THE WORKSHOP ON TAX REDUCTION · YOUR WORKBOOK

Outsmart the IRS.

How to legally and ethically keep more of your own money.

YOUR WEALTH ARCHITECTURE WORKBOOK · PRESERVE · PROTECT · POSITION · PASS

Freedom Has A Framework

WELCOME

Freedom has a framework.

Uplevel By Design is a Fractional, Virtual, Multi-Family Office for self-made business owners. We help you keep more, protect more, grow more, and transfer more … intentionally … by designing the coordinated wealth architecture that replaces fragmented advice with one integrated plan.

I have specialized knowledge in the areas of tax, estate, and business law. With my JD, CFP®, AAMS, and RFC … along with decades building and scaling my own companies and helping thousands of high-income earners across the country get their financial lives dialed in.

In the Game of Wealth, I'm both a player and a coach.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

It's your working copy. Fill it in as we go … the pages are simple on purpose. The power shows up the moment you draw on them. It's yours to keep, whether or not we ever speak again.

Edward Collins
JD · CFP® · AAMS · RFC
FOUNDER & GENERATIONAL WEALTH CREATION ARCHITECT
UPLEVEL BY DESIGN, LLC

YOUR WORKBOOK

Contents

ORIENTATION

How to use this workbook.

This is a working document, not a brochure. Some pages teach. Some pages you fill in live during the Workshop. Both matter … the teaching gives you the language, the worksheets turn it into your plan.

Read the teaching pages once, straight through, to build the frame. Then use the worksheet pages … Map Your Money, the Four Laws, the Self-Score, the Strategy Board … as we work through them together, pen in hand.

The pages are simple on purpose. White space is room to think. The power shows up the moment you mark them up with your own numbers and your own moves.

It's yours to keep, whether or not we ever speak again. Come back to it at tax time, before a big decision, or when an advisor tells you something that doesn't sound right.

PLEASE READ · DISCLAIMER

This workbook is educational. It is not tax, legal, or investment advice, and no attorney-client, accountant-client, or advisory relationship is created by using it. Every figure is illustrative … your facts, your state, and current law determine what actually applies. Confirm any strategy with your qualified advisors, or engage the Uplevel By Design, LLC Team, before acting. Uplevel By Design, LLC does not represent you as your attorney.

THE BIG IDEA

Structure beats strategy.

Most people don't lose wealth from a lack of income. They lose it from a lack of structure. You can earn more every year and still watch most of it leak away … to tax, to risk, to drag, to a transfer nobody planned.

Strategy is the move. Structure is the board the move is played on. Run a brilliant strategy through the wrong structure and you get friction, not results.

You've likely already tried strategies … a deduction here, an entity there, a plan someone mentioned at dinner. If they're not compounding into real, protected, transferable wealth, the constraint almost always sits underneath the tactics.

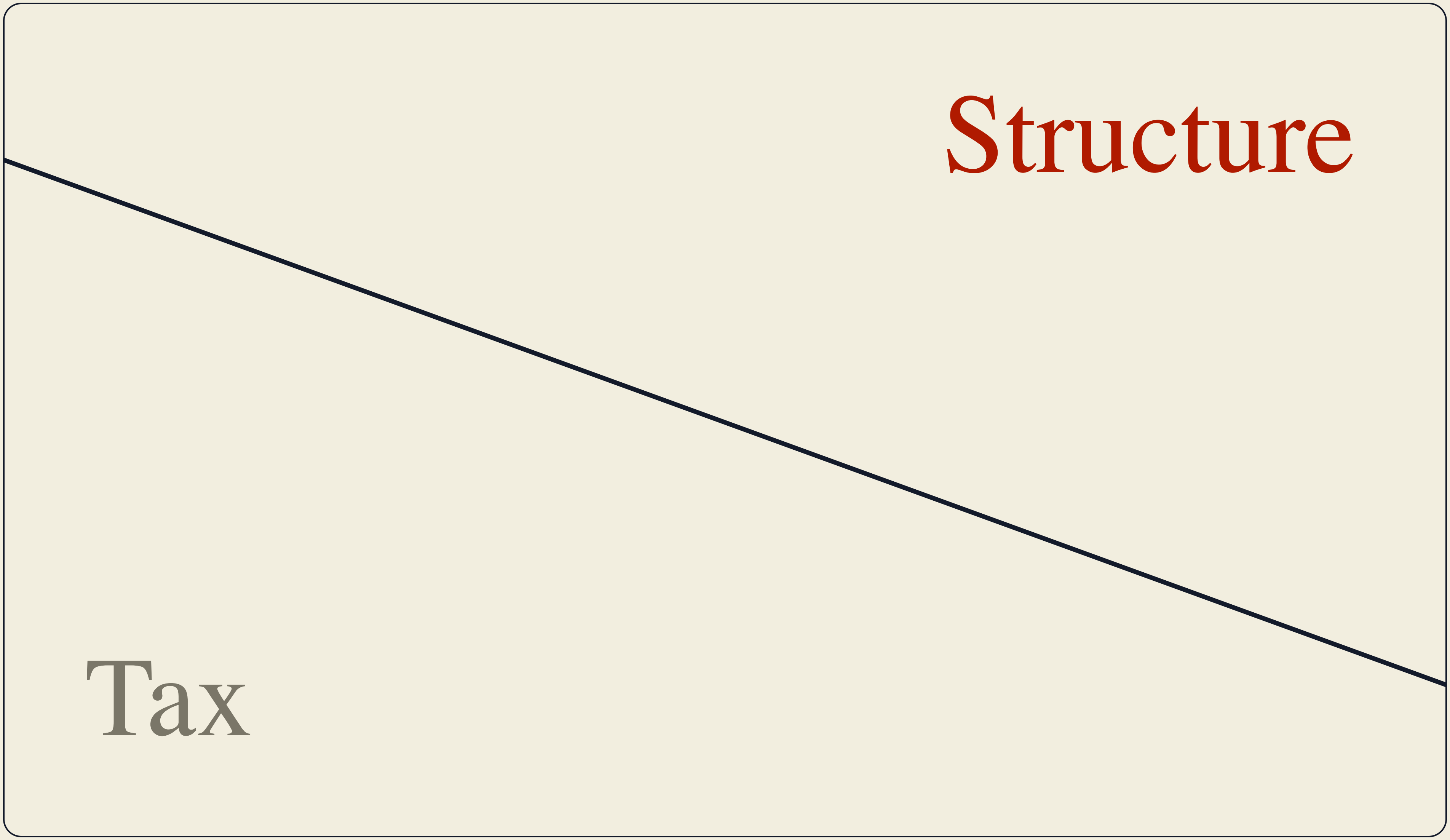
That's the whole premise of this Workshop. Fix the structure, and the strategies finally have somewhere to land … in the right order, reinforcing each other, defensible under scrutiny.

> THE CANONICAL LINE
>
> Strategy without structure is friction. Structure without strategy is a filing cabinet. You need both … built in the right order.

THE PREMISE

It was never the tax.

You don't have a tax problem … you have a structure problem.

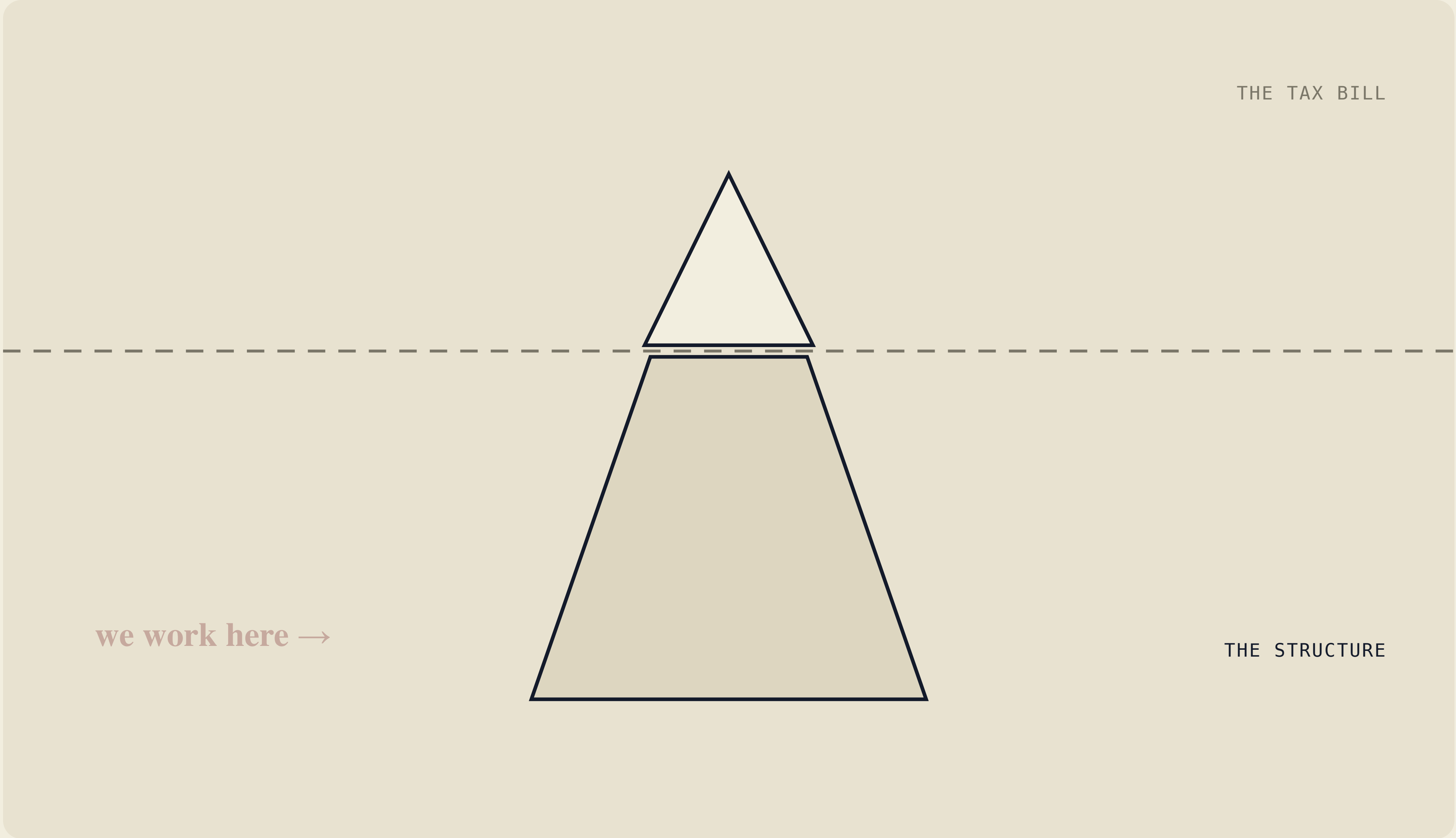


Structure sits on top. Tax is what falls out the bottom … downstream of design.

THE HIDDEN 90%

You're seeing 10%.

The tax bill is the tip. The structure is everything under the water.



Most owners attack the tip every April. We build below the line.

THE REAL ENEMY

Why fragmented advice costs you.

You probably don't have a bad advisor. You have a **coordination** problem.

Your CPA files what already happened. Your attorney drafts documents. Your financial advisor allocates what you've accumulated. Each is good at their piece … and no one owns the space between the pieces. That space is where the money leaks.

The enemy isn't any one professional. It's **fragmented advice disguised as strategy** … a stack of disconnected moves that looks sophisticated until the pieces have to work together, or be defended.

At a certain level of success, that fragmentation quietly becomes the single most expensive thing in your financial life.

THREE LINES WORTH REMEMBERING

A loophole is not a plan. A stack of documents is not a wealth operating system. And bad advice sounds smart … right up until someone has to defend it.

THE DIAGNOSTIC

The three leaks.

Circle the one that stings the most. Most owners have all three … but one is primary. You can’t fix what you can’t see.

LEAK ONE

Structure

The plumbing your money runs through before it reaches you. Wrong entity for the income. Right election at the wrong time. Assets exposed inside the operating company. Ownership and control not aligned with protection.

Bleeding by design.

LEAK TWO

Character

The code taxes what your money *is* and how it's sourced … not how hard you worked for it. Same dollar, different label, different tax. Income in the wrong bucket. Credits you qualify for but never claim.

Bleeding by default.

LEAK THREE

Discipline

A brilliant strategy with sloppy execution is a liability. Books behind. Personal and business mixed. Documentation missing. The plan lives in your head, not installed in your business.

Bleeding by execution.

THE SHIFT

Producer, or owner?

The income economy pays you when you show up and do the thing. It's fragile. It depends on your presence, your energy, your calendar. Cross a certain income and the old playbook … work harder, earn more … stops working. You just make more to leak more.

The ownership economy pays you because you own or control something that produces. It's durable. It compounds while you sleep. In volatile times, the safest job title is Owner.

Tax reduction alone isn't the goal. It's the fuel. The goal is to move … deliberately … from earning to owning.

Stop the leak. Redirect the cash. Buy the asset.

> THE BRIDGE
>
> Every dollar you stop leaking is a dollar you can redirect into an asset that produces … which throws off more cash … which buys the next asset. That flywheel is how tax savings become generational wealth.

EXERCISE · OPEN PAGE ONE

Map your money.

I don't have a ____________ problem. I have a ____________ problem.

EARNED [ ] → [ ] → [ ] KEPT

01 The box most of my money sits in

02 A box I'm not sure I control

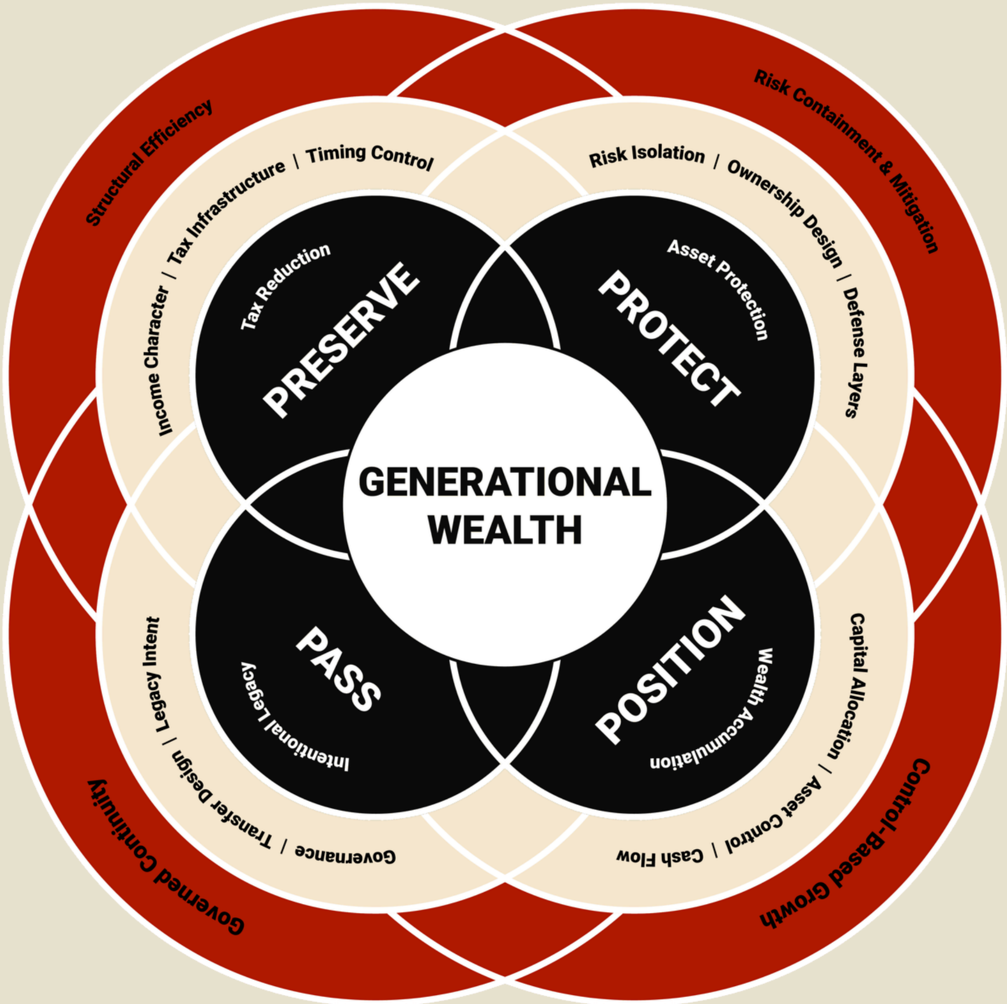
03 Where the leaks happen first

Draw every box your money passes through … most owners have more than they think.

THE ARCHITECTURE

The Real Wealth Matrix™

Four pillars, one integrated structure … built around generational wealth.



Tax reduction lives in Preserve … but it only holds if all four are built together.

THE ARCHITECTURE

The Matrix, explained.

Four pillars. One integrated structure. Real wealth isn't one clever move … it's four coordinated systems, built in order, each reinforcing the others around a single center: generational wealth.

1 **Preserve · Keep More**
Reduce tax at the structure … entity, character, timing, deductions, credits, exclusions.

2 **Protect · Shield It**
Separate what a lawsuit can reach from what you've built. Entity, trust, insurance, titling.

3 **Position · Grow It**
Deploy retained cash into assets that compound and produce … not paper alone.

4 **Pass · Transfer It**
Move wealth with intention … trusts, governance, heirs prepared without being entitled.

Keep more. Protect more. Grow more. Transfer more … by Design.

The operating rule: for any move, name the primary pillar … check for conflicts across the other three … then sequence it. A win in one pillar that quietly wounds another isn't a win.

HOW THE CODE SEES MONEY

The four spectrums of income.

The government doesn't tax effort. It taxes **what your money is and where it comes from.** Same dollar, different classification, wildly different tax. Knowing which spectrum a dollar lives in is the first lever of Preserve.

SPECTRUM I

Non-Passive

- Active business income
- S-Corp / C-Corp planning
- Reasonable comp + §199A
- The self-employment-tax lever

SPECTRUM II

Passive

- Rental real estate
- Limited partnerships
- Losses that can offset … when structured
- REPS & the STR exception

SPECTRUM III

Portfolio

- Dividends, interest, gains
- Asset location & long-term holding
- Opportunity Zones
- QSBS (§1202)

SPECTRUM IV

Personal

- Home, personal property
- Insurance & cash value
- Homestead & umbrella
- Trust ownership

The government doesn't reward effort. It rewards structure.

REFRAME

The code is an incentive system.

Most people read the tax code as a bill. It's closer to a **menu of incentives.** The government can't efficiently build housing, fund research, or drill for energy … so it rewards the people who do. Understand that, and the question changes from "what do I owe?" to "which behaviors is the code paying me to adopt?"

It rewards you through three tools, in ascending power:

Deductions reduce the income you're taxed on. **Credits** reduce the tax itself, dollar for dollar … far stronger than a deduction. **Exclusions** keep income out of the calculation entirely … the most beautiful word in the code.

> HISTORIAN VS. ARCHITECT
>
> Most professionals are **compliance experts** … historians who record what already happened and report it. A **strategist** asks what to do next week, next quarter, next year to lower the bill that hasn't been set yet. One looks backward. The other builds forward. This Workshop lives in the second lane.

EXERCISE · FILL IT IN

The Four Laws.

LAW NO. 1 PRESERVE

The tax code rewards __________, not __________.

LAW NO. 2 PROTECT

You don't __________ what you can't __________.

LAW NO. 3 POSITION

Tax savings belong in an __________ account, not a __________ one.

LAW NO. 4 PASS

Wealth transfers by __________ or __________.

Write the missing words as each Law is revealed. One per pillar.

PILLAR ONE

Preserve: keep more.

Preserve is where tax reduction lives … and where we go deepest tonight. Not because it matters most, but because it's the foundation. Stop the leak first, and every other pillar has more to work with.

Preserve isn't a pile of tricks. It's four levers, pulled in order:

- **Entity & ownership**
  The structure that decides which strategies are even available to you.
- **Character & timing**
  What your income is, and when it lands.
- **Deductions, credits, exclusions**
  The code's three incentive tools, applied on purpose.
- **Discipline**
  Clean books and documentation … so the savings survive scrutiny.

Structure determines which strategies are available. Strategy without it is just friction.

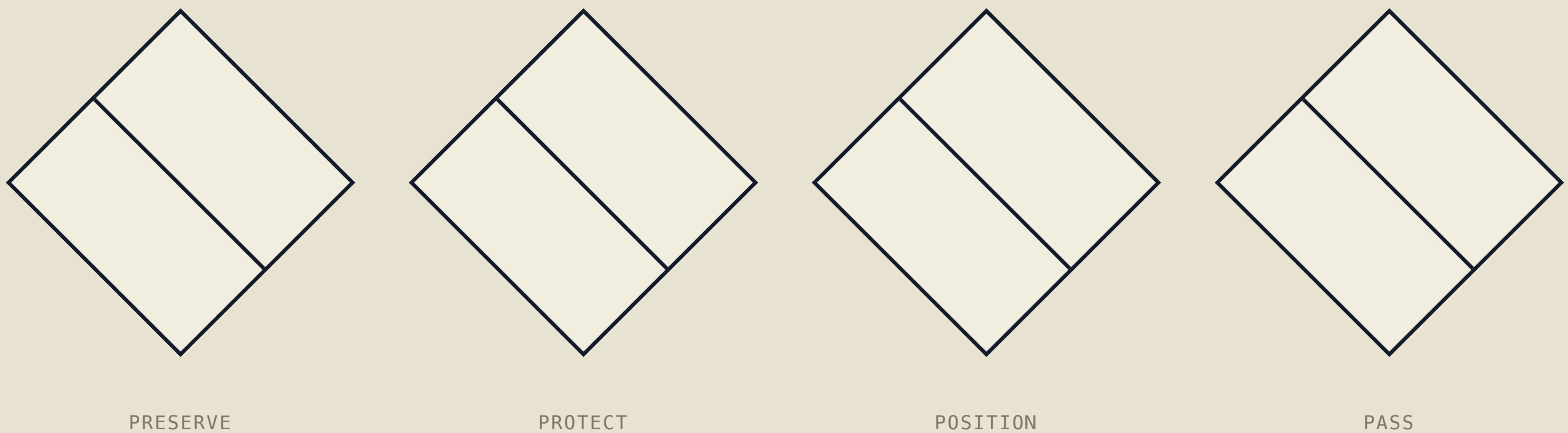
On the next pages: the specific moves … what each one is, who it's for, and the guardrail that keeps it defensible. The *how* is what we build together.

THE FOUR PILLARS

Leak & fix.

Top of each diamond: where it leaks. Bottom: the fix. One per pillar.

↑ THE LEAK



↓ THE FIX

Name one leak and one fix in each pillar as we go.

SPOTLIGHTS · TABLE STAKES

The obvious moves, done right.

IRC §199A · Reasonable Comp

Comp + QBI

WHAT IT IS

Pay yourself a defensible salary from your S-Corp, then let the balance flow as distribution … while claiming the up-to-20% qualified business income deduction.

WHO IT'S FOR

Profitable S-Corp owners above roughly $50–60K of net income.

THE LEVERAGE

Trims self-employment tax and can shield a fifth of qualified income … the honest number, not the inflated one gurus quote.

Guardrail · "Reasonable" is a real standard. Too low invites reclassification; document the basis.

Accountable Plan

The Reimbursement Plan

WHAT IT IS

A formal policy under which your company reimburses you, tax-free, for legitimate business use of personal resources … home office, mileage, phone, equipment.

WHO IT'S FOR

Any owner running business costs through personal accounts.

THE LEVERAGE

Converts money you're already spending into a clean business deduction … with no extra outlay.

Guardrail · Requires a written plan, real business purpose, and contemporaneous records. No documentation, no deduction.

Most owners have never been shown these.

IRC §105(b) · Rev. Rul. 71-588

Spouse HRA

WHAT IT IS

Employ your spouse and reimburse the family's out-of-pocket medical costs through the business … a benefit settled in the code since 1971.

WHO IT'S FOR

Owners with a legitimately employed spouse and real medical spend.

THE LEVERAGE

Moves family medical from a mostly non-deductible personal expense to a full business deduction … from the first dollar.

Guardrail · The spouse's employment must be bona fide … real work, real records, a real plan.

Cross-Tested / Cash-Balance

Advanced Retirement

WHAT IT IS

A plan design that lets a profitable owner contribute far more than a standard 401(k) … often a six-figure, largely deductible, tax-deferred amount.

WHO IT'S FOR

Established, highly profitable owners, often older than their team.

THE LEVERAGE

Turns a big current tax bill into a growing, protected retirement balance … architecture, not effort.

Guardrail · This is deferral, not disappearance … and it must pass nondiscrimination testing. Design matters.

You're likely already earning it.

And we still won't reach them all tonight … Augusta (§280A), oil & gas IDCs, QSBS (§1202), the family loan, personal-goodwill sales. There's always another pillar under this one.

IRC §41 · §174A

R&D Credit

WHAT IT IS

A dollar-for-dollar credit for developing or improving a product … or a process. Not lab coats … the everyday problem-solving in trades, manufacturing, and software.

WHO IT'S FOR

Owners who engineer, build, or systematically improve how they work.

THE LEVERAGE

A credit beats a deduction of the same size several times over … and eligible small businesses can offset payroll tax.

Guardrail · The work must genuinely qualify and be documented. Claimed loosely, it's a risk … claimed right, it's a gift.

Cost Seg + §168(k)

Cost Segregation

WHAT IT IS

An engineering study that reclassifies parts of a building into faster depreciation schedules … accelerating deductions, especially with bonus depreciation restored for 2025.

WHO IT'S FOR

Owners of commercial, multifamily, or business real estate.

THE LEVERAGE

Front-loads large paper losses into the early years … timing your deductions to when they help most.

Guardrail · A timing strategy … recapture applies at sale. And several states, including California, do not conform.

TRUST

The honest numbers.

Here's the part most of the internet skips. The S-Corp move a guru calls "$40,000 saved" is usually closer to eighteen. The write-off that "wipes out your taxes" often just moves them to a later year. We'd rather quote you the honest number and keep your trust.

Never spend a dollar to save thirty cents. Buying the vehicle, the equipment, the trip *for the deduction* is how people talk themselves into worse decisions. The rule: if you were going to spend it anyway, maximize it. If you weren't, the deduction was never the point.

Federal wins fast. Some states make you earn it slowly. California and others don't conform to bonus depreciation … a strategy that looks brilliant federally can disappoint at the state line. Always model the state.

A loophole is not a plan. Bad advice sounds smart … until someone has to defend it.

BUILD YOUR SHORTLIST

Tax strategies from the Workshop.

As each is named, write it on a line … check the box if it's one to explore. Notice how many we never even open tonight.

THE TABLE STAKES

The obvious moves, done right.

- [ ] ______
- [ ] ______
- [ ] ______

THE SPECIFIC WOWS

Most owners have never seen these.

- [ ] ______
- [ ] ______
- [ ] ______

BARELY SCRATCHED

Named tonight, opened another day.

- [ ] ______
- [ ] ______
- [ ] ______
- [ ] ______
- [ ] ______
- [ ] ______
- [ ] ______

THE STRATEGY BOARD

A move at every depth.

Tiers down the side, pillars across the top. A few to start you off … we fill the rest of the board together.

	Preserve	Protect	Position	Pass
TABLE STAKES		**Operating / Holding split**		
WOW	**§105(b) Spouse HRA**			**IDGT Estate Freeze**
LATER			**Opportunity Zone**	

Every pillar has moves at every depth. We pick yours together.

PILLAR TWO

Protect: shield it.

Success without protection is fragile. One lawsuit, one claim, one bad partnership can reach across everything you own if it all sits behind a single door.

The principle is old and simple … **own nothing, control everything.** The building that houses your business shouldn't be owned by the business that gets sued. Assets belong in structures designed to hold them; risk belongs where it can be contained.

Protection is layered … entity design, then trusts, then insurance, then clean titling. Insurance complements structure; it never replaces it.

One distinction people miss: legal structure is not tax regime. Where you register an entity and how you're taxed are two different conversations. Registering in Wyoming while operating from your kitchen in New Jersey doesn't move your tax home … it just adds a filing.

> THE QUESTION
>
> If you were sued tomorrow, what could they actually reach? If you can't answer in one sentence, that's the gap … and it's fixable by design.

PILLAR THREE

Position: grow it.

The dollars you kept don't grow themselves. The most common way wealth quietly dies is drift … you "save" twenty thousand, and six months later the lifestyle has expanded to consume it.

So the tax savings never touch the lifestyle account. They go into an **acquisition account** … a storage of capital, held for one purpose: to buy assets that produce.

An asset isn't something you hope goes up. An asset is something that produces usable economic benefit … ideally cash flow. Appreciation is nice. Cash flow is what feeds your life and funds the next move.

That's the flywheel: kept dollars buy producing assets … the assets throw off cash … the cash buys the next asset. Compound asset acquisition.

Tax savings belong in an acquisition account … not a lifestyle account.

PILLAR FOUR

Pass: transfer it.

You can fix a bad tax year. You cannot fix an estate after death. Pass is the pillar people delay because it feels complex or far off … and it's the one with the least margin for a late start.

Legacy isn't paperwork. It's **governance, incentives, and clarity** … preparing heirs without entitling them, so the assets and the values both outlive you.

The mechanics are trust-based … the right trust for the right job, coordinated with your titling and your tax plan. Done well, a funded structure keeps a thriving business intact instead of forcing a sale to pay a bill due in nine months.

THE COSTLY MISTAKE WE SEE MOST

People hear “put everything in your trust” and retitle an IRA into it while alive … which the IRS can treat as cashing the whole account out, taxable that year. The fix is quiet: leave the IRA in your name, and name the trust as *beneficiary*. Route the contract … don’t break the wrapper.

EXERCISE · SCORE YOURSELF

Your four-pillar self-score.

One question per pillar. Circle your honest color … your reds are your primary levers.

Pillar	Question	GREEN	YELLOW	RED
01 Preserve	Is your tax architecture designed, or assembled?	○	○	○
02 Protect	Building, business, home … separate doors, or one?	○	○	○
03 Position	Are your kept dollars compounding, or sitting?	○	○	○
04 Pass	Would your family inherit a playbook, or a scramble?	○	○	○

Your reds are your primary levers.

One move per pillar.

Write the single move you'll make in each pillar. Blank on purpose.

Preserve

Protect

Position

Pass

YOURS TO KEEP · THE BLUEPRINT

The architecture. In order.

PILLAR ONE	PILLAR TWO	PILLAR THREE	PILLAR FOUR
Preserve	**Protect**	**Position**	**Pass**
KEEP MORE	SHIELD IT	GROW IT	TRANSFER IT
MY FIRST MOVE	MY FIRST MOVE	MY FIRST MOVE	MY FIRST MOVE

1. Preserve → 2. Protect → 3. Position → 4. Pass

Build them in order … skipping ahead is how the leaks reopen.

A COMPOSITE, ILLUSTRATIVE FAMILY

Meet Tony & Gina.

Tony and Gina run a first-generation custom-fabrication shop. S-Corp, twelve employees, roughly $520K of household income, about $125K to federal tax, and they own their building. Their CPA is good … and every year they ask, “are we doing everything we can?” and hear “yes.”

What “yes” left on the table: comp set without a §199A lens, no accountable plan, a spouse doing real work with no §105(b) HRA, qualifying shop innovation never claimed under §41, and the building depreciating on the slow schedule.

The reorder … done in sequence, documented, defensible … not a pile of tricks.

ILLUSTRATIVE · PRESERVE PILLAR ONLY

Reasonable comp + §199A · Accountable Plan · §105(b) Spouse HRA · §41 R&D Credit · Cost Segregation … coordinated, not stacked at random.

BEFORE · BY DEFAULT

~$125K

to federal tax

AFTER · BY DESIGN

~$66K+

permanent annual reduction, plus a six-figure deferral

Composite and illustrative. Your numbers will differ …figures depend on your facts, your state, and current law.

THE STAKES

Same dollar. Two futures.

By default it drifts. By design it compounds. Draw where each one lands.

The gap between the two lines is the cost of waiting.

The 90-Day Structure Experiment™

Name one leak. Pick one fix. Run it ninety days. Measure.

THE LEAK

THE FIX

90-DAY TEST

THE RESULT

Structure isn't a someday project. It's one experiment at a time.

ANNUAL RHYTHM

Your wealth architecture calendar.

Structure isn't a one-time project … it's a rhythm. A quarterly cadence keeps the four pillars coordinated and stops last-minute, reactive tax filing from ever happening again.

Q1 · JAN–MAR

Set The Year

- Confirm entity & comp for the year
- Fund plans & accountable plan
- Prior-year filing, cleanly

Q2 · APR–JUN

Protect

- Review titling & entities
- Insurance & umbrella check
- Estate docs current with the balance sheet?

Q3 · JUL–SEP

Position

- Sweep tax savings to the acquisition account
- Review deployment & deals
- Mid-year projection vs. plan

Q4 · OCT–DEC

Harvest & Plan

- Year-end moves before Dec 31
- Document everything claimed
- Draft next year's objectives

Earners react in April. Owners run the year on a calendar.

THIS WEEK

Questions for my advisors.

Ask these this week. Write down what you hear … the gaps will be obvious.

TO MY CPA

"Are we doing compliance … or strategy?"

TO MY ATTORNEY

"If I'm sued tomorrow, what's exposed?"

TO MY ADVISOR

"Is my money positioned … or just parked?"

REFERENCE

The language of wealth architecture.

Structure. The entities, ownership, and elections your money runs through … the board strategy is played on.

Income character. What a dollar *is* … active, passive, portfolio, personal … which decides how it's taxed.

Deduction. Reduces the income you're taxed on.

Credit. Reduces the tax itself, dollar for dollar … stronger than a deduction.

Exclusion. Income the code never counts at all … the most powerful of the three.

§199A (QBI). Up-to-20% deduction on qualified business income, with phase-outs and limits.

Accountable Plan. A written policy for tax-free reimbursement of business-use costs.

§105(b) HRA. Reimbursing family medical costs through a business with a bona fide employee-spouse.

Cost segregation. An engineering study that accelerates real-estate depreciation.

Bonus depreciation (§168(k)). Immediate expensing of eligible property … restored to 100% for 2025 federally; some states don't conform.

§41 R&D credit. A credit for developing or improving a product or process.

QSBS (§1202). Potential exclusion of gain on qualified C-corp stock held long enough.

REPS. Real Estate Professional Status … lets rental losses offset active income when the hours qualify.

Acquisition account. A storage of capital where tax savings wait to buy producing assets … never lifestyle.

Basis. Your investment in an asset for tax … what gain is measured against.

Own nothing, control everything. Hold assets in protective structures while keeping control … the core of Protect.

WHEN YOU'RE READY

How to work with us.

This workbook is the map. If you'd rather not build the structure alone, there are two ways in … one you drive, one we drive with you.

DO IT WITH GUIDANCE

Uplevel University

The room where you learn to build the architecture yourself … curriculum across all four pillars, live coaching, monthly implementation, and a community of operators building the same thing.

DONE WITH YOU

Uplevel Protégé

The private engagement. We design and help implement your Generational Wealth Operating System with you … it begins with the 30-Day Generational Wealth Gap Diagnostic, which maps your primary levers and the next right move.

We help build Generational Wealth … By Design.

The 30-Day Generational Wealth Gap Diagnostic begins with a $5,000 initial investment, credited toward the full engagement if you continue. Educational resource … not tax, legal, or investment advice.

YOURS TO KEEP

Notes.

YOURS TO KEEP

Notes.