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Leader's Sidekicks: Custom GPTs as a strategic leadership tool
How systemic AI sparring partners strengthen effectiveness in leadership practice

1 | From theory to impact – with a single click

Everyday leadership is not a training situation. Decisions have to be made under time pressure, feedback has to be given between meetings, and projects have to be implemented. It is precisely in situations like these that "Leader's Sidekicks" come into their own: they are language-based micro-companions based on GPT technology grounded in systemic coaching principles (Samuel 2025) – specializing in leadership issues. Whether it's delegation, role clarification, or feedback, the Sidekicks provide structured reflection paths, question sequences, and directly usable action impulses in real time – tailored to the individual needs of the manager.

They are not didactic or formal, but dialogical, connectable – and stimulating in the best sense of the word. Many users report that working with the Sidekicks not only helps and saves time, but is even fun. This low-threshold access to reflection is more than just a nice side effect – it is one of the reasons for its high acceptance in everyday life (CoachHub 2024).

2 | More than chatbots: Systemic architecture for practical transfer

Unlike freely improvised chat inputs ("prompting"), Leader's Sidekicks are based on a dialogue-based architecture (Pavlović et al. 2024). At the beginning, users choose how deeply they want to dive in – from "Checklist" to "Short & sweet" to "Detailed & reflective." All variants work with well-founded coaching models (e.g., GROW, Tetralemma, scaling or resource questions) and tried-and-tested management concepts. The goal is not information, but implementation. The output is immediately usable results – such as a guide for a difficult critical discussion, a 3-point plan, or a structured reflection framework.

This format leads to an effect that traditional training rarely achieves: knowledge is not "retrieved" but translated into action – concrete, situation-specific, and action-oriented. This makes the sidekick a reliable sparring partner in the uncertainty of everyday management.

3 | Effective even without training – microlearning, routines, and reflection aids

Leader's Sidekicks are effective even without prior training. Managers receive ideas and

suggestions for action that can be directly applied in specific everyday situations – even if they have had little exposure to systemic coaching or feedback methods in the past. Instead of repeating theoretical models, the sidekicks activate the user's own experiential knowledge through targeted questions – step by step, at the user's own pace.

Didactically, this principle follows microlearning (Senadheera et al. 2024): short, repeated reflection units in the work context, which, according to learning research, generate particularly high transfer rates (Bego et al. 2024). The learning effect comes from application – not from prior instruction. The Sidekick also helps to establish individual reflection routines, for example through recurring daily reviews or weekly kick-offs with clarifying questions. Reflection thus becomes a habit – embedded in one's own leadership actions.

What's more, those who work with a Leader's Sidekick automatically engage with the application of artificial intelligence – not in an abstract way, but in a very practical way. In this way, managers become role models for digital sovereignty (Harvard Business Publishing 2023) within the company. They experience how AI strengthens their work instead of replacing it – and thus send a strong signal in the direction of a learning-oriented, adaptive leadership culture.

4 | Scalability: Enablement across all levels

Leadership development often encounters operational, financial, or organizational limitations—especially in middle management. In-person formats reach only a few and have a long lead time, while digital training courses are completed on the side without focus. Leader's Sidekicks, on the other hand, scale differently: they are immediately available, situation-specific, individualized, and always accessible—whether in the office, on the road, or working from home.

Sidekicks are currently available through ChatGPT's GPT Store. This means they can be used immediately, without technical integration, infrastructure, or prior knowledge. They can be used in a browser or via an app. Company-specific variants are also conceivable in the future – at the moment, the focus is on fast, individual usability.

5 | Three practical application scenarios

Scenario 1: Critical feedback conversation under pressure
At lunchtime, a team leader learns that a project team has sent incorrect figures to a customer – feedback must be provided to the person responsible on the same day. Instead of searching through old training folders for the minutes of a management seminar from three years ago – or spending time googling checklists – he opens the

Feedback Sidekick. Within ten minutes, a structured guide for the meeting is created: comprehensible, connectable, and ready for immediate use. The result: a clarifying meeting on equal terms – conducted with calmness, clarity, and poise.

Scenario 2: Delegation to a new team member
A manager is faced with the task of handing over a complex work package to a new employee. There is no time for a detailed briefing in day-to-day business. The delegation sidekick guides them through the essential reflection questions in just a few minutes: What can I delegate? What is the goal? What is the context? What resources does the employee need? The answers are used to create an immediately usable discussion guide with supplementary questions for the employee.

Scenario 3: Self-efficacy in day-to-day business
A project manager feels like she is losing track of things: emails, meetings, decisions – everything is pressing. She knows what needs to be done, but not where to start. Instead of scrolling through task lists or blaming herself, she uses the Sidekick for ten minutes of self-reflection. The starting point: a simple question – "Where would you like to be more effective today?" This develops into a structured reflective dialogue about goals, boundaries, areas of influence, and routines. The result is an individual plan for direct implementation in practice.

6 | Effect: Transfer instead of training experience

The effect is measurable: Studies on AI-supported coaching (Arakawa & Yakura 2024) show an average transfer increase of +20 percentage points compared to traditional formats – especially when reflection is based directly on real cases. The mix of microlearning (Senadheera et al. 2024), systemic structure, and immediately usable output is crucial for this effect.

The Coaching Copilot study by Arakawa & Yakura (2024) emphasizes that GPT-based tools are most effective when they guide users through self-reflection with well-designed questions – not through advice, but through structure.

A recent HBR analysis (Carter et al., 2025) also confirms that AI tools can help people communicate more empathetically, incorporate different perspectives, and thus lead more effectively. The decisive factor is not whether the support comes from a machine, but how it is embedded.

7 | Conclusion: A loyal companion for effective leadership practice

Leader's Sidekicks are no substitute for coaching and training. Personal coaching remains irreplaceable, especially when it comes to complex development processes, personal patterns, or fundamental role issues—in other words, double-loop learning.

Training programs also continue to have their place, for example, in building new social skills or self-reflection. Leader's Sidekicks complement these formats in a meaningful way: as transfer boosters, structural aids, and reflection bridges in everyday life.

Leader's Sidekicks are not simple chatbots, tools, or trainers. They are faithful companions—quiet, loyal, reliable. They do not judge, they do not demand—but they ask intelligent questions, provide timely reminders, and help shape one's own leadership impact. They are like a good shadow: always there when you need them. Discreet, but present.

For companies, they represent a scalable, learning-oriented leadership tool that not only strengthens individual action but also enables cultural change: toward greater digital sovereignty, reflective leadership, and practical implementation.

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