30Plays.

A FIELD GUIDE · NOVEMBER 2026

The growth strategies working right now.

Seven strategies, judged the same way: who each one suits, what has to be true before you start, how long until you can read the signal, and the most common reason it fails.

01 Founder-led content

02 Signal-led outbound

03 Being found in AI answers

04 Partner-led growth

05 Executive roundtables

06 Community acquisition

07 Conversion before traffic

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HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE

Pick the strategy that fits, not the one that is fashionable.

Most growth plans start with a channel. This guide starts with the business. Each strategy below gets the same four answers, so you can rule most of them out quickly and spend your time on the one or two that fit.

Every figure is sourced and dated, and graded by where it comes from. Where a number comes from a company selling the tactic, it says so. Each strategy links to the plays on the site that put it into practice, with costs, steps and the rule for when to stop.

Who it suits

The kind of business, buyer and sale the strategy fits.

What has to be true first

The conditions to have in place before spending a day on it.

When you can read the signal

How long to give it before you judge it, taken from each play's own stop rule.

Why it usually fails

The most common reason it does not work, so you can avoid it.

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STRATEGY 01 OF 07

Founder-led content

Buyers now trust a named person over a company page. The founder's voice, posted consistently, becomes the company's media channel.

WHO IT SUITS

Companies whose founder or senior team knows something buyers want to hear, selling a considered purchase where trust decides the shortlist.

WHAT HAS TO BE TRUE FIRST

Someone with a view worth hearing and two to three hours a week to share it. Every post has to contain something only you know, or it reads like everyone else.

WHEN YOU CAN READ THE SIGNAL

About a quarter for organic posting. Four weeks if you put a small ad budget behind the best posts and aim it at a named account list.

WHY IT USUALLY FAILS

Counting engagement as pipeline. Likes from peers feel like progress, so ask every new lead where they found you and judge it on conversations with target accounts.

THE EVIDENCE

Dollar Shave Club's launch video cost $4,500 to make and brought some 12,000 sign-ups in its first 48 hours (Entrepreneur, 13 October 2012).

Smokeball promoted short testimonial clips from the people featured in them as LinkedIn Thought Leader Ads and saw 8.7 times the completion rate and a 50% lower cost per view than the same videos run as standard ads (LinkedIn case study, vendor data).

PLAYS TO RUN

The Founder Feed →

Boost the Founder →

The Founder Video →

Podcast as Business Development →

STRATEGY 02 OF 07

Signal-led outbound

Smaller lists, built on events that say a company is ready to buy. Volume outbound keeps getting worse; timing still wins replies.

WHO IT SUITS

Businesses that sell to companies they can name and list, where a single sale is worth a personal message.

WHAT HAS TO BE TRUE FIRST

A customer you can describe precisely, and one or two buying signals you can watch for: a hire, a funding round, an expansion, or a past customer changing job.

WHEN YOU CAN READ THE SIGNAL

About 200 sends per signal, usually two to four weeks. Test one signal at a time against your ordinary list.

WHY IT USUALLY FAILS

Going back to volume. Stale signals bought from a database lose the timing edge, and a big list with a light personal line is still a big list.

THE EVIDENCE

Mimecast tracked past customers and champions changing jobs and, in eight months, opened 276 opportunities and more than $18 million of new pipeline, its second-highest converting channel after demo requests (UserGems case study, 23 March 2023, vendor data).

Average cold email reply rates sit at 3.4 to 5.1% (Overloop, a sales software company, June 2026), so every message needs a reason to exist.

PLAYS TO RUN

Trigger Outreach →

Engager Mining →

Built For You →

STRATEGY 03 OF 07

Being found in AI answers

Buyers now research with AI assistants. The companies those answers name are the ones other trusted sources already mention.

WHO IT SUITS

Any business whose buyers search or ask before they buy, and especially categories where buyers compare options.

WHAT HAS TO BE TRUE FIRST

Clear answers to the questions buyers actually ask, real customers willing to review you, and something worth citing: data, a test or an opinion.

WHEN YOU CAN READ THE SIGNAL

One to two quarters. Reviews show within weeks; lists, Reddit threads and AI answers take longer to move.

WHY IT USUALLY FAILS

Writing for rankings instead of earning mentions. AI answers lean on lists, reviews and communities, so a company that only publishes on its own site stays invisible.

THE EVIDENCE

The Wirecutter built a business on one format, the best X, and drove $150 million of e-commerce transactions for retailers in 2015 (Nieman Lab, 24 October 2016).

51% of 1,076 B2B software buyers now start their research in an AI chatbot (G2, April 2026, vendor data).

A one-star rise on Yelp led to a 5 to 9% increase in revenue for independent restaurants (Luca, Harvard Business School working paper, 2016).

PLAYS TO RUN

Get on the Lists →

The Reddit Presence →

The Review Engine →

The Comparison Hub →

STRATEGY 04 OF 07

Partner-led growth

Borrowing trust from companies and people that already sell to your buyer, and paying them for results.

WHO IT SUITS

Products with customers who already recommend them and a margin worth sharing.

WHAT HAS TO BE TRUE FIRST

Customers who would recommend you, a clear list of who already owns your buyer's attention, and someone who owns the partners once they are signed.

WHEN YOU CAN READ THE SIGNAL

Two months for a first read on whether partners or creators sell. About a quarter before a programme proves itself.

WHY IT USUALLY FAILS

Recruiting partners and then leaving them alone. A partner programme with no owner, no targets and no monthly review produces a logo page, not sales.

THE EVIDENCE

Google opened the Gmail beta in April 2004 to about 1,000 opinion leaders who could invite friends. Within two months invitations were selling on eBay for up to $150 (Spokesman-Review, 6 June 2004).

Fashion Nova grew on a network of about 3,000 everyday Instagram influencers, mostly paid in clothes and tracked by individual codes (BuzzFeed News, March 2017).

PLAYS TO RUN

Seed the Connectors →

The Micro-Influencer Swarm →

The Affiliate Discord →

Who's Got My Customers? →

STRATEGY 05 OF 07

Executive roundtables

Small rooms of the right people. The guest list is the target account list, and the invitation is the outreach.

WHO IT SUITS

Companies selling to senior buyers, where a few customers are worth a lot.

WHAT HAS TO BE TRUE FIRST

A target account list concentrated enough to fill a room in one city or sector, and a topic those buyers want to discuss with each other, not with you.

WHEN YOU CAN READ THE SIGNAL

Three events, so about a quarter if you run them monthly.

WHY IT USUALLY FAILS

Selling in the room. The follow-up is the sale. A room that is mostly vendors fails too.

THE EVIDENCE

Most Julys since 1983, Allen & Co has hosted an invitation-only retreat in Sun Valley. Disney's $19 billion purchase of Capital Cities/ABC was worked out during the Sun Valley week in 1995 (CNBC, 5 July 2016).

Roundtables with a curated experience averaged 76% attendance, nearly 20 points above those without (The Ortus Club, April 2026, vendor data).

PLAYS TO RUN

The Roundtable Series →

The Conference Play →

STRATEGY 06 OF 07

Community acquisition

Showing up where your buyers already talk, and giving customers a place to help each other, without becoming the person who sells in the group.

WHO IT SUITS

Products people use often and talk about, and categories where buyers ask each other before they buy.

WHAT HAS TO BE TRUE FIRST

A moderator from day one, a narrow first audience, and a reason for people to come back each week.

WHEN YOU CAN READ THE SIGNAL

About three months. If fewer than one member in ten takes part each month by then, change the format.

WHY IT USUALLY FAILS

No manager. A community without one goes quiet, or fills with complaints and spam. Starting too broad produces silence.

THE EVIDENCE

Instant Pot did no television or print advertising. Its owners' Facebook group passed 300,000 members by January 2017 (NPR, via WGBH, 18 January 2017) and reached roughly three million by 2024 (Modern Retail, 3 June 2024).

Harley-Davidson launched the Harley Owners Group in 1983, and it had more than 30,000 members in its first year (Harley-Davidson).

PLAYS TO RUN

Users Teach Users →

The Customer Community →

The Early Commenter →

Be in the Thread →

STRATEGY 07 OF 07

Conversion before traffic

Fixing what happens after the click usually beats buying more clicks.

WHO IT SUITS

Businesses already paying for traffic, or with steady visitors who are not turning into enquiries.

WHAT HAS TO BE TRUE FIRST

Enough traffic to test against, and someone ready to answer the enquiries a better page produces.

WHEN YOU CAN READ THE SIGNAL

Two weeks for an A/B test on a page or an ad destination with enough traffic. About a quarter for a free tool to earn its own search traffic.

WHY IT USUALLY FAILS

Buying more traffic before fixing the page. The other common one is asking for an email before giving the result, which kills usage of any free tool.

THE EVIDENCE

HubSpot's free Website Grader scored more than four million websites between 2007 and 2011, and HubSpot said it was built to generate traffic, links and leads (HubSpot, 2008 to 2011).

Arabian Automobiles Company pointed its Meta ads at a WhatsApp chat instead of only its website and, between 17 and 30 April 2025, reported twice the leads at a 56% lower cost per lead (WhatsApp Business success story, vendor data).

PLAYS TO RUN

The Free Tool →

Ad to WhatsApp →

The Template Library →

Paid Pilot, Not Free Trial →

THE FULL LIBRARY

45 plays, graded and dated.

Every play on the site opens with the real case it is built on, then sets out how it runs, what it costs to test and when to stop. Each title links to its page.

ORGANIC SOCIAL

The Reddit Presence
The Unhinged Mascot
Seed 500
Users Teach Users
The Founder Video
The Voice With Permission
The Founder Feed
Pinterest Is Search
Shoppable Stories
The Early Commenter

SEARCH AND AI VISIBILITY

Ship Into the AI Assistants
Get on the Lists
The Comparison Hub

PAID MEDIA

Boost the Founder
Affiliates Feed the Ads
The Live Sale Marathon
Ad to WhatsApp
The Demo Worth Watching
The Sponsored Lens
Boards to Basket
Sponsor Who They Watch
Be in the Thread

CONTENT AND THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Podcast as Business Development
The Annual Report

EMAIL AND MESSAGING

The Nine-Word Email
Messaging Commerce

WEBSITE, CONVERSION AND PRODUCT-LED GROWTH

The Free Tool
The Template Library

OUTBOUND SALES

Trigger Outreach
Built For You
Engager Mining
Paid Pilot, Not Free Trial

PARTNERSHIPS, AFFILIATES AND CREATORS

The Affiliate Discord
The Micro-Influencer Swarm
Who's Got My Customers?

EVENTS AND COMMUNITY

The Roundtable Series
The Customer Community
The Conference Play

PR AND LAUNCHES

Seed the Connectors
The Waitlist Launch
Data PR

REPUTATION, REFERRALS AND RETENTION

The Review Engine
The Two-Sided Referral
Ask at the Till
Early Access Instead of Discounts

A plan before a team.

If one of these strategies fits and you would like a second view on which play to run first, I offer a free growth plan: two calls in one week and a written plan you keep, whether or not you hire me to run it.

Book a call at 30plays.com

One play every Tuesday by email. Every figure in this guide was checked in November 2026; tactics decay, so each play on the site carries the date it was last checked.

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