

The four dials on every answer you get.

Researchers at Anthropic measured 309,000 real conversations across three models and twenty languages. Every answer swings on four dials. Nobody tells you they exist, so most people never touch them, and then wonder why the writing comes back useless. Here is each one, and the sentence that moves it.

01 Warmth or rigor

Turned to warmth it agrees with you, tells you the plan sounds great, and hands back your own idea with better adjectives. You wanted someone to check the number, and instead you got a cheerleader.

SAY THIS

Stop being agreeable. Check my numbers and tell me where this falls apart.

02 Deference or caution

Turned to deference it does whatever you asked, even when what you asked was wrong. Turned to caution it hedges everything and tells you to consult a professional. One wastes your afternoon, the other wastes the whole job.

SAY THIS

If this is the wrong way to do it, say so before you start.

03 Depth or brevity

This is the one that makes people quit. You ask for a two line reply to a customer and get six paragraphs with a summary, three options and a closing note. Then you rewrite it yourself, which is the thing you were trying to avoid.

SAY THIS

Three sentences. No preamble, no summary, no options. Just the reply.

04 Candor or execution

Turned to candor it explains what it is about to do, why, and what you might consider. Turned to execution it just does the thing. For work you repeat every week you want execution, and you want it to stop asking permission.

SAY THIS

Do it. Do not explain it to me first and do not ask me to confirm.

It answers differently in French than it does in English.

The same research measured the same questions across twenty languages and the dials moved. English came back with more caution, more rigor, more depth. Arabic came back warmer, shorter, more willing to just do the thing. **Not a translation of the same answer. A different answer.**

What that means if you run a business here.

Half your week is in French and half is in English, so this is not a curiosity. Four things follow from it.

- 01 **Write in the language you are going to send in.** Asking in English and translating gives you English phrasing wearing French words, and your francophone client can hear it.
- 02 **Do not assume the two answers match.** If a quote matters, ask in both and read them side by side. They will differ by more than vocabulary.
- 03 **If the answers feel too soft, say so in the same language.** The dials above work in French. Word them in French and they land the same way.
- 04 **Pick one language for your instructions and keep it.** Switching mid task moves the dials underneath you and the tone drifts without you noticing.

The dials reset every time you open a new chat.

This is the part that wastes the most time. You spend twenty minutes getting the tone right, close the window, come back tomorrow and it is back to six paragraphs and a summary. The fix is to write the settings down once, somewhere it reads every time, instead of retyping them. That is most of what I do in the second session.