

# Marketing System Design

## *A Working Workbook for Solopreneurs*

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This workbook is a companion to the paper *Why Your Marketing Isn't Working*. If you have not read that paper, it is worth doing first. It will make what follows more useful.

What you have here is a structured way to work through your marketing system layer by layer. Some of this work will be straightforward. Some of it will surface things you have been avoiding. Both are useful.

A note before you begin: this workbook is designed to be honest with you. The questions are not easy. The prompts will push you toward specificity that may feel uncomfortable. That discomfort is the work. The entrepreneurs I see build real marketing momentum are the ones who are willing to get precise about things they have previously left vague.

Work through each layer in order. The layers build on each other. Skipping ahead is tempting, but the tools at the top will only work as well as the foundation below them.

*You can work through this on your own. Many people do, and they find it valuable. If at any point you want a thinking partner, or if you find that the questions are surfacing more than you expected, I am available for that conversation.*

## How This Workbook Is Organized

Your marketing system has five layers. They are not sequential phases you complete once. They are interdependent layers that must all be functioning for marketing to produce consistent results. Most entrepreneurs are working almost entirely in the top two layers, which is why most entrepreneurs are dissatisfied with their marketing.

Here is the architecture:

Layer 5	<b>GOVERNANCE</b>	Scorecard, Rocks, Review Rhythm, Accountability	<i>Are we running the system?</i>
Layer 4	<b>EXPRESSION</b>	Messaging, Collateral, Channels	<i>What do we say and where?</i>
Layer 3	<b>PLAN</b>	System Design, Pipeline and Process	<i>How do people move toward us?</i>
Layer 2	<b>STRATEGY</b>	Target Market, Strategic Insight	<i>Who are we for, and why do we matter?</i>
Layer 1	<b>FOUNDATION</b>	Objectives, Constitution, Design Center	<i>What exists to be marketed?</i>

Each layer has a framing section that explains what the layer is responsible for and why it matters, followed by the working prompts and forms. Read the framing before you fill anything in. The framing is not decoration. It is the context that makes the forms useful.

## LAYER 1 FOUNDATION

*What exists to be marketed?*

Everything you build in this workbook rests on what you establish here. The Foundation layer is not about tactics or messaging or channels. It is about the honest declaration of what your business actually is.

Most marketing problems are, at their root, foundation problems. The business has not been constituted clearly enough to be marketed. The offer is vague, the target is broad, and the entrepreneur has not yet examined whether the business they are building is genuinely built for them. Tactics applied to an unclear foundation produce unpredictable results at best.

This layer has three sub-domains: Objectives, Constitution, and Design Center.

### Objectives

*What are you trying to produce, and how will you know if it's working?*

Most entrepreneurs design a marketing system without first deciding what the system needs to produce. This is like planning a road trip without knowing the destination. You will make a lot of turns, but you will not know if you are making progress.

Your marketing objectives start with revenue. From revenue, you work backward through your sales process to determine how many leads you actually need. That number becomes the anchor for everything that follows. Without it, you have no basis for evaluating whether any given activity is working.

**What is your revenue goal for the next 12 months?**

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**What is your average client value (annual or lifetime)?**

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**How many clients do you need to hit that revenue goal?**

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**What is your realistic close rate when you have a qualified conversation? (e.g., 1 in 3, 1 in 5)**

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**Based on that close rate, how many qualified conversations do you need per month?**

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**How many leads do you need to produce that many qualified conversations? (account for leads that are not yet qualified)**

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**What other outcomes matter to you beyond revenue? (e.g., number of referrals, geographic reach, specific types of clients)**

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## **Constitution**

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*What is your business, declared clearly in language?*

A business does not exist because you have a feeling about it. It exists because it has been declared in language, specifically enough that another person can understand it, remember it, and describe it to someone else.

This is harder than it sounds. Most entrepreneurs have a rich internal world of possibilities and contingencies around their business. They know what they mean. The problem is that no one else does. Constitution is the work of making what you mean visible to others.

Brand is not your logo or your color palette. Brand is the personality and identity of your business. It is the self of the business, the thing that allows someone to encounter your company and immediately sense what it stands for and who it is for.

**What are the core values your business operates from? (3-5, stated as behaviors, not aspirations)**

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**What is your Core Focus? State your purpose or cause, and your specific niche.**

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**What is your 10-year target? What does the business look like at full expression?**

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**How would you describe the personality of your business if it were a person? What does it stand for? What does it refuse to do?**

**What is your offer, stated specifically? Not what you are capable of, but what you are actually selling, to whom, producing what result.**

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**What is your company, as a distinct entity from you personally? If someone else had to represent it, what would they say?**

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**How do you as the entrepreneur show up in the marketplace? What is your perspective, your voice, your particular way of seeing things?**

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## Design Center

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*Is this business built for you, not just for the market?*

Traditional marketing logic says: find a group of people with a problem and shape your offer to meet their needs. That is sound advice. It is also incomplete for a solopreneur, because you are not a corporation with departments that can be restructured on command. You are a person, and you will be delivering this work, having these conversations, and sustaining this effort over time.

If the business is not built for you, it will hollow out. You will go through the motions. And that will show up in your marketing, in your conversations, in your presence, in every piece of content you write. There is no tactical fix for a business that does not energize the person running it.

The Design Center asks whether the business works for both the market and the entrepreneur.

**What kinds of clients genuinely energize you? Describe them specifically, not just demographically.**

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**What work do you do where time disappears? What problems do you find genuinely interesting to solve?**

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**What kinds of clients or projects drain you? Be honest.**

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**Is the business you are currently describing one you can sustain for the next five years?  
What would need to be true for that to be yes?**

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**Where is there tension between what the market seems to want from you and what you  
actually want to do? How are you resolving that tension?**

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## LAYER 2 STRATEGY

*Who are we for, and why do we matter?*

With the Foundation in place, you can begin to articulate the strategic insights that shape your messaging and your market. Strategy is not a plan. It is the understanding of your situation that makes a good plan possible.

Most entrepreneurs skip this layer and go straight to tactics, which is why their tactics rarely produce consistent results. Tactics without strategy are just activities. Strategy is what allows you to create messaging that feels magnetic to the right people, that makes them say: this is exactly what I have been looking for.

### Target Market

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*Who specifically is this for?*

The single most common and most costly mistake I see in small business marketing is the refusal to narrow. Entrepreneurs fear leaving money on the table, so they stay open to everyone. What they do not yet see is that openness is invisible. A message designed for everyone reaches no one.

The most powerful marketing for a small business targets psychographics above all else. Not just who the person is demographically, but how they think, what they believe, what they are frustrated by, what they are reaching for. A person who thinks the way your best clients think will recognize themselves in your message. Everyone else will scroll past, which is exactly what you want.

**Describe your ideal client demographically. (industry, role, company size, geography, etc.)**

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**Describe your ideal client psychographically. What do they believe? What frustrates them? What are they trying to become? What have they already tried?**

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**What does your ideal client think their problem is? (This is often different from what the actual problem is.)**

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**Who is explicitly not your client? Who do you not serve well, and why?**

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**Where do your ideal clients collect? What do they read, attend, participate in, search for?**

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## Strategic Insight

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*Why do you matter to the right people?*

Strategic insight is the understanding that shapes your messaging. It is the answer to the question: given who your ideal client is, given what they believe and what they are frustrated by, what is the specific insight that makes your offer the obvious response to their situation?

Your 3 Uniques are the specific things that differentiate you. Not generic claims like 'great service' or 'years of experience,' but honest, specific, and verifiable differences that matter to your ideal client. Your Proven Process is the repeatable path you take clients through. Your Guarantee, if you offer one, is the commitment that reduces their risk of saying yes.

**What are your 3 Uniques? What do you offer that your ideal client genuinely cannot get the same way anywhere else?**

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**What is your Proven Process? Describe the path you take a client through from beginning to end.**

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**What is the core insight at the heart of your work? What do you see that most people in your space do not?**

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**What is the most common misunderstanding your ideal clients have about their problem or its solution?**

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**What guarantee or risk reduction do you offer? If none, what would make saying yes feel safer for a qualified prospect?**

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## LAYER 3 **PLAN**

*How do people move toward us?*

The Plan translates your strategic insight into a system. It answers the questions: where are your ideal clients, how will you reach them, and how does a stranger become a customer? Without a plan, you have activities. With a plan, you have a system you can evaluate, improve, and eventually delegate.

### **System Design**

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*What is the architecture of your marketing?*

A marketing system is not a collection of things you try. It is a designed set of relationships, mechanisms, and channels that work together to move people from not knowing you exist to being willing to have the conversation that leads to becoming a client.

Most solopreneurs start with network marketing, which relies on personal presence and is difficult to scale. Many then move toward referral marketing, which requires a clearly constituted business that others can carry. Eventually, those who want to grow need distributed marketing, reaching people who do not yet know they exist through channels that operate independent of their personal time.

**What is your current primary marketing approach? (networking, referrals, digital, content, etc.) How is it working?**

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**What channels do you currently use to reach your target market? Which ones are producing results?**

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**What is the path from a stranger first encountering you to becoming a client? Map it out step by step.**

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**Where does the path break down? Where do people fall away or stall?**

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**What marketing approach do you need to develop that you are not yet using? What would need to be true to begin?**

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## Pipeline and Process

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*How do people move through your system?*

A pipeline is not a CRM. It is a clear picture of who is at each stage of the journey from stranger to client, what moves them from one stage to the next, and what the realistic conversion rates are at each transition. Without this picture, you cannot manage the system or improve it.

**List the stages of your pipeline. (e.g., Unaware, Aware, Interested, Conversation, Proposal, Client)**

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**What specific action or mechanism moves someone from each stage to the next?**

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**How many people do you currently have at each stage? What is the conversion rate between stages?**

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**How are you currently nurturing people who are aware of you but not yet ready to have a conversation?**

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**What would it take to double the number of people entering your pipeline each month?**

#### LAYER 4 **EXPRESSION**

*What do we say, and where do we say it?*

Expression is where most entrepreneurs spend most of their time and energy. It is the layer most people think of as 'marketing.' The website. The content. The social presence. The pitch. The proposals.

None of it works well without the three layers beneath it. But with those layers in place, this work becomes much more straightforward. You are not trying to convince anyone of anything. You are making it easy for the right people to recognize themselves in what you are saying.

## Messaging

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*What do you say, and how do you say it?*

Messaging is not copywriting. It is the set of true things you say, in a consistent voice, that produce the understanding you want in the mind of your ideal client. Good messaging does not try to reach everyone. It is precisely aimed at the person you are actually for, in language that resonates with how they actually think.

**How do you describe what you do in one sentence? (Write it, then test it: does it make your ideal client lean in or glaze over?)**

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**What is the core problem you solve, in the language your ideal client uses to describe it?**

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**What is the result a client can expect from working with you? Be specific.**

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**What is your elevator pitch? Not a description of your services, but a statement that opens a conversation.**

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**What are the 3-5 core messages you return to consistently across all your marketing?**

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**Describe the voice and tone of your marketing. How does it sound? What does it never sound like?**

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## Collateral and Channels

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*What artifacts and tools carry your message?*

Collateral is the set of artifacts that carry your message: the website, the brochure, the presentation, the proposal template, the business card, the email signature. Channels are the mechanisms through which your message reaches people: events, email, social media, referral networks, paid advertising, content platforms.

The question is not which collateral and channels exist in the world. The question is which ones make sense given your target market, your strategic insight, and your plan.

**List the collateral you currently have. For each item, assess honestly: does it reflect your current business clearly and compellingly?**

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**Which channels are you currently using? Which ones are producing results and which are not?**

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**Where do your ideal clients actually spend time and attention? Are you showing up there?**

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**What collateral do you need that you do not currently have?**

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**What is the one channel that, if you committed to it seriously for the next six months, would most likely produce results?**

**LAYER 5 GOVERNANCE**  
*Are we running the system?*

Governance is the layer most entrepreneurs skip entirely, and it is the reason most marketing systems drift. You can do excellent work on the first four layers, build something clear and compelling and well-designed, and then watch it slowly stop working because nobody is tending to it.

Governance is not micromanagement. It is the regular practice of checking whether the system is doing what it was designed to do, and adjusting when it is not. It is the scorecard that tells you what is working. It is the rocks that keep the most important work moving. It is the rhythm that ensures marketing does not get crowded out by the daily demands of delivery.

If you use EOS in your business, this layer will feel familiar. The disciplines are the same. What changes is that they are now applied specifically to your marketing system.

### Scorecard

*What are you measuring, and how often?*

You cannot manage what you do not measure. A marketing scorecard is a small set of leading and lagging indicators that tell you, week by week, whether the system is functioning. Leading indicators are the activities and inputs you control. Lagging indicators are the outcomes those activities produce. You need both.

Metric	Notes / Formula	Target	Current
Revenue (month)	Total billed or received		
New clients	Signed this month		
Active proposals	Pending decisions		
Qualified conversations	First conversations with prospects		
New leads	People who entered your pipeline		
Referrals received	Introductions from existing clients/network		
Networking touchpoints	Events, meetings, calls		
Content published	Posts, emails, articles		
Email list size	Total subscribers		
Close rate	Proposals / Clients		

**What additional metrics matter specifically to your business and your marketing approach?**

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**Who owns the scorecard? Who enters the numbers, and who reviews them?**

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**How will you review the scorecard? (weekly leadership meeting, solo review, etc.)**

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## **Rocks and Rhythm**

*What is the most important marketing work this quarter, and how are you protecting time for it?*

A Rock is a 90-day priority. It is the specific marketing work that matters most right now, stated as a clear outcome that can be evaluated as done or not done at the end of the quarter. Most entrepreneurs have too many marketing priorities and protect time for none of them. Rocks force the choice.

Rhythm is the recurring structure that keeps the system running. It is the weekly time block for content. The monthly review of the scorecard. The quarterly assessment of whether the strategy still fits. Without rhythm, marketing happens when there is nothing else to do, which means it rarely happens consistently.

**What are your 1-3 most important marketing Rocks for this quarter? State each one as a specific, completable outcome.**

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**What is the work that has to happen weekly for your marketing system to function? List it.**

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**When specifically will you do that work? Block it in your calendar.**

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**When will you conduct a quarterly review of your marketing strategy? What will you assess?**

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**Accountability**

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*Who holds you to this?*

Accountability is the mechanism that keeps the system honest when the daily demands of the business create pressure to let marketing slip. For a solopreneur, this is genuinely hard, because there is no team to be accountable to. You have to create the structure intentionally.

**Who in your life or business holds you accountable for your marketing commitments? If no one, what structure could you create?**

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**What are the warning signs that your marketing system is drifting? How will you notice?**

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**What is the quarterly commitment you are making to yourself about this system?**

## **Where to Go From Here**

You have done something most entrepreneurs never do: you have looked at the full scope of what marketing actually requires, and you have begun the work of being honest about where you are in each layer.

That honesty is not comfortable. But it is the beginning of something real.

Some of what you have written here will be clear and solid. Some of it will be vague, or incomplete, or will have surfaced questions you do not yet know how to answer. Both are valuable information. The vague areas are where the leverage is.

***You cannot market something that does not yet exist clearly in language. The clarity you build here is not preparation for marketing. It is marketing.***

A few suggestions as you move forward.

Do not try to do everything at once. Choose the layer that is weakest and work there first. In my experience, most entrepreneurs are weakest at the Foundation, which means everything built above it is less stable than it could be. But you know your business. Trust what this process surfaced.

Revisit this workbook. It is not a one-time exercise. The answers you write today will change as your business develops. The scorecard section in particular should be a living document. Come back to it quarterly, at minimum.

And if you want a thinking partner for any of this, that is exactly what I do. Not to tell you what your answers should be, but to help you think more clearly about what they are. The work of constituting a business is fundamentally a conversation, and some of it is genuinely hard to do alone.

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## **Kevin Suboski**

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*The GBB Marketing System program walks entrepreneurs through each of these layers with support, accountability, and the thinking partnership that makes the work stick.*