

OPENWAYS

AN ARMY OF ONE

The AI Growth Playbook for Solopreneurs

Content, Trust, and Lean Conversion





In the AI Era, One Person's Ceiling Just Changed



1.1 —

A Question Worth Asking First

Before we talk about AI and growth, here's a question worth sitting with: is your growth bottleneck actually a staffing problem?

Most solopreneurs' first instinct is: *if I had more hands, I could do more things*. Another operator, another content person, another support role — then things would move. That's not wrong. But it's usually an expensive answer, not a growth answer.

After working with a lot of entrepreneurs, we've noticed a pattern: what's really holding most of them back isn't headcount. It's **systems** — no reliable way to bring in new clients, no understanding of how content compounds over time, no repeatable process for anything. In that situation, adding people just scales the problem. It doesn't fix it.

AI offers a different answer.

1.2 —

What AI Has Actually Changed

Ask a solopreneur from five years ago what one person could realistically do. They'd probably say: build a good product, hustle for clients, and figure out the rest later. That boundary has fundamentally changed.

What used to require a content team — scripts, layout, scheduling — can now be done solo, at meaningful quality, in a fraction of the time.

What used to require a sales team — consistent, personalized follow-up — can now be partially automated through email sequences, running in the background while you focus elsewhere.

What used to take a research team weeks — market and competitive analysis — much of it can now be done in an afternoon with the right tools.

AI hasn't replaced people. But it has raised the ceiling on what one person can accomplish. For enterprise companies, this matters. For solopreneurs, it's more fundamental — it changes the gap between you and competitors who have entire teams. It gives you a real shot at doing what only teams used to be able to do.

1.3 —

But Most People Are Using It Wrong

At this point, you're probably thinking: *I already use AI.*

Fair. Lots of entrepreneurs have started. But the way most people use it still looks like this:

They wrote a few captions with ChatGPT, thought "not bad," then moved on without building it into any kind of workflow.

They chased every new tool that came out, got underwhelmed, and went looking for the next one.

They spent a lot of time "learning AI" without making any real changes to their business.

That's not the same as having a growth system.

The entrepreneurs who actually get results from AI aren't playing with tools — they're **using AI to fill real, specific efficiency gaps in their business**. Too slow on content. Client follow-up is too manual. Market research takes forever.

They start with what their business needs, then find the tool that fits. Not the other way around.

That sequence difference is enormous.

1.4 —

What This Playbook Is Actually Going to Do

This isn't a tool guide. The goal is to help you weave AI and content into the actual logic of your business — gradually building a growth system that belongs to you.

The system doesn't need to be complicated. It can start small. But it should **compound** — what you build today should still be working for you in six months.

Each chapter that follows is one piece of that system. We'll start where you're most likely to be stuck right now, and work forward from there.

-- CHAPTER ONE -- KEY TAKEAWAY

AI hasn't replaced people. But it has raised the ceiling on what one person can accomplish. For solopreneurs competing against fully-staffed teams, that ceiling shift is the real opportunity. The question isn't whether to use AI -- it's whether you're using it as a **system**, or just as an occasional shortcut.



Where Are You Actually Stuck?



2.1 —

Diagnose Before You Prescribe

One of the most common mistakes entrepreneurs make when looking for growth solutions: jumping straight to tactics before understanding the actual problem.

Someone sees another person doing video, so they do video. They hear LinkedIn is working, so they post on LinkedIn. They read that AI can save time, so they sign up for five tools. Everything gets started; nothing gets finished.

Before we go anywhere near specific methods, we want to help you do a quick self-diagnosis.

Across the entrepreneurs we've worked with, we see three recurring bottleneck types. You might have elements of more than one — but usually one is primary.

(Type D from the self-assessment — inconsistent content, no rhythm — is the execution-level expression of these three core bottlenecks. Chapter 6 addresses it specifically. For now, let's focus on the root causes.)

2.2 —

Bottleneck Type A: Nobody Knows You

The most basic — and most common — problem. You have a product, a service, real capability. But your ideal clients don't know you exist.

What this looks like: You rely almost entirely on referrals; almost no cold inbound; you've tried promoting yourself but it feels like talking to an empty room; the moment you stop actively reaching out, inquiries dry up.

The core issue here is **visibility and trust-building**. The right path for most solopreneurs isn't advertising — it's building trust through content. Let the right people find you through something genuinely valuable. Slower, but it compounds.

› THE MISTAKE TO AVOID

Assuming the fix is to promote more loudly, or buy ads. Ads can drive awareness, but they don't build trust — and the moment you stop paying, they stop working.

2.3 —

Bottleneck Type B: People Know You, But Nobody Pays

More underestimated than Type A, and arguably more common. You have followers. People engage with your content. Some DM you. Very few buy.

What this looks like: Content is flowing, but sales aren't happening; you're having conversations with prospects that don't progress; people say "let's connect sometime" and disappear.

The root issue is a **trust gap**: people have seen you, but they don't yet have a compelling reason to believe you can solve their specific problem. Closing the trust gap isn't about selling harder. It's about consistently delivering targeted value.

› THE MISTAKE TO AVOID

Thinking it's a pricing problem. They drop their prices — and it works once. But the trust gap is still there. You've just made it cheaper to work around.

2.4 —

Bottleneck Type C: You Have a Business, But the Business Has You

This one is hardest to spot because everything looks like it's working. You have steady clients, steady income. But you can't step away. Every project needs you. Your business's ceiling is exactly the size of your available time.

What this looks like: One day off and things pile up; every new client needs a full onboarding from scratch; your income and your hours are directly proportional — no passive anything.

The core problem: **you're trading time for money, not building a system that earns.** The fix is systematising the repeatable parts — automating and templating enough that parts of your business run without you in the room.

► **THE MISTAKE TO AVOID**

Taking on more clients. The time you spend on that client is time you could have spent building the system that sets you free.

2.5 —

Know Where You're Stuck to Move in the Right Direction

These three bottleneck types require different solutions. If you're stuck on Type A but applying Type C fixes, you'll exhaust yourself with zero result.

► **ONE STEP FROM THIS CHAPTER, RIGHT NOW**

From Types A, B, and C — pick the one that's most true for you right now. If it feels like all three, pick the one that's most urgent. Write it down. Everything else in this playbook is designed to help you solve it.

Finding Your Growth Entry Point

3.1 —

Start from the Problems You Can Solve, Not the Things You Want to Do

Most entrepreneurs, when deciding what to focus on, start from what they enjoy. That leads to a trap: you work hard on something you love, nothing happens in the market, and you can't figure out why.

When we work with entrepreneurs at OpenWays, we tend to start with three questions: **Who can you help, with what specific problem? Will those people pay to have that problem solved? Can you keep doing this for the long haul?**

! THREE THINGS THAT ARE NOT THE SAME THING

Enjoying something does not equal the market needing it. The market needs it does not equal people paying for it. People will pay for it does not equal you sustaining it. All three need to be true for a direction worth committing to.

3.2 —

What Kinds of Problems Do People Actually Pay For?

A simple filter: **Does this direction map to a problem people are desperate to solve?** "Desperate" means the problem causes enough pain that people actively seek solutions — and are willing to pay for them.

Historically, people pay most readily for problems related to: making money; health; relationships; and self-improvement. You don't have to be squarely in one of these categories. But the closer your direction is to one of them, the easier the monetisation.

3.3 —

A Four-Step Process for Finding Your Entry Point

Step 1: List what you're genuinely good at. Not what you think you should be good at. What you actually do faster, better, and more reliably than most people.

Step 2: Identify the concrete problem you can solve. Push toward specificity. "Helping people be more productive" isn't a concrete problem. "Helping newly promoted managers run effective team meetings" is.

Step 3: Validate willingness to pay. Before investing heavily, find a handful of people who match your target profile. Have real conversations: How much does this problem cost them? Have they paid to solve it before? No product needed — just honest conversations with real people.

Step 4: Pick one direction and go deep. From what passed validation, pick the one you have the most confidence in. Resist the urge to cover everything at once. Become the most trusted person in one small space first — then expand.

3.4 —

An Often-Ignored Criterion: How Long Can You Do This?

Most entrepreneurs evaluate a direction based on earning potential. They forget the equally important question: **Can you stick with this long enough for it to work?**

Building content, building trust, building growth — all of it takes time. One month won't do it. Three months might not show obvious results. Most people quit right here and switch directions. Then quit again — an endless restart loop.

Ask yourself honestly: **If this earns me nothing for three months, will I keep going?** If the answer is no — this direction doesn't have enough pull for you. If yes — you've found something worth a real bet.

> ONE STEP FROM THIS CHAPTER, RIGHT NOW

Take 10 minutes: write down three things you're genuinely skilled at. For each one, finish the sentence: "I can help [who] solve [what specific problem]." Don't overthink it — write your first honest answer. This is where your growth entry point begins.



Content Isn't Performance. It's Your Trust Infrastructure.



4.1 —

Most People Have the Wrong Mental Model of "Content"

When most entrepreneurs hear "do content," they think: *that's for influencers. What does that have to do with my actual business?* Or they think content means posting on social media to gain followers, drive traffic, get seen.

That understanding isn't completely wrong. But it misses the more important point: **for entrepreneurs, the core value of content isn't reach. It's trust.** You don't need to become an influencer. You need potential clients, at the moment they find you, to quickly understand who you are and quickly trust that you can help them.

4.2 —

Trust Is the Most Expensive Thing You Can't Buy

Big companies can spend their way to visibility and perceived legitimacy — sheer repeated exposure creates a baseline sense of credibility. Solopreneurs don't have that budget, or that frequency. Every client relationship has to be built from scratch.

Advertising is the most expensive and least durable way to do that. Content is the most realistic path for most entrepreneurs.

One article that genuinely helps someone. One video that actually solves a problem. One email that delivers real thinking — these can work on your behalf 24 hours a day, long after you've moved on. That's what we mean by **trust infrastructure**: content isn't a sporadic marketing activity. It's the ongoing accumulation of trust in your potential clients' minds.

4.3 —

What Kind of Content Actually Builds Trust?

Not all content does. A lot of entrepreneurs post things like "long day today" or "our product is great" — these have almost no value to the reader and build almost no trust. Content that builds trust has one defining quality: **after reading it, someone thinks "this person really knows their stuff."**

Three content types consistently build trust:

- **Content that solves a real problem.** You've thought through something your target clients are struggling with, explained it clearly, and given them something actionable.
 - **Content that shows how you think.** Not just conclusions — your process, your perspective on an industry trend, how you made a hard decision under uncertainty.
 - **Real stories and honest lessons.** Who you've helped, what you worked through together, what you got wrong, what you learned. Authenticity is more persuasive than a perfect case study.
-

4.4 —

One Simple Question to Test Your Content

Before publishing anything, ask yourself: **"Will my target client trust me more after seeing this — or will nothing change?"**

If the answer is "probably nothing changes" — that piece of content probably isn't worth the time. If the answer is "they'd trust me more" — this content is building your trust infrastructure.

This standard doesn't mean everything you publish has to be profound. It just helps you filter out the noise — the posts that check a box without creating value — so your limited energy goes toward content that actually compounds.

4.5 —

Platform Choice: Start in One Place

Where you publish depends on where your ideal clients actually spend time, and what format you can consistently produce. Three platform types are worth prioritising:

- **Long-form video (YouTube):** Long shelf life — a video from two years ago can still surface in search today. Higher production threshold, but the compounding effect is significant once it kicks in.
- **Short-form platforms (LinkedIn, X, Instagram):** Low barrier to entry, fast to start. Good for building a content habit and testing what resonates.
- **Email newsletters:** Underestimated by most. Your email list is an asset you actually own — it doesn't disappear when a platform changes its algorithm.

› ONE STEP FROM THIS CHAPTER, RIGHT NOW

List the three biggest problems your ideal client is dealing with — not topics you want to write about, but problems they most want solved. Those three problems are your next three content ideas. Starting from the audience's pain rather than your own preferences is always more effective.



Validate With a Dollar Before You Invest Ten Thousand



5.1 —

The Perfect Version Is the Most Expensive Trap

Here's a pattern we see constantly: an entrepreneur gets excited about a direction. They immediately start building the full version. The website, the brand, the course, the long-form copy, the membership system... Three months, a lot of money, finally the "official launch." Then: nothing. Nobody buys.

Not because the product was bad. Because they made a massive bet of time and money without a single real signal from the market. This is one of the most expensive mistakes entrepreneurs make — and one of the most common.

5.2 —

The Logic of Validating First

The right sequence is: **find someone willing to pay before you build the product.** That feels counterintuitive. But the truth is, you can test "will people pay for this" before you've built anything.

Tesla accepted pre-orders before the cars were in production. Kickstarter built an entire platform on the principle that people pay first, products get made after. At a smaller scale, the same logic applies:

- Thinking about launching a **course**? Do a free one-hour workshop first. See who shows up. At the end, mention the full course. See who asks about pre-purchasing.

- Considering a **consulting service**? Offer a small number of free discovery calls. Use them to understand what people actually need. Let that shape what the service looks like.
 - Planning an **ebook or guide**? Publish one core idea as a free article first. See how people respond. Watch for "is there more?"
-

5.3 —

What to Validate and How

The core thing you're testing isn't "does anyone seem interested." It's "**will anyone take a real action.**" Interest is cheap. "Great idea," "send it to me when it's ready" — these feel encouraging. They don't mean anything about actual purchase intent.

Real validation signals: someone pre-purchases, even at a low price; someone leaves their contact details when there's nothing yet to buy; someone asks "when can I get this?"; someone shares what you made with someone else.

If you test and none of those happen — that's valuable information. Either the direction is wrong, or the framing isn't hitting the real need. Find out early. That's the point.

5.4 —

Pricing: The Ends Outperform the Middle

On pricing strategy, one framework helps: **the middle price is usually the most dangerous choice.** The middle means you're competing in the most crowded price band, with no clear reason for anyone to choose you.

- **Low-price strategy** means you're competing on scale. You need volume, but the barrier to purchase is low. Easier to validate, easier to enter the market.
- **Premium strategy** means you're selling your time, judgment, and direct involvement. Higher price requires you to clearly articulate why it's worth it.

The middle inherits the problems of both without the benefits of either. OpenWays's recommendation: in early testing, pick an extreme. Don't start in the middle.

5.5 —

Validation Is When the Real Building Begins

Once you've validated, you know which direction has real market demand, and what your clients are actually willing to pay for. Now you're ready to build in earnest. Not before. Now.

› ONE STEP FROM THIS CHAPTER, RIGHT NOW

Think of one product or service direction you've been sitting on. Design a "minimum validation action" for it: no product needed — just one sentence describing the value you'd provide, and three people to share it with. Listen to their response. This doesn't need a week. You can start today.



One Person, Team-Level Output



6.1 —

AI Changed the Cost of Doing Content

The biggest obstacle to one person consistently producing high-quality content used to be execution cost — not lack of ideas. Writing one good article: hours. Producing one video from script to edit: most of a day.

AI tools **dramatically reduce the time and cognitive load of each step**. The catch: you have to actually integrate them into your workflow. Using them occasionally doesn't change much. This chapter is about which tools solve which real bottlenecks — and how to string them together into a repeatable system.

6.2 —

The Two Core Execution Bottlenecks

Regardless of what type of content you make, most people get stuck in one of two places:

- **You don't know what to say.** You sit down to create something and your mind is blank. You don't have a fast, reliable method for generating good topics and structures.
- **You know what to say, but you can't get it down.** You have the ideas, but what you produce feels flat. The writing process is taking too long and producing too little.

AI tools can genuinely help with both.

6.3 —

Five Tools, Five Real Problems

Perplexity (*AI-powered real-time search*) — Best for when you need to quickly understand a topic but don't know where to find reliable, up-to-date information. Within ten minutes you have a sourced overview, rather than starting from scratch.

Claude (*AI writing and editing assistant*) — Best for when you have a rough draft that lacks flow or voice. Write your own messy first draft first, with your real experiences and examples. Then give it to Claude to polish. The output retains your substance but reads better.

Napkin AI (*Text-to-visual diagram tool*) — Best for expressing a layered idea that's hard to grasp as pure text. Paste in a paragraph describing a process — Napkin generates a corresponding diagram.

Gemini + NotebookLM (*Deep research + source integration*) — Best for when you have a lot of material to absorb and not enough time to read it all. Gemini synthesises multi-source research; NotebookLM lets you interact with it.

Notion AI (*AI integrated into your knowledge workspace*) — Best for when your source material and ideas are scattered, and every new piece of content feels like starting from zero.

› IF YOU CAN ONLY START WITH TWO

Perplexity (solves "research takes too long") + **Claude** (solves "what I write isn't good enough"). Add the others after you've built a basic content rhythm.

6.4 —

Build Your Content Workflow

Tools alone don't raise your output. What actually raises output is **integrating tools into a fixed, repeatable workflow**. A simple content workflow:

- Step 1: Pick the topic (what problem does this solve? for whom?)
- Step 2: Use Perplexity to quickly research — current data and examples

- Step 3: Write the first draft in your own words (don't worry about quality)
- Step 4: Give the draft to Claude to polish (tell it who the audience is)
- Step 5: Format for publishing; if you need a visual, use Napkin AI
- Step 6: Review after publishing (what was the response? What's reusable?)

The key is **consistency** — doing it this way every time. A repeatable workflow is what allows compounding.

6.5 —

Write in Your Voice First, Then Let AI Polish

A lot of people's approach to AI content is: ask AI to write an article on a topic, get back something passable, publish it. That's the fastest method. It's also usually the least effective — because the piece has nothing of *you* in it. Readers finish it and know nothing more about who you are.

The more effective approach: **write the raw version in your own words first — messy, imperfect — then let AI clean it up.** Write what you actually mean — the experience you had, the thing you noticed, the opinion you've formed. Then hand that rough draft to AI: "clean this up for readability, but keep my voice." You get the best of both — substance that's yours, expression that's polished.

› ONE STEP FROM THIS CHAPTER, RIGHT NOW

Of Perplexity and Claude — pick one you haven't used before. Use it for just one step in your next piece of content. Not the whole thing. One step. Get the real feel of where it's actually useful before thinking about the full workflow.



From Content to Clients — Building Your Lightweight Conversion System



7.1 —

Content Is Just the Beginning

You've built your content. People are following. They find what you say useful. Then what?

This is where a lot of content-producing entrepreneurs get stuck: there's content, but there's a wall between that content and actual revenue. The attention and trust being generated doesn't reliably turn into clients.

Usually it's because: **there's no mechanism for interested people to "stay in touch" and keep encountering you over time.** That's the problem the conversion system solves.

7.2 —

Why You Need a Conversion System

Picture this: someone sees a piece of your content today. They find it genuinely valuable. But they're not in buying mode — they're on the go, and don't have bandwidth to follow up. They close the tab and move on.

Two weeks later, this person is dealing with exactly the problem you solve. They think of someone they saw... somewhere... but they can't remember where. That client is gone.

With a conversion system, the story ends differently: after reading your content, they leave their contact details in exchange for something valuable. Over the next two weeks, they receive a series of useful emails. When they hit that problem, you're the first person they think of. **A conversion system gives interested people a way to keep encountering you — until they're ready to decide.**

7.3 —

Step 1: Give People a Reason to Leave Their Contact Details

The first thing you need is **a reason for interested people to hand you their email address**. In practice, this is usually a free resource with specific, concrete value — a guide that solves a particular problem, a checklist, a useful template, a short video tutorial.

It doesn't need to be complex. It needs a clear connection: your ideal client has a specific pain, and this resource helps them solve it. You reference this in your content: "if you want this, drop your email and I'll send it to you." That's your opt-in entry point.

7.4 —

Step 2: Use Email to Build an Ongoing Relationship

You might be thinking: why not just have them follow me on social media? You can. But social platforms are one-to-many broadcasting, with algorithms deciding who sees what. You don't control who sees your posts or when.

Email has a different advantage: write a series of valuable messages in advance, set the send schedule, and the system delivers them automatically. New subscribers start from the first email. Existing ones continue receiving the sequence. None of it requires your manual involvement.

Email also carries another major advantage: **your list is an asset you actually own**. Platform policies change. Accounts get suspended. Your subscriber list is yours, permanently.

7.5 —

Step 3: Deliver Value on a Rhythm, Not a Sales Pitch

Most people's first reaction to "send emails to potential clients" is: *isn't that just spam?* That concern is valid — if every email is a pitch, readers will unsubscribe fast.

But if your emails are genuinely useful — helping people think through a problem, sharing a practical technique, offering a real observation about something they care about — readers don't feel bothered. They look forward to hearing from you. Email marketing's actual logic is **relationship-building**. By the time someone has received a series of genuinely useful emails from you, they feel like they know you. When they're ready to buy, you're the person they think of first.

7.6 —

Step 4: Make It Easy for Clients to Find and Buy Your Product

When a potential client is ready to move, make the process as simple and frictionless as possible:

- **Automatic digital delivery:** For ebooks, templates, recorded courses. Client pays; system sends the download link automatically. Common options include Gumroad.
- **Course / membership platforms:** For ongoing content or communities. Options include Kajabi and Teachable.
- **Service-based products:** Use a booking tool so clients can schedule directly — eliminates back-and-forth. Calendly is a simple option.

The principle: reduce friction for the client, reduce manual intervention for you.

7.7 —

Connect the Four Steps — You Have a Basic Conversion System

Someone reads your content (trust is building) > **A valuable free resource catches their interest; they leave their email** (you now have a way to reach them) > **They receive your email sequence** (the relationship deepens) > **They're ready; they find your product; they buy** (conversion happens).

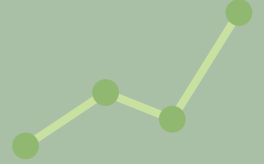
This system doesn't need to be built all at once. Start with the minimum viable version: one simple free resource, one opt-in entry point, three to five valuable automated emails, and one clear product page. That's it. And it's already dramatically better than having none of it.

> ONE STEP FROM THIS CHAPTER, RIGHT NOW

Map out your current "content to client" path — even just a few rough boxes on paper. How do interested people currently leave you their contact details? How do you follow up? Where is your product or service entry point? When you draw this out, the biggest gap will become obvious.



Make Your Effort Compound



8.1 —

Consumable Work vs. Compounding Work

Two very different ways of working. Wildly different outcomes.

- **Consumable work:** What you do today is gone tomorrow. You answer twenty client inquiries — those twenty replies serve twenty people and leave nothing reusable behind. Tomorrow, twenty more arrive and you spend the same time again.
- **Compounding work:** What you do today keeps generating value. You write an article answering the question your clients ask most often. Tomorrow, next month, next year — that article is still answering the question for new readers.

The entrepreneurs who genuinely move from "one person holding things together" to "a system that runs" share one turning point: **they start deliberately converting consumable work into compounding work.**

8.2 —

Four Assets Worth Building

- **Content library:** Every thoughtful article, every well-crafted video, is continuously building trust — not disappearing, but continuously working on your behalf.
- **Email subscriber list:** This is genuinely yours. Your subscribers opted in deliberately. Their trust is higher-quality than random traffic. And the list doesn't evaporate when a platform changes its rules.

- **FAQ and standard response library:** If you're repeatedly answering the same questions, turn those answers into a standard document. Once built, the time spent on repetitive responses drops dramatically.
- **Client case studies and outcome records:** Every person you've helped is a future reference point. Document what problem they came in with and what changed. More persuasive than any marketing copy.

8.3 —

One Simple Habit That Makes Compounding Happen

Compounding doesn't happen automatically. You have to build a deliberate habit: after completing anything, ask yourself: **Is there something in this that I could turn into a reusable asset?**

You just helped a client through a complex problem — could you write up the thinking as an article? You answered the same question from five different people this week — could you consolidate it into a FAQ doc? You don't need to do this every time. But with this awareness active, you'll start consciously converting a portion of your consumable work into compounding assets.

Turn what you've done into something that keeps working. That's the most important idea in this playbook.

› ONE STEP FROM THIS CHAPTER, RIGHT NOW

Think back over the past month. Find one question you've answered more than once. Spend 15 minutes writing up a clean, thorough version of that answer. That response can now be copied directly into future client emails. Or published as content. Or dropped into an FAQ page. One piece of consumable work just became a compounding asset.



Starting Is Already Ahead of Most People

This is where the playbook ends — and we want to close it cleanly.

By now you have: a framework for diagnosing where you're stuck, a way of thinking about where to focus your energy, a different understanding of what content actually does, and the full skeleton of a path from content to conversion to long-term assets.

None of it is worth anything sitting in a document.

You don't need to have every chapter figured out before you begin. Start from the one thing that's most important and most immediately actionable — maybe it's writing one piece of content this week that genuinely solves a specific problem. Maybe it's setting up a simple email opt-in. Maybe it's designing a minimum validation action for that thing you've been thinking about for months.

Taking that step puts you ahead of the majority of people still sitting in "I've been meaning to."

Your Next Step — OpenWays Can Help

› STEP 1: GET THE TOOLS AND TEMPLATES

Email hi@openways.net and tell us which bottleneck type applies to you (A/B/C/D). We'll send you the corresponding resource pack, including fillable versions of all appendix templates from this playbook.

> STEP 2: JOIN A GROWTH DIAGNOSIS WORKSHOP

OpenWays runs regular online workshops where we help entrepreneurs get specific — in two hours, working through your actual bottleneck, entry point, and first action. Visit www.openways.net for the current schedule.

> STEP 3: WORK WITH AN OPENWAYS ADVISOR

If you'd like support building this system end-to-end for your specific business, reach out at hi@openways.net with a brief description of what you're working on.

If this playbook was useful, share it with another entrepreneur who could use it.

Published by OpenWays · www.openways.net · hi@openways.net

Appendix A

Tools and Terms in This Playbook

TOOL / TERM	PRIMARY USE
Perplexity	AI-powered real-time search; quickly research topics with cited sources
Claude	AI writing and editing assistant; improve draft readability, flow, and voice
Napkin AI	Convert written content into professional diagrams — process flows, hierarchies
Notion AI	Content management and knowledge workspace with built-in AI that reads your stored content
Gemini	Google's AI tool; "Deep Research" synthesises multi-source reports with citations
NotebookLM	Google's AI notebook; integrates multiple sources into an interactive, queryable knowledge base
Kickstarter	Crowdfunding platform; validates demand by collecting payments before production
Gumroad	Simple platform for selling and delivering digital products — ebooks, templates, etc.
Kajabi	All-in-one platform for courses, memberships, and email marketing
Mailchimp	Popular email marketing platform with list management and automation
ConvertKit	Email platform for creators; built for content monetisation workflows
Calendly	Scheduling tool; reduces back-and-forth in booking client calls
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure — documented steps for repeatable tasks
Email automation sequence	A series of pre-written emails automatically sent to subscribers over time; used to warm up potential clients

Appendix B

Growth Bottleneck Self-Assessment

Use this to identify your primary bottleneck more precisely.

PART 1 — VISIBILITY AND AWARENESS

- Yes No Some of my ideal clients have found me proactively (not through referrals)
- Yes No I have a reliable way for strangers to discover me (content, platforms, search)
- Yes No I can clearly state in one sentence: who I help and what specific problem I solve

If 2 or more answers are "No", your primary bottleneck is **Type A: Visibility and Awareness**. Prioritise: Chapter 3, Chapter 4.

PART 2 — TRUST AND CONVERSION

- Yes No People have encountered my content but didn't end up buying
- Yes No I have potential clients who've been "thinking about it" for a long time
- Yes No I have no system for keeping interested people in regular contact with me (e.g., an email list)

If 2 or more answers are "Yes", your primary bottleneck is **Type B: Trust and Conversion**. Prioritise: Chapter 4, Chapter 7.

PART 3 — SYSTEMS AND SCALABILITY

- Yes No My income is entirely tied to my hours — if I stop working, income stops
- Yes No Every new client requires me to explain everything from scratch
- Yes No I can't take more than 3 days off without things backing up

If 2 or more answers are "Yes", your primary bottleneck is **Type C: Systems and Scalability**. Prioritise: Chapter 7, Chapter 8.

PART 4 — CONTENT RHYTHM

- Yes No I know I should be doing content, but I post inconsistently or not at all
- Yes No Every time I sit down to create something, it feels like starting from scratch
- Yes No I don't have a fixed content workflow

If 2 or more answers are "Yes", your primary bottleneck is **Type D: Content Rhythm**.
Prioritise: Chapter 6, Chapter 8.

Want a fillable digital version? Email hi@openways.net with "Self-Assessment" as subject.

Appendix C

One-Page Content Brief Template

Before you start creating anything, spend 5 minutes filling this in. Think before you write.

TARGET READER

Who they are (role / situation):

What they're most stuck on right now:

WHAT THIS PIECE WILL DO

In one sentence, the problem it solves:

How you want the reader to feel or act after finishing:

CORE STRUCTURE (choose one)

Problem > Root cause > Solution (best for analytical content)

Step 1 > Step 2 > Step 3 (best for how-to content)

What I observed > Why it matters > What you can do (best for perspective content)

MUST-HAVE ELEMENTS

One real example or case

One immediately actionable recommendation or tool

One CTA guiding the next step (resource / booking / subscribe)

Platform: _____

Target publish date: _____

Works best when used with the content workflow in Chapter 6.

Appendix D

Minimal Conversion System Diagram

Fill in each stage with the specifics of your business.

CONTENT LAYER

Content you publish (articles / videos / posts)

Reader finds value, wants to know more

ENTRY LAYER

Free resource / lead magnet
(e.g., checklist / template / short video tutorial)

> Reader submits email to receive it

WARMING LAYER

Email automation sequence
(3–5 emails, each delivering value — not just promotion)

> Trust is building

CONVERSION LAYER

Product / service entry point
(course page / booking link / inquiry form)

> Reader is ready, finds you, completes the purchase

YOUR VERSION

Content layer: where you publish and what format

Entry layer: what free resource you'll offer in exchange for email

Warming layer: how many emails in your sequence, and what each one covers

Conversion layer: where your product/service lives and how people buy

Published by OpenWays · 2026 · www.openways.net · hi@openways.net