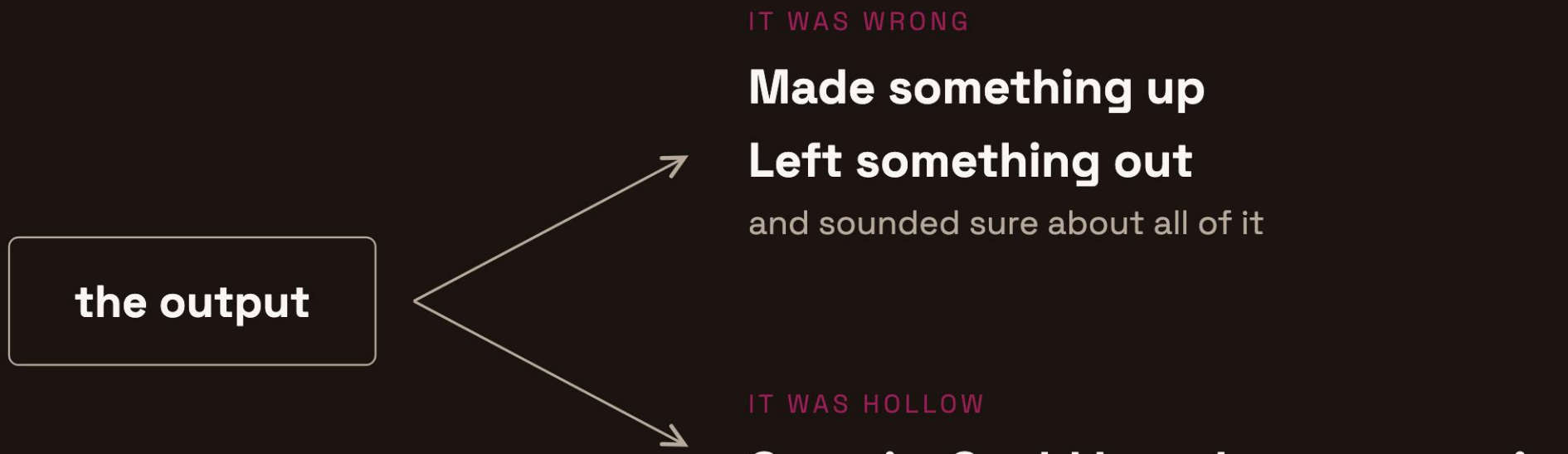
Graded loops

Getting AI to check its own work, and using the same trick on yourself.

Erica Layer · AI in Practice · 23
September 2026

SOUND FAMILIAR?

You put a prompt in. You got something back. Then, later...



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AI ON PURPOSE

THE TRICK

Make it grade its own work before you ever see it.

Against criteria you wrote down first. That is a graded loop, and it is the one habit that turns a good guess into something you can trust.

Anthropic's own guide to building agents names this pattern: evaluator-optimizer.

WHAT A GRADED LOOP NEEDS

The four things a loop needs

01	**What you want**	say what you are actually trying to produce
02	**What “good” means**	your standard, in your words. The only part that is really yours
03	**Let it check itself**	grades its own answer against your standard, fixes what fails
04	**When to stop**	a clean pass, or after a few tries it stops and asks you

WHAT A GRADED LOOP IS

How the four fit together



THE PART THAT IS YOURS

What makes a criterion objective?

A grader given only your criteria and the output should reach the same verdict you would. No room to interpret. That is what lets you trust the result without reading it.

NOT OBJECTIVE

“Make it sound professional”

professional to whom? graded on a feeling

“Don’t miss anything important”

important is the thing you needed decided

OBJECTIVE

“Every action item quotes the line of the transcript it came from”

“Every date appears in the source. If none does, say so”

THE PART THAT IS YOURS · AN EXAMPLE

My six criteria for a task list

01	**Grounded**	someone actually said it. If you cannot point to where, it should not be there
02	**Owned**	one named person. Not two, not “the team”
03	**Time-bound**	a date, or it says “no date agreed”. Never an invented one
04	**Actionable**	a concrete next step, not a topic
05	**Complete**	nothing that was actually committed got missed
06	**Sorted**	every item is one of: action, decision, FYI, or unresolved

Every one of these can be checked against the transcript. None of them is a feeling.

LIVE

One messy meeting transcript.
Watch it grade its own work.

Then how the whole thing packs into one reusable skill.

WHAT JUST HAPPENED

Six checks. Two passes.

FIRST PASS

quietly wrong



a fabricated task
a missing date invented, not flagged
a decision quietly misrepresented

SECOND PASS

after grading



clean. all six pass.

The grading pass catches what a glance will not. And it read as confident both times.

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ME, IN THE LOOP

I am not very good at business development. So I built myself a coach.

Every sales call goes through the loop. The rubric is nine things I wrote down about what a good call looks like.

ME, IN THE LOOP

What one call looks like

BEFORE

The prep card



DURING

The call

recorded. nothing else changes

AFTER

The coaching

nine scores, each with a quote from the call

OVER TIME

The record

every score, every call

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TWO THINGS IT CAUGHT

Real coaching, from real calls

IT HEARD

“I’m figuring it out as I go”

three times on one call, plus “it’s just me right now”

IT GAVE ME

Stop narrating uncertainty

the trigger: any “is it just you” question
the line: “It’s me directly, which is the point.”

LISTEN TO THIS

How and When to Talk About Your Firm ↗

2Bobs podcast, Blair Enns and David C. Baker · 30 min, cut to six points

IT HEARD

“I’ll wait to hear about next steps”

right after the buyer said “huge sigh of relief”

IT GAVE ME

Catch the buying signal the instant it happens

and turn it into a dated ask. Zero for five calls so far. The loop will not let me forget.

READ THIS

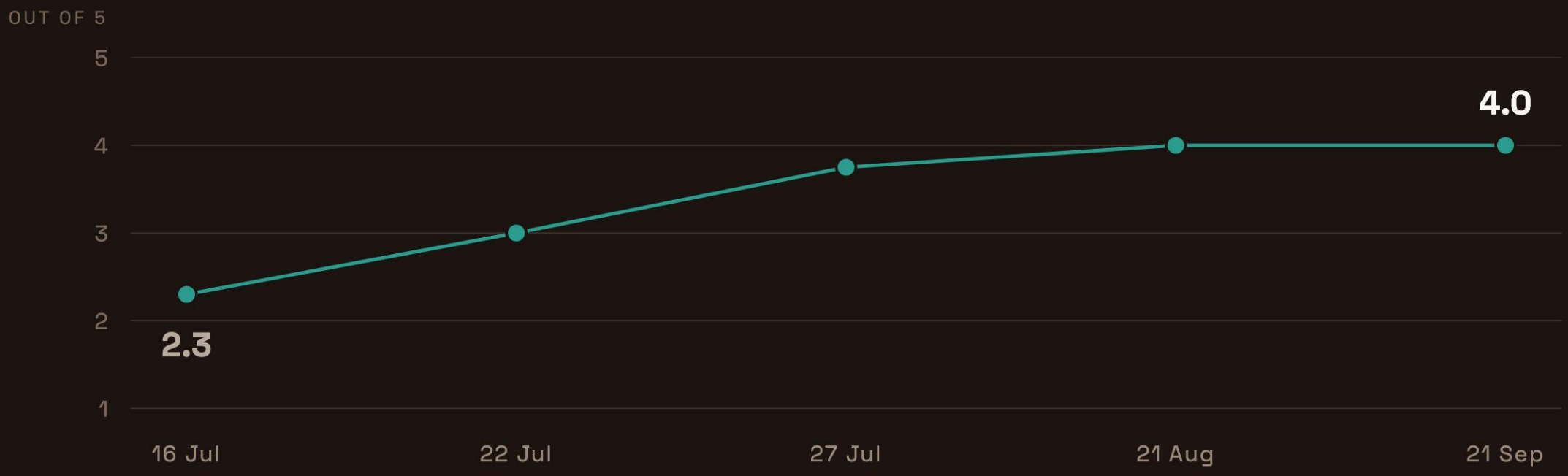
Decoding Buying Signals in Sales ↗

HubSpot · 10 min, cut to five points

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ME, IN THE LOOP · THE RECORD

Average score across nine dimensions, five calls



Most improved: self-talk, 2 to 5. Most stubborn: the close. I could never hold a record like that on myself.

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HOW TO DO THIS YOURSELF

Same four steps, for the work and for you

01 **Pick something you already check by hand**
a task list, a draft, a screening pile, a call you just had

02 **Write down what good means**
five or six things, in your words. The only part that is really yours

03 **Tell it to draft, grade, fix, and grade again**
and to show you the grades, not just the answer

04 **Set a stop**
a clean pass, or a few tries and then it asks you

One rule underneath all of it: an independent reviewer, never the same pass grading itself. A prompt you can copy is in tomorrow's email.

WHERE A LOOP FITS

Graded loop examples

In the work

THINGS YOU EYEBALL BEFORE YOU SEND

- Meeting notes and action lists
- Grant and RFP responses
- CV screening and interview notes
- Email automations, before they send
- Ad copy, against your real customer
- A monitored inbox or Slack channel
- A monthly sweep of your sources
- Anything with numbers in it

On yourself

THINGS YOU WANT TO GET BETTER AT

- Sales and BD calls
- Job interviews
- Presentations and talks
- Hard conversations
- Your own writing, against your voice rules

TEMPO

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