

The Founder Build System

Six stages from zero brand to a market that knows your name, for technical founders entering a market where nobody has heard of them.

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THE PROBLEM

You cannot get customers without credibility, and you cannot get credibility without customers.

You have a great product but nobody knows who you are. This is the loop that breaks it.

Six stages. Each one earns the next. The whole thing runs on the founder to start with, and the last two stages are how it stops needing you.

1

Trust foundation

Week 1 to 2. Your audience needs to believe you are credible before they will listen.

2

Product articulation

Week 2 to 4. Explain the product in your buyer's language, not engineering jargon.

3

Value communication

Week 4 to 8. Broadcast where your audience actually lives.

4

Social proof

Week 8 to 10. Get other people to vouch for you, systematically.

5

Community building

Week 10 to 12. Build a network of allies who amplify.

6

Brand virality

Month 4 and on. The brand spreads without you in the room.



Trust foundation

Week 1 to 2. Your audience needs to believe you are credible before they will listen to a word about the product.

- Optimise the LinkedIn profile. The headline speaks to buyer pain, not your job title.
- Write your founder manifesto. A public declaration of what you stand for.
- Show up consistently. Three posts a week, minimum.
- Share authentic vulnerability. The journey, not just the wins.

THE TRUST TEST

Can a stranger Google you and, inside two minutes, understand what you are expert in, who vouches for you, and why you are different?

Product articulation

Week 2 to 4. Can you explain the product in your buyer's language?

- **The monster you fight.** What problem exists?
- **Why now.** Why is this urgent today rather than next year?
- **Your unique approach.** A philosophical difference, not a feature list.
- **The outcome.** What becomes possible?

Exercise. Interview three customers. Extract the exact phrases they use to describe your value, and use those words instead of yours.

Value communication

Week 4 to 8. Broadcasting your value where your audience lives. The mix matters more than the volume.

Share	Type	What it does
70%	Authority	Teach what you know deeply
20%	Credibility	Showcase results, customers, achievements
10%	Relatability	Behind the scenes, the founder journey

Day	What runs
Monday	Authority. A technical deep dive, or a change in your market
Wednesday	Credibility. A case study or an achievement
Friday	Relatability. An event recap or a personal story

Social proof

Week 8 to 10. The flywheel: win a customer, get the testimonial, build the case study, share it, tag them, their network sees you, warm intro arrives, new customer.

ASK IMMEDIATELY AFTER A SUCCESS

What specific result did we achieve? What was different about working with us? Would you do a two-minute video testimonial?



Community building

Week 10 to 12. Thirty strategic allies, chosen on purpose rather than collected.

How many	Who	Why them
5	Similar founders	Peer support and honest read on what is working
10	Industry influencers	The people your ICP already follows
10	Target customers	Engage long before they are ready to buy
5	Strategic partners	Distributors and complementary products

Engagement protocol. Follow, comment thoughtfully, share with your own point of view, DM to thank, then look for the collaboration.

Brand virality

Month 4 and on. The brand starts spreading without your direct involvement.

- **Product-led.** The dashboard itself says who built it.
- **Marketing-led.** Customers tag you without being asked.
- **Engineered.** One speaking slot produces the next one.

THE LITMUS TEST

Are customers bringing you other customers without being asked?



Your company has zero brand equity. All of it is in you.

The company post gets three likes. Your post gets thirty. That is not a vanity observation, it is a routing decision.

Start with the personal brand. Migrate to the company brand over about twelve months, once there is something for the company account to inherit. Doing it the other way round is why most company pages read like an empty room.

Then multiply yourself

You are one person. There are four ways to clone the parts of you that do not have to be you.

Four clones

1

Documentation

Turn your brain into playbooks. Your pitch, your discovery questions, your email templates, your LinkedIn strategy, your voice guide. If it only exists in your head, it cannot be handed over.

2

AI leverage

After every call, feed the transcript in. Analyse the sales process. Draft the follow-up. Pull ten post ideas. One call becomes thirty days of content.

3

Team leverage

The hire sequence that works: SDR at month 3 to 6, content marketer at 6 to 9, AE at 9 to 12, fractional marketing leadership in year two.

4

Fractional experts

Senior expertise part-time beats junior expertise full-time while you are still finding the motion. You are buying judgement, not hours.

THE ORDER THAT MATTERS

Document first. Automate second. Hire third. A hire dropped into an undocumented motion spends two quarters inventing the job instead of doing it.

What good looks like, month by month

Month	Milestone	Deliverable
1	LinkedIn optimised, 5,000+ profile views	12 posts published
2	First inbound DM from a target persona	10 meetings booked through outbound
3	First hire in seat, founder time freed by half	3 testimonials collected
4	Inbound is 20% of pipeline	First speaking engagement

THE SUCCESS METRIC

When strangers recognise your name before they recognise your company's, you have won.

Nothing in here is fast. Stage 1 to 3 is where most founders stop, usually somewhere around week six, because the numbers look small and the effort feels large. The compounding starts on the other side of that.



We build the system, then hand you the keys.

Forte is a marketing build team. We become your marketing department, build the whole function, run it, then hand it to your team or keep running it fractionally.

Positioning, the content engine, outbound infrastructure, CRM, automations and the sales process. You own all of it.

If this playbook described your company, the gap is usually not effort. It is that nobody has built the system underneath.

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