section?
- Rewrite interface copy for clarity: Turn this microcopy into something a user will actually understand: 'Loyalty applied at cart if thresholds met.'

For product managers:

- Turn roadmap questions into researchable objectives: Reframe: 'Do users understand the new rewards system?' as a testable question.
- Write first-pass prompts for internal concept feedback
- Summarize a batch of Slack feedback into themes and follow-up questions

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Planning prompt **library**

This section is your structured library of plug-and-play prompt frameworks, built to match real-world research, not hypotheticals. You can copy and paste each of these into your preferred LLM to use directly.

Prompt A: Build a clear research plan

I'm working on a research project and need help turning a vague idea into a structured plan.

Here's what I know:

- *What it's about: [Describe your project in 1–2 lines]*
- *What the team wants to learn: [Paste their vague input or goal]*

Help me build a research plan by following these steps:

Step 1: Clarify the research goal

- *Rephrase the team's goal into a clear, specific research objective (what we want to learn, not how).*

Step 2: Write 3 research questions

- *Make them behavior-focused, open-ended, and decision-oriented. Avoid "do you like..." or "what do you think..." Follow the TEDW structure, which starts each question with one of the following phrases:*

  T - *Tell me more about...*
  T - *Talk me through...*
  E - *Explain...*
  D - *Describe...*
  W - *Walk me through...*

Step 3: Suggest 1-2 methods for each question

- *Choose practical methods based on the goal and timeline (e.g., usability test, interviews, concept feedback).*

Step 4: Draft a basic timeline

- *Include setup, recruitment, fieldwork, analysis, and reporting, just rough estimates.*

Help me build a research plan by following these steps:

Prompt B: Write a screener that finds the right people

I'm recruiting participants for a research study about [insert topic, like how users redeem loyalty points, how team admins onboard new tools, etc.].

Help me write a screener that:

1. *Filters based on recent behavior, experience, or context —not just age, gender, or job title*
2. *Includes 2-3 disqualifier questions (multiple choice) to screen people quickly*
3. *Includes 1-2 open-ended questions to help confirm mindset, confidence, or familiarity with the topic*

Use plain, natural language. The goal is to get people who are thoughtful and match the behavior we're studying, not just those who click quickly.

At the end, give me a gut check for the screener:

- *Is the language clear and natural?*
- *Are the disqualifiers strict enough to avoid the wrong people but not so strict that I'll struggle to recruit?*
- *Are the open-endeds useful for judging fit?*

Optional context to improve quality:

- *This is for a [B2B/B2C] study*
- *We're looking for people who have recently [done a behavior]*
- *This is moderated/unmoderated*
- *I'll be sourcing participants from [User Interviews/CRM/email/etc.]*

Prompt C: Write usability test tasks

I'm running a usability test for [insert product or flow, e.g., a loyalty redemption feature in a mobile checkout flow].

Help me write 3 behavior-focused usability tasks that:

1. *Start with a one-sentence setup (something a real user might do or think)*
2. *Include a clear goal or action for the user to take*
3. *Include a success/failure condition (what I'm watching for as a researcher)*

Keep tasks grounded in user behavior, not opinions.
Avoid vague asks like "explore the page" or "give feedback."

Then do a quality check for each task:

- *Is it realistic for the user's goal?*
- *Could the task be misunderstood without more context?*
- *Does it test something the team actually needs to learn right now?*

Here's extra context: The team wants to know: [insert 1-2 key learning goals like, "Are users noticing the loyalty points option?" or "Do they understand what's included in their discount?"]

Format like this for each task:

- *Task: [One-sentence scenario + action]*
- *Success: [What shows the user succeeded]*
- *Failure: [What shows the task fell apart]*
- *Why this task matters: [What this helps the product or design team learn]*
- *Risk check: [Is this task clear and connected to a real decision?]*

Prompt D: Write a high-quality survey

I'm building a research survey to learn about [insert topic or behavior, e.g., how people track their habits or choose collaboration tools].

Help me write a strong draft of the survey using these steps:

Step 1: Frame the purpose

- *Write 1 sentence that explains what we're trying to learn and why.*

Step 2: Recommend 5-7 questions

- *Mix of multiple choice and open-ended*
- *Avoid asking for opinions or hypotheticals (i.e., "Would you use this..." or "Do you think it's helpful...")*
- *Aim for behavior and context (what people do, not just what they say)*

Step 3: Suggest an intro message and thank-you message

- *Keep both short and friendly, explaining why this matters*

Please format the survey so I can review and copy it easily into a survey tool.
Add 1 tip after each question if you think it needs context or a better answer structure.

Prompt E: Turn user feedback into business-relevant insights

I've just finished a round of interviews or usability tests. I've grouped my notes or clips under themes like: [insert tags or themes like "confusion during onboarding," "hesitation about pricing," "workarounds in checkout flow"].

Help me write 3-5 insight bullets that I can share with the product or leadership team. Each one should:

1. *Describe what users are doing, expecting, or struggling with*
2. *Include a short, direct quote (realistic or paraphrased)*
3. *Explain why it matters to the business or product team, such as risk to adoption, missed revenue, feature underused, value misunderstood, brand perception)*
4. *Include a follow-up question or next step the team could explore*

Use this format for each insight:

- *Insight: [User behavior or expectation]*
- *Quote: "[What the user said]"*
- *Why it matters: [Business or team impact, such as lost revenue, trust, activation, retention, etc.]*
- *Next step: [Follow-up research, product question, or metric to watch]*

Add a short headline above each bullet if you think it would help the team scan faster.

Using an AI-backed **research tool**

A lot of teams ask me the same question once they start experimenting with AI in research: “Where does the actual research platform fit in?”

They’re using AI to write screeners. To refine research questions. To test assumptions. To draft early insights. But then what? At some point, the research has to be run, observed, analyzed, and shared.

That’s where a tool like Dscout becomes critical.

This section breaks down how Dscout fits into an AI-supported research flow, and how teams can pair human thinking, AI prompts, and a strong tooling backbone to move faster without compromising quality.

1. Study planning

A conversational AI tool can help...

Draft early hypotheses, assumptions, and research questions; pressure-testing for bias or gaps.

Dscout can help...

Provide structure for usability tests, diary studies, surveys, interviews, etc., with question banks and targeting tools.

Extra human input needed...

For final framing, scope definition, and stakeholder alignment.

2. Recruitment and screener design

A conversational AI tool can help...

Suggest screener logic, eligibility criteria, and question variations.

Dscout can help...

By offering a curated participant panel (with options to invite and manage your own users), extensive targeting and quality filters, and video screener questions.

Extra human input needed...

Review for fit, inclusivity, edge-case testing

3. Data collection

A conversational AI tool can help...

Generate realistic participant tasks or reflection prompts.

Dscout can help...

Run any type of research you need, from usability tests and concept testing to diary studies and interviews.

Dscout can also take on some of the ops work, including scheduling, incentive payments, consent forms, and more.

Extra human input needed...

Ensure real-world tasks, monitor progress, and adapt the study if needed.

4. Analysis

Dscout AI can help...

With theme generation and summaries for open-ends and interviews, automating highlights of notable moments, automatic interview transcripts, and help you ask deeper questions of your data with chat-style AI Research Assistant.

Dscout can also help with...

Data visualization and organization with word clouds and bar charts, tagging, and commenting features.

Extra human input needed...

Vetting and refining AI-generated insights, identifying nuance and patterns

5. Shareouts and implementation

Dscout can help...

Finding clips of notable moments or top quotes tied to specific themes or highlight reels to illustrate findings to stakeholders.

Easily pull and showcase insights with a playlist builder, hidden observers, integrations with Figma and Slack, and more.

A conversational AI tool can help...

Reframing findings for stakeholder goals and generating draft decks or emails

Extra human input needed...

Selecting the highest-signal moments and tailoring insight delivery for business impact.

An example

Let's say a mid-sized B2C productivity app called Loop wants to understand why engagement with their new scheduling feature is lower than expected.

Their product manager, Nina, works with a UXR, Sam, and a designer, Alex. They want fast insights, but they don't want fluff. Here's how they use AI and Dscout in tandem:

Kickoff

1. Sam writes down their research goal:
   "Why aren't people using the new Smart Slots feature?"
2. A conversational AI tool helps them reframe this as: "What prevents users from discovering or adopting Smart Slots during daily use?"
3. They feed this revised question into an unmoderated study on Dscout.

Screener design

1. They ask a conversational AI tool: What factors might influence whether someone uses a scheduling tool? AI suggests segments like remote workers, power users, and those managing teams.
2. They plug these segments into Dscout's targeting options and write a custom screener.

Study setup

1. The team uses Dscout's media survey or usability test with open-ended prompts like:
   a. "Show us how you normally schedule a meeting. Talk through your thought process as you do it."
   b. "Try using Smart Slots. Tell us what's helpful, what's confusing, and what you'd expect instead."
2. They run the test with 10 participants.

Early analysis

1. As videos roll in, they summarize each clip using Dscout's AI analysis:
   a. Themes and summaries of each open-end and video are provided, as well as specifically flagged "notable moments" of delight or frustration.
   b. They also use the AI research assistant to identify top quotes related to key pain points and themes.
2. They tag clips in Dscout by theme: discoverability, expectation mismatch, UI friction.

Synthesis and activation

1. Sam uses Dscout AI to draft a summary of findings. They then tweaks it to match stakeholder language:
    a. "The Smart Slots feature isn't visible enough during key workflows. Users either miss it or misunderstand its purpose. This creates drop-off, even among power users."
2. They pull 3 high-signal video quotes from Dscout and embed them in a Notion page shared with the product team.

Outcome: Loop's team shipped a UI tweak that made Smart Slots more visible in one week. Engagement increased 28% the following sprint.

Why it **works**

AI helps you move fast. Dscout tools enable that, but also help you stay grounded in real human behavior. You don't need to choose between speed and rigor.

By combining:

- AI's ability to generate and iterate quickly
- Human judgment and storytelling
- And a tool like Dscout that blends AI and anchors everything in real-world data…

You end up with research that's fast and credible. Insightful and actionable. Trusted by your team, not just tolerated.

Rule of thumb: **Using AI responsibly**

AI can support research in powerful ways from framing questions to surfacing risks and helping you prep for meetings—but only if you approach it with intention. Without guardrails, it's easy to let AI overstep, mislead, or create work that won't hold up in a meeting.

This section offers practical guidance on using AI wisely: what to trust it with, what to double-check, where it's most useful, and how to make sure what you share with others stays credible.

1. Know what AI is good at

AI tools generate fluent, confident responses. That doesn't mean those responses are reliable. The most common mistake people make is taking AI outputs at face value and using them without scrutiny.

Use AI for:

- Reframing your thinking: What else could explain this behavior?
- Generating options: What are 3 different ways I could run this study?
- Pressure-testing ideas: What's the strongest counterargument here?
- Drafting first versions of plans, scripts, summaries, or messages

Review everything AI gives you when it comes to:

- Facts, metrics, timelines
- User quotes or example data
- Research decisions that affect participant safety or consent
- Recommendations you'll deliver to leadership

Quick prompts to gut-check outputs:

- "Which part of this could be misleading if I shared it as-is?"
- "What assumptions might this draft be making?"
- "If a stakeholder challenged this, how would I defend it?"

If you can't confidently explain or defend the output, revise or replace it.

2. Don't give AI the final word, use it to sharpen your own

AI is a tool for expansion, not substitution. It should push your thinking, not replace it.
For any major decision, ask yourself: "Did I use this output to think better or just to avoid thinking at all?"

Helpful use vs. risky shortcuts:

Scenario	Good use	Bad use
Writing a survey	Ask AI to reword biased questions	Copy the whole thing with no edits
Writing a script	Ask AI to generate edge-case questions	Let it break your natural interview flow
Writing a summary	Ask AI to reframe for a VP audience	Ask it to "sound more strategic" without context

At every step, keep yourself in the decision-maker seat. You set the goals. You set the standards.

3. Use structure to keep quality high

When using AI to write anything you'll share with others—plans, summaries, reports—build in structure to prevent shallow or scattered results.

Use structured prompts like:

- Write a 1-page research plan including objective, methods, participants, and timeline. Use short paragraphs, clear subheadings, and no filler language.
- Generate 3 possible summaries of this study for a VP audience. Each one should focus on a different business angle: revenue, retention, and product risk.
- Reframe this insight for a skeptical PM. Focus on clarity and actionability.

Then layer in a quality check:

- What parts of this sound generic or vague?
- What would a stakeholder ask if they read this?
- Where could this create false confidence?

AI's default tone often mimics consultant-speak. The more structure and feedback you give it, the more useful and grounded your output will be.

4. Always test how findings will land, not just how they read

Before sharing anything externally, use AI to help test for tone, clarity, and potential backlash.

Use prompts like:

- Act as a PM reading this finding. What questions would you raise?
- Respond to this recommendation as a head of product who's worried about deadlines.
- Rewrite this summary in plain language for a busy exec who only cares about outcomes.

If the response still feels safe, clear, and persuasive across multiple personas, you're in a good place. This doesn't just strengthen delivery. It helps you anticipate where the resistance will come from and get ahead of it.

5. Spot red flags in AI output

Even with great prompts, some responses should be thrown out entirely. Red flags to watch for:

Red flags to watch for:

- Repetitive or formulaic phrasing
- Vague references to “users,” “insights,” or “business impact” with no backing
- Overuse of empty adjectives like “valuable,” “meaningful,” or “essential”
- Generic advice that doesn’t apply to your case
- Drafts that feel right until you actually read them aloud

If something feels too smooth, too obvious, or too good to be true, it probably is.

Ask yourself:

- “Would I say this in a real meeting?”
- “Would I be able to explain why this matters?”
- “Is this trying to sound right, or be right?”

If the answer isn’t clear, don’t use it.

6. Share the thinking, not just the output

When you’re using AI to help shape research work, the output alone isn’t the full story. What matters is how you got there and how confident you are in it.

Before sharing any AI-assisted output, take 5 minutes to reflect on:

- “What did I use AI for in this case?”
- “What parts did I revise or reject?”
- “What trade-offs were made in the wording or framing?”

This doesn’t mean adding a disclaimer. It means knowing where you stand.
If asked, you should be able to explain:

“This draft started with an AI outline, but I rewrote the synthesis section and added all participant quotes manually. The metrics came from our analytics team.”

That’s what builds trust.

Research and product building are **yours**

AI won't replace your judgment, your instincts, or your experience. It can't read between the lines in a stakeholder meeting. It won't notice when a participant hesitates in a way that matters. It can't feel tension in a room or catch that one detail in a user quote that flips the entire direction of a study.

What it *can* do is help you think more clearly, move faster, and show up sharper.

Use it to break past the blank page. To test your framing. To sharpen your message. To help your team start strong without hand-holding. But don't hand over the reins.

The best research still comes from you, your questions, your judgment, your ability to connect the dots others miss. AI just gives you a little more room to do that well.

Start small. Use the prompts. Check the output. Keep what's useful. Push back on what's not. And remember: this isn't about doing more with less. It's about doing the right work, better.

Take your product to the next level *with* Dscout AI

Conduct faster UX research without sacrificing quality. You stay in the driver's seat, our AI analysis tools will ride shotgun and assist with…

- Theme generation and summaries for open-ended questions and interviews
- Automated highlights of notable moments
- Designing further research with upcoming chat-style research assistant features

Go from user questions to measurable impact faster with Dscout AI, see it in action.