



Mike Knapp

TECH INNOVATOR,
SERIAL ENTREPRENEUR &
AI EXPERT

Speaker Kit



About Mike

Mike Knapp is a serial entrepreneur and tech innovator with a knack for turning groundbreaking ideas into impactful products.

With over two decades of experience spanning startups and tech giants, Mike brings a unique perspective on innovation, AI integration, and the power of neurodiversity in tech.

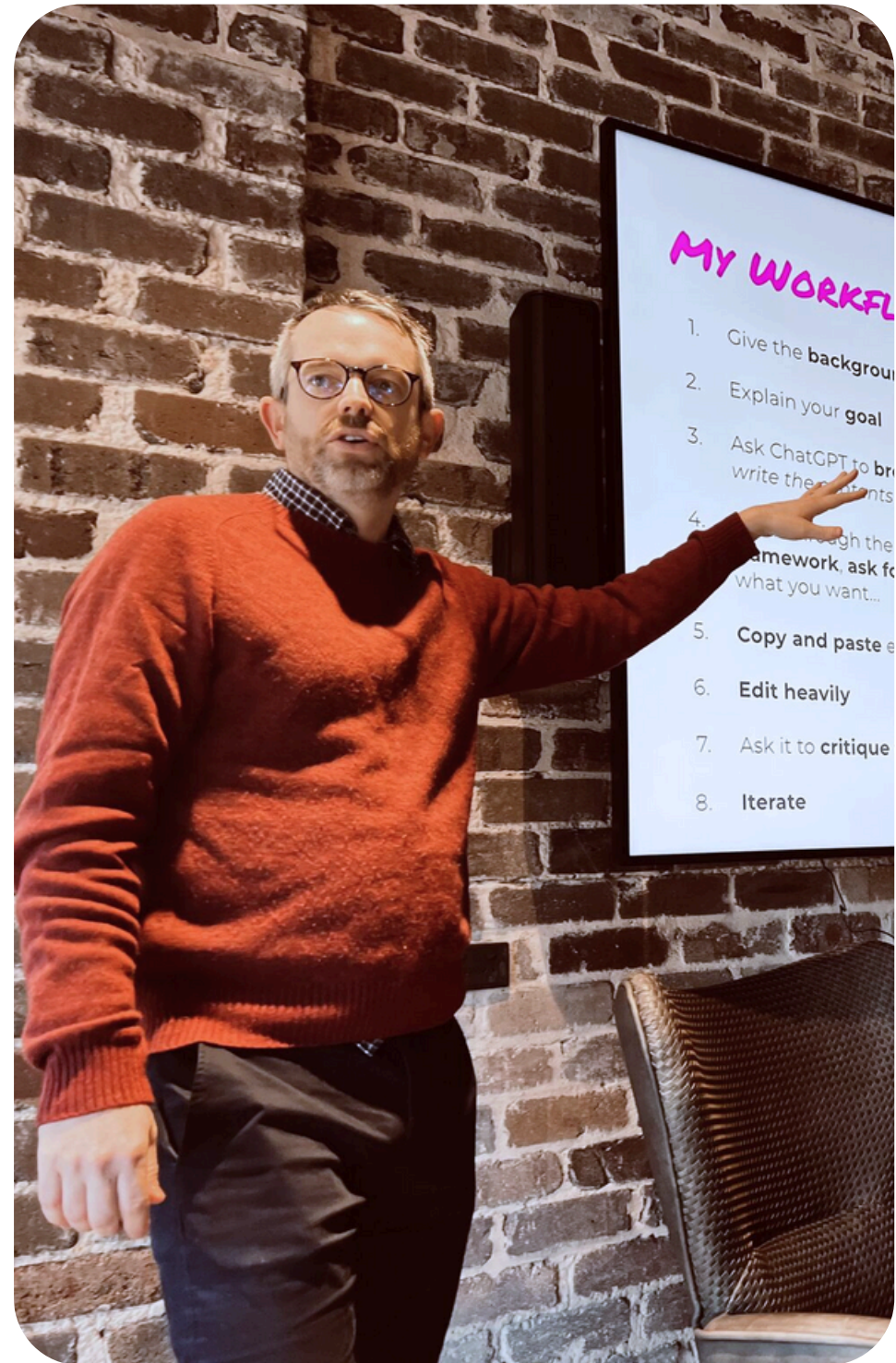
EXPERTISE:

- Product Innovation and Development
- Artificial Intelligence
- Scaling Startups
- Neurodiversity in Tech

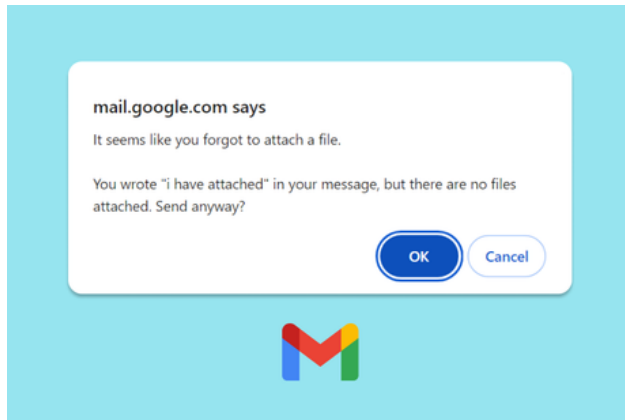
As a proudly neurodivergent leader (Autistic & ADHD), Mike champions the power of diverse thinking in driving innovation and solving complex problems.

His talks and workshops blend personal insights, technical expertise, and practical strategies, inspiring audiences to embrace change and think differently about the future of technology and business.

Contact Joel at ICMI for bookings:
joel.sloane@icmi.com.au

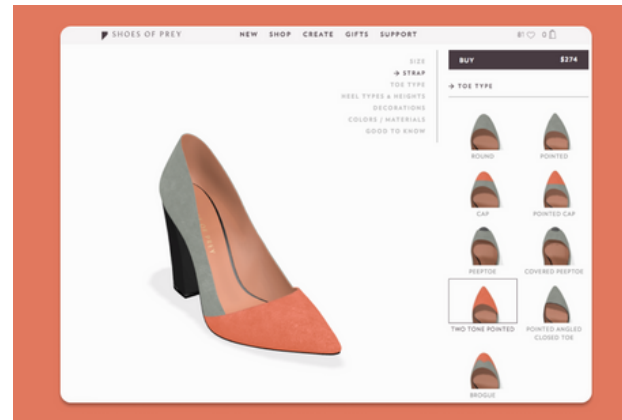


Selected Projects



"Did You Forget to Attach?"

Invented this popular feature inside Gmail. It deeply resonated with users.



Co-Founded Shoes of Prey & CTO

Startup allowing women to design custom shoes; raised \$35m.



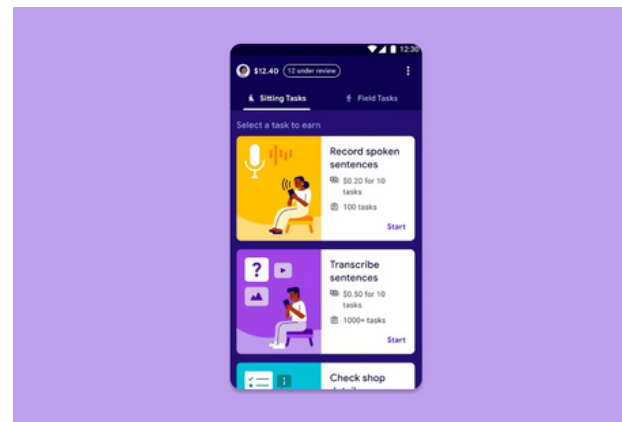
Built a Shoe Factory in China

Spent 3 years in China overseeing construction of 150+ person factory.



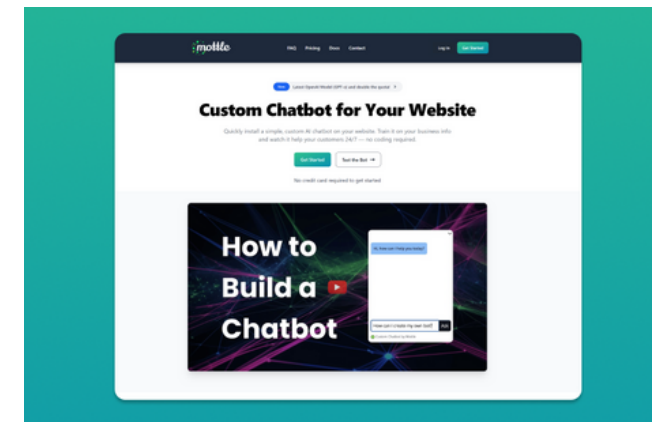
Voice-Only Social Network

Launched three iterations of an innovative voice-only social network.



Co-Founded Task Mate at Google

Won a pitch competition, launched in 3 countries and built the team to 50 people.



Custom Chatbots for Business

Building custom chatbots to help businesses scale their customer support.

Keynote #1

AI Revolution:

Navigating the Future of Business and Technology

In this forward-looking keynote, Mike explores AI's transformative potential across industries, drawing from his experiences creating AI-driven products including a robotic journalist and a semi-automated YouTube channel.

He provides a practical overview of how AI is reshaping business landscapes, demonstrating real-world applications and strategies for harnessing AI to drive innovation and efficiency.

Your audience will learn:

- Current capabilities and future potential of AI in business
- Real-world applications of AI across various industries
- The basics of “prompt engineering”
- Strategies for integrating AI into existing business models
- Practical steps to stay ahead in the AI-driven business landscape





Mike delivered an exceptional keynote on AI, breaking down complex ideas into clear, engaging insights for our audience, many of whom were new to the topic. We received fantastic feedback from our members, who found the session both informative and highly relevant to the payroll industry. Mike's ability to tailor his message to our industry was truly impressive, making the session a standout at the conference.



— Jason Low, CEO of Assoc. Payroll Specialists

Keynote #2

Neurodiversity in Tech: *Harnessing Unique Perspectives for Success*

This personal keynote delves into Mike's journey as a neurodivergent entrepreneur in tech.

Diagnosed with Autism and ADHD in his 40s — which was quite a shock — he shares how these traits have shaped his career, exploring neurodiversity as a competitive advantage in innovation, problem-solving, and leadership.

Your audience will learn:

- The potential of neurodiversity in driving innovation and problem-solving
- Strategies for leveraging diverse thinking styles
- How to create inclusive environments that foster creativity
- Real-world examples of neurodiversity leading to breakthrough ideas
- Insights for both neurodivergent individuals and neurotypical leaders

Surprising mid-life diagnosis makes me proud

Mike Knapp

I've always felt like a "normal" person: A bit quirky, sure, but otherwise your garden-variety computer dork who, thanks to a fortunate upbringing, was on an exciting career trajectory.

Working first for a judge, then Google – my minor claim to fame was inventing the "did you forget to attach" pop-up inside Gmail. Later I co-founded a women's shoe start-up, Shoes of Prey, which raised \$35 million in venture funding before it failed.

It wasn't until my 40s – after quitting my job two weeks before my wife discovered she was pregnant – that life suddenly felt very difficult. I was crippled by overwhelming anxiety, brain fog, tinnitus, excruciating ear pain, insomnia and fatigue. I had already been prescribed a CPAP machine for "severe" sleep apnoea, but the specialist was perplexed because I didn't look like someone who needed it. My teeth grinding crescendoed too, sawing in half a hard plastic splint one night. I told my puzzled doctors I felt like "a 90-year-old trapped in a 40-year-old body".

For a while, I wondered if I had long COVID. The timing matched, as did many of the physical symptoms. The dramatic part of my brain regularly inquired if I might be dying. Medical tests assured otherwise.

After waiting more than 12 months for a formal psychological diagnosis – a lengthy \$3000 report looking back to childhood – I now have an answer. I'm neurodivergent. Specifically, I have autism and ADHD, a combination often abbreviated as "AuDHD".

This is quite the shock at 43 years



Mike Knapp says that a label provides him with a framework to better understand himself.

of age. It's like discovering you've been wearing a silly hat since the day you were born, though no one ever thought to mention it. All my personality quirks and unique struggles immediately made a lot more sense; every prior awkward encounter could be analysed in a new light.

About one in 40 Australians are thought to be autistic, whereas ADHD is twice as common (one in 20). Neither condition was identified during my childhood. According to my psychologist, I probably escaped an earlier diagnosis because my intelligence allowed me to "mask"; for example, by consciously monitoring my facial expressions, or scripting conversations ahead of time. Autism in women remains

underdiagnosed, and their experiences under-researched, perhaps for a similar reason: it's said they're socially conditioned to be better at masking. Our truth can remain undiscovered until a big trauma comes along.

Some of my recent physical symptoms are what's known as "neurodivergent burnout", probably triggered by years of gruelling back-to-back video calls during COVID. During this time, my brain was in constant overdrive, trying to read non-verbal cues through a flat computer screen, while also trying to maintain a high level of performative energy. I worked extreme hours due to my "always on" brain and the lack of physical boundaries between home and

office. Don't get me wrong, COVID was very hard for most people for similar reasons, but I believe some of us particularly struggled because of our unique neurology, making us vulnerable to extreme burnout.

Common throwaway responses to my diagnosis range from: "you don't seem autistic" to "we're all a little on the spectrum, aren't we!" Though well-meaning, they're hurtful because they trivialise the internal nature of the experience. You can't "see" a brain thinking, or hear my deafening tinnitus. Claiming everyone's on the spectrum is like saying "we're all a little bit extremely tall, aren't we!"

More cynical folk were suspicious I was now applying a "label" in middle age. Is it suddenly

trendy? What difference will it actually make? For me, a label provides a framework to better understand myself. It might also provide helpful context too for those that know me. More crucially, it has given me access to the optimal treatment. Counselling techniques for anxiety, for example, are different if you're neurodivergent. Without a formal diagnosis, a psychologist may, or may not, be prepared to treat you as such. Regular anxiety medication may also not work for you.

The good news is that, with better knowledge and more holistic treatment, the exhaustion and anxiety have started to improve. I'm back to feeling much better after a long and confusing process.

While there are some negatives to being neurodivergent, I couldn't be more proud of the positives. Greta Thunberg says it's the source of her "superpower" and I feel that way too. For example, I can be intensely creative and passionate about whatever captures my imagination. I'm also able to quickly dive in on highly technical topics, sometimes seeing patterns and trends before others. These are common AuDHD traits, and I wouldn't trade them for anything.

I hope my story inspires you to have a fresh perspective on any "quirky" people in your life. We don't need your unsolicited diagnosis or relaxation tips – thanks in advance – but we do need your gentle support, particularly when we're burnt out. And, if someone is brave enough to tell you about their own diagnosis, a great response is, "tell me more!"

Mike Knapp is a tech innovator and entrepreneur.



Australian Government

Australian Financial Security Authority

"Mike's talk was engaging, informative and connected with our staff. Sharing his story of growing up not knowing he was neurodivergent and then after receiving a late adult diagnosis of autism/ADHD was really powerful. He explained well the concept of 'different not less' and the benefits of neurodiversity in a workplace."

— Australian Financial Security Authority



Keynote #3

Startup Failure: *Lessons from Shoes of Prey*

In this candid and insightful keynote, Mike delves into the journey of Shoes of Prey, from its innovative beginnings to its ultimate closure. He shares his thesis on why the startup didn't succeed, focusing on the critical importance of solving a painful problem for a niche customer.

Mike also highlights the successes within the failure, including building a great company culture and creating a product with inherent marketing appeal.

Your audience will learn:

- The importance of problem validation in startup success
- How to identify and focus on a niche customer base
- Strategies for building and maintaining a strong company culture
- Techniques for creating products with built-in marketing appeal



Watch this talk: bit.ly/failedshoes

Logistics

Mike travels from **Sydney, Australia** but can also present virtually.

How to book:

1. **Check availability:** Contact Joel at joel.sloane@icmi.com.au
2. **Request a proposal:** After an initial discussion about your event needs, you'll receive a customized proposal including speaking fees and any travel expenses.
3. **Approval and booking:** Once you approve the proposal, we'll lock in the date, issue a contract, and request a deposit to secure your booking.

Mike offers:

- Customization of content to align with your event theme and audience
- A promotional video or written content to build excitement for your event
- Thorough research of your industry for relevant examples and insights
- Management of all travel and logistics to minimize your workload

Technical requirements:

For in-person events: Standard audiovisual setup (screen, clicker, headworn microphone preferred)

For virtual events: Mike can provide a high-quality video feed from his home studio

To begin the booking process or for any questions, please reach out to Joel at joel.sloane@icmi.com.au. We look forward to bringing Mike's insights and energy to your next event!

"Fishburners was so lucky to have Mike gracing our stage for our recent panel on AI. His expertise in artificial intelligence, energetic delivery and authentic energy made him a real star. Given his exceptional delivery you would have had no idea that I had only asked him an hour prior to be on the panel - his ability to gel immediately with the other panelists, seamlessly provide value throughout the conversation and provide high value tips, was echoed by the sponsors, attendees and team. As a non-technical person he broke down the intricacies of artificial intelligence into bite size easy to understand pieces. We highly recommend Mike for any speaking engagements - he is a true asset!"



— Keriana, Community Lead at Fishburners

Harnessing AI For Startup Success

Fishburners | DELL Technologies





"Mike delivered an interactive introduction to AI with our Executive Team that helped us develop a greater understanding of how various forms of AI work and in particular, opportunities to leverage popular AI chat interfaces to level up our work. I'd highly recommend Mike to other progressive teams (including both teams with and without prior AI experience) who are looking to deepen their understanding of AI and its commercial applications."



— Andy Miller, CEO of Heaps Normal