

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Clicks Aren't Customers.

A simple system for turning traffic
into paying customers

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Each chapter is one link in the chain. Read them in order, or go straight to the one that sounds like your problem.

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One Campaign, Start to Finish

You have a program with empty spots and no idea how to fill them.

You have run it before, so you are not starting from nothing. But it has never been properly advertised, there is no page built for it, and when somebody shows interest there is nowhere to send them that can take a payment.

That is roughly where a tennis center in the Bronx found itself last fall. Children's programs were not new to them. A campaign built for one, pointed at a page built for one, that finished on a phone, was.

They spent \$420.47 on Facebook and Instagram over four weeks. Registrations were slow at first while the platform worked out who responded, then came steadily until the sessions were full.

The ad said what it was and what it cost, printed on the picture where it couldn't get cut off: six weeks, ninety-nine dollars, racquet included. It was aimed at parents whose child had never played, and it answered the obvious objection, that they didn't own a racquet, before anyone had to raise it.

Everyone who clicked landed on a page about that program and nothing else: which ages, which days, when it started, what it cost. The parents who wanted it signed up and paid right there on their phones, in a few minutes, and got a confirmation straight away with the dates and what to bring.

All six sessions filled. Thirty-eight children signed up and paid.

Thirty-eight, from \$420.47.

That works out to \$11.07 for each child who signed up and paid, and it is worth being clear about what that is not. It is not \$11.07 for a click, or for a form, or for a name on a list to chase later. It is eleven dollars and seven cents for a child who will be on the court.

The ad did not sell anything. It got the right person to a page that could.

Four things had to happen in order: the ad reached the right parent, the page answered her, the checkout let her pay on her phone, and the confirmation told her what came next. Each one only matters if the one before it worked. If the page had been vague, the ad spend bought nothing. If the checkout had asked for an account, the page had convinced her for nothing.

Those four are what the rest of this book is about.

Introduction

Attention. Interest. Action. Follow-up.

Those are the four: getting the right person to look, giving them a reason to stay, making the next step obvious, and answering whatever the page couldn't finish.

FOUR LINKS, ONE CHAIN



If you have picked this up, there is a decent chance something is not working and it is hard to say what. The ads run, people click, and the numbers in the report look reasonable enough. Then at the end of the month there are fewer new customers than the spending suggests there should be.

So you fix something, and it is usually the ads, because the ads are the part you can see working. The platform gives you a screen full of numbers updated constantly: how many people were shown the ad, how many clicked, what each click cost. None of it tells you whether anybody bought, but it is the only part of the chain that reports on itself at all, so it is the part that gets the attention. New photographs, a bigger budget, a different agency. Sometimes results pick up for a few weeks. More often they don't, and nobody can say why.

The advertising platforms have got much better at their part of this. Given a well-made ad they will now find the right people on their own, and the hand-built audiences that mattered a few years ago often make results worse today. That is real progress and it is worth knowing about.

But it is progress on one link. No platform writes the ad for you, builds the page, takes steps out of the checkout, or answers the inquiry that arrives on a Sunday. And none of them can tell you which of those is the reason the money is not coming back.

Three links working and one broken is not three-quarters of a result. It is no result.

These are not four separate projects. They are four links in one chain. A good ad pointed at a page that cannot close anyone produces nothing. A page that sells well with nobody arriving produces nothing. Both of those working, followed by an inquiry that sits in an inbox for three days, produces nothing either.

Which is why the useful question is not *how do I get better at marketing*. It is *which link is broken*.

Most marketing starts prescribing on day one, with more budget, new photographs or a rebuilt website, without ever establishing what is actually wrong.

That is the good news, in a way. You don't have to be excellent at all four. You have to find the one that is failing and fix that one.

Some businesses can take payment on the page: a program, a class, a membership. Others can't, like a course of treatment, or anything costly enough that somebody wants to speak to a person first. The four links are the same either way, and only the fourth one changes shape.

How to use this

One chapter for each link. Read them in order or go straight to the one you already suspect.

Each chapter shows what breaks at that stage, what it looks like when it works, and what to change. Then it ends with questions to ask about your own business. Those are worth stopping for, because they are how you find out which link is yours.

You can see live examples of everything in this book at signupengine.io/examples: the ads, the pages and the quiz.

Before You Start

This book is for businesses that sell a specific product or service and want more customers. You may already be running ads. You may never have spent a dollar on advertising. Either is fine. Most of what follows is about what happens after a potential customer clicks, and that part works the same whether the click was paid for or not.

This book will not tell you whether you should advertise at all. Some businesses should. Others would be better off spending that money answering the phone faster, or fixing something else in the business. If only four people a year want what you sell, advertising will not find them cheaply. The honest answer is that ads are the wrong tool.

It also will not fix an offer no one wants, a price the market will not pay, or a service people try once and never use again. Those problems are real, and they are more common than broken advertising. Even four working links cannot sell something people do not want.

Read the four chapters as questions, not rules. The right answer for your business may be different from the right answer for another business. We have tried to make clear where each approach applies and where it does not. Almost nothing here is absolute.

The four links tell you where to look first. That is a smaller claim than most marketing advice makes, and it is one we can stand behind.

CHAPTER ONE

Attention

Getting the right person to look.

When the ad fails, nobody arrives. The page you built and the follow-up you planned never get used, because there is no one there to use them.

Pull up the last three ads your business ran. Read the first line of each one.

If those lines say *learn more*, or *contact us today*, or *book a free consultation*, the problem is already visible. Those are not offers, they are requests. The ad is asking a stranger to do the work of clicking, inquiring and going to find out, in exchange for nothing they can name.

An offer tells a person what they get and what it costs. A request asks them to go and find out.

AN ASK IS NOT AN OFFER

AN ASK

Free consultation

Contact us today

Call for pricing

AN OFFER

A 3D rendering of your finished space

\$1 for your first month

A cleaning, exam and x-rays for \$189

One asks the reader to go and find out. The other says what they get and what it costs.

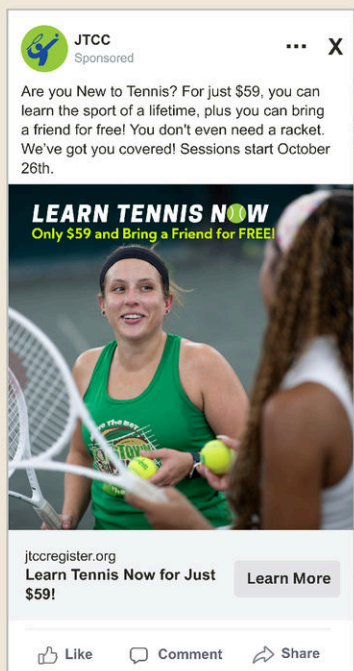
Nobody wants a free consultation. People want the thing on the right.

This mistake survives because no report points it out. A report shows how many people clicked and what each click cost. Neither number tells you that the ad describes the business instead of giving anyone a reason to act, so the ad keeps running, the results stay flat, and the owner decides advertising doesn't work for this kind of business.

What a good ad does

Here is one of ours. Adults, six weeks of beginner tennis, fifty-nine dollars, and a friend comes free.

WHAT A GOOD AD DOES



Puts the price in the first sentence

\$59, before anything else.

Answers the objection before it is raised

You do not even need a racket.

Gives a real date

Sessions start April 26th, not "sign up today."

Shows the real thing

Real coaches, real players, the actual courts.

Names one action

One thing to do next, stated plainly.

Five things, and none of them are about tennis.

Puts the price in the first sentence. Not at the bottom, not on the landing page, not on request. Price is the first thing a reader wants to know and the last thing most ads give them. Not everything can carry one, and a camp with four age groups and three

session lengths has no single number to print. In those cases the job is to give the reader something equally concrete instead: an offer they can picture, like a free first month with no joining fee, or a starting price with the word from in front of it. What you are avoiding is the ad that names no figure at all and expects somebody to go and find out.

Shows the real thing, not a stock version of it. That photograph is the actual courts and the actual coaches. Stock fails when it stands in for something the customer is about to see for themselves: a generic salon interior passed off as your studio, a smiling team that is not your team. A photograph that sells the result rather than the room is a different matter, and for some businesses that is the honest choice. What you are avoiding is the picture that gets contradicted the moment somebody walks in. Most businesses have something real they could show instead: a treatment being done, a unit being opened, a finished roof.

Answers the main objection before it is raised. For adult beginners, the reason not to sign up is not owning a racquet, so the ad says racquets are included before anyone has to ask. Every business has its own version of that objection, and most owners can name it without thinking, because they hear it every week.

Gives a real date. *Sessions start April 26* beats *sign up today*, because one is a fact and the other is not.

Names one action. One thing to do next, stated plainly.

One thing about that ad is worth saying out loud, because a careful reader will already have spotted it. The button on it says Learn more, which is one of the phrases this chapter has just been criticizing. The difference is where the offer lives. On Facebook and Instagram you do not write the button text, you choose it from a short list the platform gives you, and Learn more is often the least wrong option on that list. The offer sat in the first line, in the price, and on the image, so the button only had to be a door. It becomes a problem when it is doing the work the copy should have done, which is what happens when the whole ad says nothing but the name of the business and Learn more.

The part you cannot see

Fix the ad first, because the ad is the part you can see. Then start asking about the part you cannot.

Every campaign is set to chase something. Some chase clicks, some chase people who fill in a form, and some chase people who pay. That setting is invisible, since it is neither in the ad nor in the report, and it decides what your money buys.

A campaign set to chase clicks will find people who click, it will do that very well, and the report will look good. A campaign set to chase people who pay will find fewer of them, and more of those will buy.

Two more things decide whether your money lands anywhere useful.

Where the ad runs. A tennis center in the Bronx has no use for a parent in Queens who will never make the drive. A campaign running across a whole metro area, for a business that serves ten square miles, is buying attention that cannot be used.

Who sees it. This one has changed. The platforms are now good enough at finding the right people that a well-made ad does most of that work on its own, and the narrow, hand-built audiences that were correct several years ago often make results worse today. If your media buyer is still building five separate audience groups and layering interests on top of each other, ask when they last tested that against leaving it open.

You cannot check most of this yourself, but you can ask, and you can judge the answers.

Two questions about any campaign

- ✓ **Is this set to bring in leads or sales?** There is a real difference. Leads means someone gives you their details and a person follows up. Sales means someone pays on the page. Ask which one this campaign is chasing, and make sure the answer matches how your business actually sells.

Where is it running? Ask for the actual area, then ask where your customers actually come from. Those two answers should match, and distance is only part of it: the nearest neighborhood is not always the one that buys.

There is one more setting that has to be right, and it does not live in the ad at all. It lives on the page. That is the next chapter.

You cannot pick the winner in advance

Here is the part most owners get wrong. An ad can do all five of those things and still be the version that loses.

The ad an owner is proudest of is often the one that performs worst, and not occasionally either. The photograph that looked flat outperforms the one that took a week, and nobody can explain why beforehand.

Most businesses run a single ad. It underperforms, the owner decides advertising doesn't work here, and yet that single ad was never tested against anything.

The instruction is not "make a great ad." It is "make several honest ones and let the results decide."

Six or seven versions is plenty, as long as each one is truly distinct. Different photographs, different first lines, sometimes a different angle on the same offer, with the offer itself unchanged underneath. The campaign in the front matter ran eight: six photographs and two short videos, all shot at the club. Then you look at which versions produced customers and keep those.

Ask yourself

Read the first line of your last three ads. Is there a price, or a specific offer, in any of them? If not, what is a reader supposed to do with what is left?

Look at the images. Is that your place, your people, your work? Or a photograph of someone else's?

What reason do people give for not buying from you? Write it down. Then find where an ad of yours answers it.

How many versions are running right now? If the answer is one, nothing is being tested.

Interest

Giving them a reason to stay.

The ad did its job and somebody clicked. What happens in the next four seconds decides whether the money you spent getting them there was worth spending.

Most clicks land on a home page.

It is the address the business knows by heart, so it is the one that gets used. The visitor arrives somewhere that explains the club, the practice or the studio, with a menu of everything the business does and a photograph of the building. Somewhere further down, if they scroll, is the program they actually clicked on.

They clicked on one thing. The page is about everything.

That gap is where most advertising money goes. Not on bad ads, but on good ads pointed at a home page, which was built to introduce the business to anyone who might land on it. It was written for the person who searched your name, not for the parent who just clicked an ad about a beginners' program. It answers "who are you?" when the visitor is asking "is this the thing I just saw, and how do I get it?"

Some offers need more explaining than a short page can carry: a treatment, a membership, anything people want to read about before committing. The answer is still a page built for that one offer, with room to explain.

A home page is a table of contents. Someone who clicked an ad has already chosen the chapter.

The page has to pick up where the ad left off

Chapter 1 showed an ad: adults, six weeks of beginner tennis, fifty-nine dollars, sessions start April 26. Here is where that ad went.

The headline is the same promise, the price is the same price, and the photographs are the same courts. Nobody has to work out whether they are in the right place, because nothing has changed between the ad and the page.

That sounds obvious, and it is still the most common failure in this chapter. An ad promises six weeks for fifty-nine dollars, and the page opens with the club's mission statement and a menu.

The page the ad in chapter 1 pointed at, top to bottom.



The same courts, the same coaches

One next step, where people are ready

The condition is explained where the decision is

Pick a time, and see what is left

Pay on the same page

No account to create, no second website. Finishing here is what tells the ad platform a sale happened.

The page has to tell the platform what happened

This is the setting chapter 1 pointed at, and it does not live in the ad.

When somebody buys, the sale gets reported once, usually at the moment the payment goes through and they land on a confirmation page. That is how the advertising platform finds out a sale happened rather than just a click.

That matters more than it sounds, because a campaign can only chase what it can see. If the page never reports a sale, clicks are the only thing the platform can see, so clicks are what it goes and finds, and it gets very good at finding them.

The thing doing the reporting is a small piece of code on your website. Everybody in advertising calls it a pixel, and it is worth knowing the word, because you will meet it: in the platform's own settings, in anything you read about running ads, and in the first conversation with anybody you bring in to help. It does two jobs.

It tells the platform what happened. The code watches for the moments that matter and reports them: somebody landed on the page, somebody started a booking, somebody paid. Without it the platform is working blind, and everything it tells you about results is guesswork.

It gives you a second chance at the people who left. Most people who click your ad will not buy on that visit. They read the page, decide they are interested, and go back to whatever they were doing. Because the code recognizes them, the platform can put your ad in front of those particular people again a few days later. It is why you look at a jacket on one website and see it on your phone that evening while reading something unrelated. For anything people think about for a week before booking, that second chance is often where the sale actually happens.

Set the goal and report the result, and the platform starts looking for people who buy. Skip the second half and the first half is decoration.

The page needs an answer for people who cannot buy today

Look at the times on that page. Some are sold out. Others say two spots remaining.

Most businesses treat a full session as the end of the conversation. The visitor arrives, finds the slot they wanted is gone, and leaves, taking with them everything it cost to put them there.

That page does something else. It offers to tell them first when the next session opens.

Every online store already does this. You find the shirt you want, the size you need is gone, and instead of a dead end there is a box asking for your email so they can tell you when it is back. Nobody thinks of that as marketing. It is just the obvious thing to do with somebody who has already chosen.

Think about who those people are. They came from an ad, read the page, chose a time and found it full. They are the most interested people who will visit that page all week, and the only thing standing between them and a sale is a calendar.

What a waiting list is worth

One club collected 107 people this way over four weeks, all of them asking to hear first about the next adult session.

When it opened, they were emailed before it was announced publicly. Twenty-three of them registered and paid, roughly a fifth of the list, and every order landed in the same five-day window.

Half the list had been waiting twenty days or more before the session opened. They wanted it before anyone could buy it.

A second club runs the same thing. Their list has taken 212 signups across three sessions, with 129 of them waiting on one.

A list only helps if there is something to tell them about reasonably soon. Collected against a session six months away, or one at times nobody wants, it turns into a record of people you disappointed.

Ask yourself

Click your own ad, right now, on your phone. Does the first thing on the page say the same thing the ad said? Or does it say the name of your business?

Count the links on that page. Every unrelated link is another way to leave. How many does someone need to do the thing they came for?

Ask whether your page reports a sale. Not a click, a sale. If nobody can answer, that is the answer.

What happens on your page when something is full or unavailable? If the answer is nothing, you are paying to send your most interested visitors to a dead end.

Action

Making the next step obvious.

Somebody has decided to buy from you, and everything between that decision and finishing is working against you.

The hardest part is already done. The ad found them, the page convinced them, and they have decided. What follows is the same whether the next step is paying or asking a question: every screen between the decision and the finish is a chance to lose them.

Then the page asks them to create an account, confirm a password, and enter a billing address for a class they will attend six miles from their house. Somewhere around the fourth screen, on a phone, standing in a kitchen, they stop.

Nobody records that as a lost sale. It shows up as a click that didn't buy, and the conclusion drawn is that the traffic was poor, or that the people arriving were never serious buyers in the first place.

The traffic was not poor. Somebody was ready to pay and the process outlasted them.

Who is each step for?

Counting steps is a start, but the number on its own doesn't tell you much. What matters is who each step serves: the customer trying to buy, or the business collecting information.

Every field should earn its place. Ask what the business does with each answer, and if nobody uses it, you are taking the customer's time for nothing.

Ask that question about every screen in your own checkout and the answer is usually uncomfortable.

Steps that are usually about you, not them

- ✓ **Requiring an account before buying.** Retail settled this by offering one with guest checkout beside it. The record is worth having; compulsory is not.

A password, for something bought once. A subscription needs an account; a six-week class usually does not.

Fields nobody reads. For each one, name the person who uses it and what they do with it, then delete the rest.

A phone number, when nobody is going to call.

Anything that breaks on a phone. Most of your customers are on one, so a form that only behaves on a laptop is a form most of them meet at its worst.

What it is worth fixing

Before we rebuilt the registration process for one club, signing a child up for camp meant finding a form on the club's website, downloading it, printing it, filling it in by hand, scanning or photographing it, emailing it back, and then waiting for the club to call and take payment.

Seven steps, and not one of them could be done on a phone. We took it to three.

BETWEEN DECIDING AND PAYING

The same camp registration, before and after it was rebuilt.

BEFORE

7

- 1 Find the form on the website
- 2 Download the PDF
- 3 Print it and fill it in
- 4 Scan it or photograph it
- 5 Email it back
- 6 Wait for someone to reply
- 7 Call to pay

Nothing here could be done on a phone. Every step needed a printer, a scanner, or somebody at the club to pick up.

AFTER

3

- 1 Tap the ad
- 2 Fill in one short form
- 3 Pay and get confirmed instantly

All three happen on a phone, in a few minutes, without anybody at the club being involved.

Registrations rose **88%** the following season.

The programs, the coaches, the prices and the advertising budget didn't change. The ads, the page and the checkout did.

THE PROGRAMS DID NOT CHANGE

What changed was everything around them: the ads, the page, and a one-page checkout.



Two seasons two years apart. Camper counts and revenue taken from the client's own registration system.

And they didn't only sign up in greater numbers. Revenue grew faster than registrations, with prices held flat, which suggests families were booking more weeks each. Making the first registration easier made it easier to add another.

When the customer cannot decide

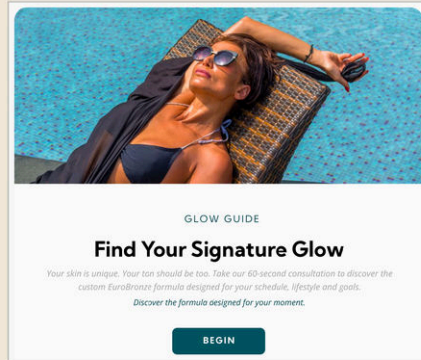
Some things cannot be bought in three steps, because the customer doesn't yet know what they want.

A sunless tanning studio has a menu of treatments that means nothing to somebody who has never had one. Their real options are to read it and guess, or call the studio and ask, and most people do neither. They decide to think about it, and thinking about it is where the sale goes.

So the page asks instead of telling.

It opens with the offer and one button. No menu, no form, no email, and nothing to read past the promise that this takes a minute.

WHERE IT STARTS



The page the ad points at

No form, no email, and nothing to read past the offer. The next thing on the page is the first question.

Sixty seconds is a promise the page has to keep, so it is the first thing said and the only number on the screen.

Then five short questions: how soon they need to rinse, what kind of finish they want, what they are preparing for, whether they want any sculpting, and any finishing treatments. Two or four choices on each screen, written in plain language, and each answer removes what no longer applies.

FIVE QUESTIONS, ONE RECOMMENDATION

A sunless tanning studio, start to finish. Each answer removes what no longer applies.

STEP 1

Your rinse window

Rapid Edit

STEP 2

Your desired finish

The Bronze

STEP 3

Performance & occasion

Signature Gala

STEP 4

Airbrush sculpting

Facial Sculpt

STEP 5

Finishing touches, optional

Luxe Finishing Powder

RESULT

One service, one price

Red Carpet Airbrush Tan • \$105

Two or four options, never a menu

Each screen offers a handful of plain-English choices. Nothing requires knowing what a treatment is called.

The last step is optional, and it is where the extras are

Add-ons are offered once, at the moment of deciding. Nobody has to sell them on a call afterwards.

The answers stack up in view

Every choice appears as a tag at the top. The customer watches their own profile being built.

Nothing is held back

No email address is asked for. The recommendation is given, then the booking button is right beneath it.

At the end there is one named service, one price, and a button that takes them straight to booking.

Every screen is about them. Not one of those questions is asked for the studio's benefit.

Three things in there are worth stealing.

The answers stay in view. Each choice appears as a tag along the top, so the customer watches their own profile being built rather than wondering how much further there is to go.

The last question is optional, and it is where the extras live: a finishing powder, a hydration treatment. Sculpting comes one step earlier. Offered once, at the moment of deciding, by a page rather than by a salesperson on a call afterwards.

Nothing is held back. No email address is asked for before the recommendation appears. Most pages like this would trade the answer for a contact detail, and this one gives the answer and puts the booking button underneath it.

That is more steps than three, not fewer. It is also the entire decision, made in under a minute by somebody who could not have made it from a menu at all.

Try it yourself

The Glow Guide is live at ebzsunless.com/glow-guide.

Take it on your phone and time it. Then go through your own signup and ask, at every screen, whether that step is for you or for them.

Ask yourself

Go through your own checkout on a phone, as a stranger. How many screens?
Where did it get annoying?

For every required field, name who reads it. If nobody does, delete it.

Does someone have to create an account before they can pay you? What is the account for?

Can your customer actually choose? If your options only make sense to someone who already knows the vocabulary, you are asking them to do research. Most will not.

Follow-up

Answering what the page could not finish, before and after payment.

They filled in the form. Nothing else on your website can help them now, and what happens in the next few hours decides whether the money that brought them there was worth spending.

Not every sale can finish on a page.

A six-week program for fifty-nine dollars can. A membership that costs a few thousand a year, a course of treatment, or anything somebody wants to see in person before committing to, cannot. The page does its job, the person asks, and then a human being has to do something.

The ad was paid for and the page did its work. Then the inquiry arrives in an inbox on a Friday afternoon, and by the time the front desk opens it on Monday that person has called two other places.

A lead nobody answers was never a lead. It was money spent finding somebody and then losing them.

The message that goes out first

Fill in your own inquiry form and watch what happens.

One of two things usually happens. Either a reply arrives that was written years ago, when the form was first set up, and has not been read by anybody since, or nothing arrives at all, just a line on the screen saying thank you. Then the browser closes and the customer has no record that anything was sent.

Both leave the person in the same place. We will be in touch shortly is not a time, and one of our associates is not a person. Somebody who asked on their phone at lunchtime has nothing to reply to, no name to chase, and no way to tell whether the

message arrived.

Here is what both of those look like side by side, with a rebuilt version of the same reply next to it. The left is a real screen from a client's website, before we changed it. The right is what we replaced it with.

A good first reply does four things, and none of them are difficult.

Names a time. Not shortly, but by five o'clock today, or tomorrow morning. A promise you will keep on your worst day, not your best one.

Names a person. Somebody's name, so the reply comes from a human rather than from a system.

Answers the next question before it is asked. They wanted to know the price, or whether there is a waiting list, or how it works, so put it in the reply. Somebody who already has their answer is easier to talk to than somebody still waiting for it.

Gives them something to do. A page to read, a time to pick, a video of the place. Not because it closes the sale, but because a person who does something is still interested when the call comes.

AFTER THE FORM IS SENT

The same inquiry, answered twice

One version ends the conversation. The other starts one.

WHAT THE FORM SENDS NOW

On the screen



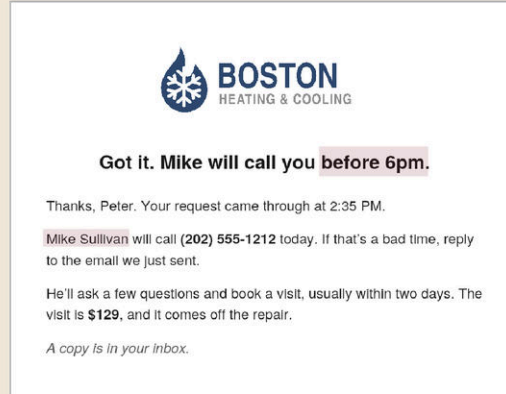
Not a person

No name, so nobody at the business owns the reply.

Not a time

Nothing here can be late, because nothing was promised.

WHAT IT COULD SEND



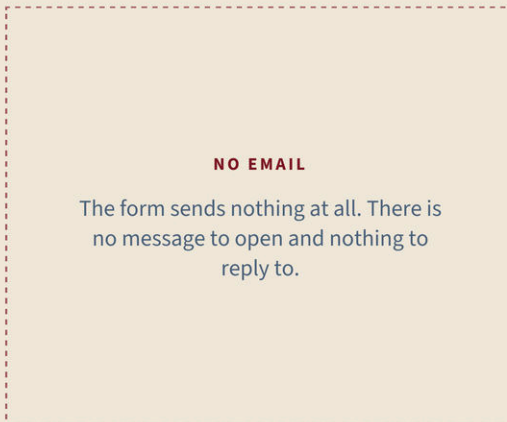
A person

Mike Sullivan owns the call, and the customer knows who to expect.

A time

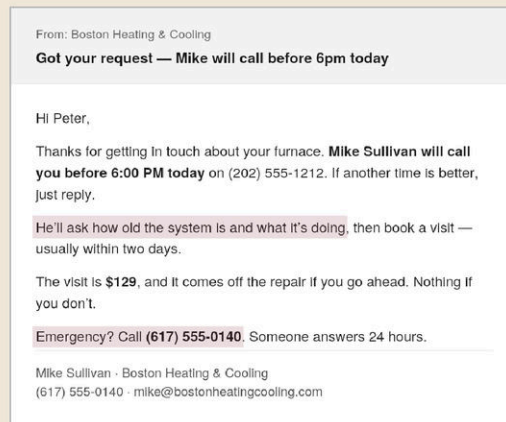
Before 6pm today, and one the business can keep on a busy day.

In the inbox



NO EMAIL

The form sends nothing at all. There is no message to open and nothing to reply to.



Two questions, answered first

What he will ask, and what the visit costs, before either is raised.

Something to do, and a way out

Reply to move the time, or call the line that answers around the clock.

Two things changed: the words on the screen, and whether anything arrives afterwards.

Nobody owns the inquiry

Here is the part no software fixes.

Ask who answers inquiries at your business and you will usually get a pause. The front desk assumes the manager handles them, the manager assumes the front desk does, and the inquiry sits in a shared inbox that three people can see and nobody checks. On Monday somebody replies to a message from Saturday.

None of that is anybody's fault. It is what happens when a job has no name attached to it.

Three questions, and you will know within a minute

- ✓ **Who answers inquiries?** One name. Not a department, not an inbox.
- ✓ **By when?** A time that survives a busy Tuesday, not an ambition.
- ✓ **What happens when that person is away?** If the answer is nothing, then every holiday, every sick day and every weekend is a stretch when your advertising is paying for inquiries that go nowhere.

The ones who do not answer the first time

Somebody inquiring about a membership is not going to decide today. They want to see the place, they want to think about the cost, and most of them will want to talk it over with somebody at home.

So the call goes out and it goes to voicemail. A message is left. For most businesses that is the end of it: one attempt, one voicemail, and the inquiry quietly becomes a name in a spreadsheet nobody opens again.

That person didn't lose interest. They were driving, or working, or it was a number they didn't recognize. Nothing about not answering a phone once means somebody stopped wanting the thing they asked about four hours ago.

Two things fix most of this, and neither is a sales technique.

Try more than once and space it out. A call, then a message the next day, then something a few days later. Not the same message three times, but different times of day and different ways of reaching them. Somebody who didn't pick up on Tuesday

afternoon may well pick up on Thursday morning.

Send something each time, rather than just checking in. Every attempt should carry the thing they wanted when they inquired. For a club, a time you could show them around. For a medspa or a dental practice, the specifics they asked about and a way to book. For anything priced by the job, the price or a realistic range.

Just checking in, did you get my message? gives the person nothing. The only reason to reply is to make you feel better, which is why most people don't. A message carrying the price gives them something useful whether they reply or not and moves them closer to deciding even if they never pick up the phone.

Then stop. There is a point where continuing costs you more in goodwill than the sale is worth, and it comes sooner than most sales advice suggests. It is also much further out than one voicemail.

What this looks like written down

Somebody inquires, and a reply goes out within the hour naming a person and a time. That person calls the same day. If there is no answer, a message goes out the next morning with the price and what is still available. A few days later, one more, with something useful in it. Then the inquiry goes on a list to be contacted when the next session or opening comes round.

None of that requires a salesperson. It requires somebody deciding it is their job and writing down what happens at each step.

One message, twenty-three customers

The club in chapter 2 sent one email to its list of 107 and took twenty-three registrations in five days.

That is the whole of the follow-up. One list, one message, sent at the moment it was useful. Nobody was chased and nobody was sold to.

Which sales actually need a conversation

Some things genuinely cannot be booked without a conversation first, like a treatment that depends on an examination, or a procedure with options nobody could choose from a page.

But that is worth deciding rather than assuming. Most businesses treat a call as necessary for everything, and usually that is because it is how they have always done it, not because every sale genuinely needs one. Look at what you sell and separate it: what somebody could buy right now if you let them, and what really does need a person first. Then give them the choice on everything in the first group.

A customer who could have booked online and had to call instead is a customer you made work for it. Some of them will. The rest go somewhere that lets them.

They paid. Now what?

The second version of this link is the one businesses forget entirely, because it doesn't feel like a problem.

Somebody bought, the page took the payment, and the sale is done, so attention moves on to finding the next one.

But that customer is now deciding, without anybody helping them, whether this was a good idea. What arrives in the next few days shapes whether they show up, whether they come back, and whether they tell anyone.

The confirmation is the cheapest thing in this book to fix and the most commonly wasted. Most of them say *order #4471 confirmed* and attach a receipt.

A receipt is not wrong, and for some purchases it is all anybody needs. But if what they bought has a date attached, they now have questions it does not answer: when to arrive, what to bring, where to park. If those answers are coming a week beforehand, say so.

What decides this is not the wording of one automated message but whether anything is planned behind it. One club sends a note a week before the first session with the coach's name and what to bring. That is not a better receipt; it is a business that decided the customer should hear from them.

A receipt confirms a transaction. Everything after it decides whether they turn up expecting to enjoy it.

Where this book stops

We are not the people to teach you how to sell. That is a different skill, a different book, and probably somebody else's.

This chapter is about keeping an interested person there until somebody responds, and making sure a new customer knows what happens next.

Get that right and the conversation is easier. Get it wrong and there is no conversation, because they found somebody who answered first.

Ask yourself

Send yourself an inquiry through your own form. What came back? How long did it take? Would it have kept you interested?

Ask who answers inquiries. If the answer takes longer than a second, that is your problem.

How long did your last ten replies take? Not the average. The slowest one. That is the experience some of your customers are having.

Find your confirmation message and read it as a customer. Does it tell them what happens now, or does it tell them their card was charged?

How to Tell If It Is Working

Reading the report you are handed.

All four links in the chain are working, and now somebody sends you a report saying so. Can you tell whether they are right?

Reports are easy to produce and hard to read. Every advertising platform generates one automatically, full of numbers that are all true and mostly beside the point.

Here is a real one, from the campaign at the front of this book.

\$420.47 spent. The ad was shown 27,159 times to 8,025 people and got 826 clicks, at fifty-one cents each. That is about three clicks for every hundred times it was shown.

Every one of those numbers is accurate. Now answer one question: did anyone become a customer?

You can't, because nothing in that report tells you.

That is the same campaign, described twice. The second version is the one the club could act on, and it didn't come from the advertising platform. It came from the club's own registration system, which records every order and where it came from.

ONE CAMPAIGN, TWO REPORTS

The same four weeks, described twice

\$420.47 spent on a children's tennis program.

WHAT THE ACTIVITY REPORT SAYS

27,159

times the ad was shown

826

clicks

\$0.51

a click

3 in 100

clicks per hundred times shown

WHAT THE OUTCOME REPORT SAYS

38

children signed up

\$11.07

to sign up each one

\$3,762

taken in fees

\$8.95

back for every \$1 spent

Both columns describe the same four weeks

Every number on the left is real, and none of it tells you whether the campaign worked. Clicks and click prices measure activity. Only the right-hand column measures whether anyone actually signed up and paid.

Where the right-hand column comes from

The ad platform recorded 19 purchases at \$22.13 each. The club's own records show 38 children enrolled at \$11.07. Same campaign, same weeks. The platform misses people who see an ad, don't click, and come back later on their own.

Figures from Meta Ads Manager and the club's own store order records, August 6 to September 4, 2026. Store records show 34 of 38 enrollments tagged to the ads; the other four came in directly.

The ad platform does not see everything

Thirty-eight children registered and paid.

The advertising platform recorded nineteen purchases.

It counted the people who clicked the ad and registered in the same sitting, and missed the ones who saw it, thought about it, and came back two days later on their own. Those children enrolled and paid, and the platform never saw them.

**The platform recorded nineteen purchases.
Thirty-eight children were enrolled.**

Read that the wrong way round and you would have concluded the campaign was expensive. You might reasonably have turned it off.

This is not the ad platform being dishonest. It is a platform reporting what it can see, which is less than what happened. Your own system sees all of it, because your own system is where the money arrives.

A cheap lead is not the same as a cheap customer

The other number that gets reported proudly, and means very little on its own, is what a lead cost.

Say your ads produce inquiries at ten dollars each. That sounds good. But if one in ten of those people buys, each customer cost you a hundred dollars, and the ten-dollar figure told you nothing on its own.

Somebody else pays twenty-five dollars an inquiry and one in three buys, so their customers cost seventy-five. They are paying more than twice as much per inquiry and getting customers for less, and if what they sell is worth more, they are further ahead again.

You need both numbers. Most businesses can only produce the first.

The one question

Ask this of anyone running your advertising, including us.

What number will you report on, and how will we know if this is working?

Then listen to the shape of the answer rather than the confidence of it.

If the answer is how many people were reached, or how many clicked, you already know how the relationship ends. Not because the person is dishonest, but because you have just agreed on a definition of success that doesn't include your revenue.

If the answer is bookings, members, registrations or money taken, you have something to hold up in ninety days.

And notice the second half of the question. Somebody who cannot tell you how you will know it is working also cannot tell you when it has stopped working, which means you will find out from your bank balance rather than from them.

What good reporting looks like

- ✓ **It ties spending to outcomes.** Not “\$2,500 and 5,523 clicks” but “\$2,500 and 47 booked appointments at \$53 each.”
- ✓ **It survives a follow-up question.** Ask where a number came from. There should be an answer, and it should not require a meeting.
- ✓ **It reports bad news on time.** Somebody who surfaces problems only after you notice them is managing your perception.
- ✓ **It shows the same numbers every month.** Numbers that appear when they flatter are being selected, not tracked.

Ask yourself

Open your last report and count. How many of the numbers in it describe money coming in, rather than people looking, clicking, or being reached?

Pick one number in that report and ask where it came from. Keep asking until the answer is a system that records payments. If the trail ends at the advertising platform, that number is an estimate.

Does your own system tell you which customers came from advertising? If not, that is the first thing to fix, because nothing else in this section is possible without it.

Where Do You Stand

Finding the weakest link in your chain.

You have read four chapters about what breaks. This is where you work out which one is broken in your business.

Before you can judge any of the four, you need to know what a customer is worth to you. Without that there is no way to tell whether what you are paying is sensible or ruinous.

There is no benchmark to copy

Published averages exist, and they are less useful than they look.

What a customer costs shifts with your city, your competition, what you charge, how long your account has been running, and what you are asking a customer to do. A figure that describes everyone describes nobody.

Here is what five of our own campaigns cost. Not as a target, but as a range, so you can see how wide the spread is between businesses doing broadly similar things.

OUR OWN CAMPAIGNS

What these actually cost us

The cheapest number is not necessarily the best one. Each figure measures a different outcome.

THEY PAID

A completed sale. The money arrived and the club can see it.

\$8.60

One paid \$99 registration

An adult program at a different club. Money taken on the page.

\$11.07

One paid \$99 registration

A children's program, newly offered. Money taken on the page.

\$36.57

One paid \$59 registration

An adult program. Taken on the page.

THEY ASKED

Someone got in touch, or went through to book. Nobody has paid yet.

\$5.20

One membership inquiry

A racquet and swim club. Someone asking, not buying.

\$7.32

One completed quiz and a click to the booking page

A tanning studio. People finished a quiz, then went through to book.

Compare within a group, not across

The two under **They asked** are not sales, so setting them beside a completed registration makes every figure under **They paid** look expensive. That comparison means nothing. Within a group the programs still sold at different prices, so read each figure against what that customer paid.

All figures come from Meta Ads Manager and the clients' own store order records, each covering a single campaign over the dates it ran. The children's program figure is checked against store records showing 34 of 38 enrollments tagged to the ads. The tanning studio's bookings are taken in a third-party system, so payment cannot be confirmed from our records.

What can you afford to pay?

Three steps, using numbers you already have.

1 Find which path your business uses

They buy on your website

- They see the ad
- They land on your page
- They pay

One sum: what you spent ÷ how many bought.
That is your customer cost. Go to step 3.

Someone has to call them

- They see the ad
- They land on your page
- They leave their details
- Someone calls them back
- Some of them buy

You are paying for leads, not customers. Do step 2 first.

2 Work out what one customer really costs

Say each lead costs you **\$5**. You pay for every lead, including the ones who never buy, so the customer is carrying all of them.

2 IN 100 LEADS BUY

so one customer takes
50 leads

$$50 \times \$5 =$$

\$250

PER CUSTOMER

4 IN 100 LEADS BUY

so one customer takes
25 leads

$$25 \times \$5 =$$

\$125

PER CUSTOMER

10 IN 100 LEADS BUY

so one customer takes
10 leads

$$10 \times \$5 =$$

\$50

PER CUSTOMER

\$5 is an example, so use your own. Rates vary too widely between businesses for a borrowed number to help. If you do not know yours, measure that first.

3 Set that against what a customer is worth

Not what they paid the first time. Everything they pay you, including what they come back for.

They buy once

\$300

WHAT A CUSTOMER IS WORTH

\$250 to win a \$300 customer leaves \$50, before you have delivered anything.

They come back, or move up

\$1,200

WHAT A CUSTOMER IS WORTH

The same \$250 leaves \$950. Same campaign, same lead price, a different business.

Work out your own version of that number. Without it, there is no way to judge what you are paying.

The question worth asking is not whether your number is normal. It is whether you can afford it.

The first sale is not always the product

One of those campaigns sold a fifty-nine dollar beginner tennis program. Roughly half the places came in free on a friend's registration, so the average collected was about thirty dollars. Judged on its own, that looks like thin business.

Over eighteen months, 1,455 people signed up for it. Half of them went on to the next level at eighty dollars. Forty percent of those moved into full club programming, worth around a thousand dollars a year each.

All in, counting advertising, the registration system and managing it, the club spent **\$14.83** to bring in one player. One player was worth **\$270** across those eighteen months, most of it from what the players who stayed went on to spend.

The fifty-nine dollar program was never the product. It was the door.

That changes what the club can afford to pay. Judged on the first sale, the campaign is barely worth running. Judged on what a player is worth by the end of the second season, it is one of the best things the club does.

Most businesses have a version of this and have never worked it out. A customer who buys once is worth what they paid. One who comes back is worth something else entirely, and you cannot decide what to spend until you know which one you are buying.

Score your own chain

Four links. Score each one honestly, and score it on what you found when you went and looked, rather than on what you believe about your own business.

SCORE YOUR OWN

Where does yours break?

Give each stage a 0, 1 or 2. Your lowest score is where to start working.

1 • ATTENTION

YOUR SCORE

Not enough of the right people are showing up.

0 1 2

0 • NOT YET

You boost posts and judge them by likes and reach.

1 • PARTLY

The ads go to an audience you chose, and you know what a click costs.

2 • WORKING

You know what it costs to get one paying customer, not just one click.

Most people read this as a budget problem.

Chapter 1

Before you spend more, find out what one customer actually costs you.

2 • INTEREST

YOUR SCORE

They show up and leave.

0 1 2

0 • NOT YET

The ad sends people to your home page, where the offer competes with everything else on it.

1 • PARTLY

There's a page built for the ad, but you scroll to find the next step.

2 • WORKING

The page says what the ad said. One next step, plain to see on a phone.

Most people read this as a design problem.

Chapter 2

Check that your ad and your page make the same promise before you redesign the page.

3 • ACTION

YOUR SCORE

They start and don't finish.

0 1 2

0 • NOT YET

Whatever comes next, paying or booking a call, has to happen by phone, email or a printed form.

1 • PARTLY

It works online, but you ask for more than you need.

2 • WORKING

You ask only what you need, it finishes on a phone, and you know where people stop.

Most people read this as a price problem.

Chapter 3

Count the steps between deciding and finishing, whether that means paying or sending an inquiry, before you cut the price.

4 • FOLLOW-UP

YOUR SCORE

Good leads that never become customers.

0 1 2

0 • NOT YET

Follow-up depends on somebody remembering, and nobody owns it.

1 • PARTLY

People get a reply, but how fast depends on who is working that day.

2 • WORKING

One person owns it, you promise a time and keep it, and there is a plan for after.

Most people read this as a bad-leads problem.

Chapter 4

Check how long your last ten replies took, before you decide the inquiries were poor quality.

SCORE YOUR OWN

What your score means

Add up the four numbers. The total tells you what kind of problem you have.

ATTENTION		INTEREST		ACTION		FOLLOW-UP		TOTAL
	+		+		+		=	

out of 8

It isn't really built yet.

0–2 Nearly anyone you attract will slip away before they reach you. Start at your lowest-scoring stage, and where several tie, take the earliest of them.

One or two stages are carrying the rest.

3–4 The usual pattern is a strong start and a weak middle. Work on your lowest-scoring stage first, because everything after it inherits the problem.

It works. The losses are in the details.

5–6 You will get more from measuring what you already have than from rebuilding it. At this level small changes add up.

This one is working.

7–8 Nothing here is obviously broken. Measure each link before deciding whether the next gain comes from reaching more people or from the details.

A note on what you already suspect

You probably already suspect what is wrong, and you may well be right. You may need more people seeing your ads, or you may be charging too much.

Scoring does not tell you your instinct was wrong. It tells you what to check first.

Your lowest single score is where to start working on it, even if that is not chapter 1.

Add them up and start with your lowest. Not the first one, and not the one you were already planning to fix.

If two of them score equally low, start with the earlier one, because everything after it inherits the problem. Starting earlier does not mean spending more. Fixing Attention is about making the ad an offer, not buying more traffic for a page that is already losing people.

If you want a second opinion

There is an offer on the last page of this book. Send us the stage you scored lowest and we will look at it with you.

Ask yourself

Which link scored lowest? Write it down before you do anything else. The one you suspected before you started is not always the one that scores worst.

What is one customer worth to you over the time they stay? Not what they paid the first time, but everything they paid, less what it costs you to deliver it. That remainder is what you have to spend on finding them.

What does one cost you to get? Not what you paid for a click, but everything you spent divided by the customers it produced.

Before you close this

You started this book with a tennis center in the Bronx that had run children's programs for years and had never advertised one properly. Thirty-eight children signed up and paid, from \$420.47 in advertising. Eleven dollars and seven cents each.

Nothing about that campaign was clever. The ad said the price. The page said the same thing the ad said. The checkout finished on a phone. The confirmation told a parent what to bring. Four ordinary things, done in order, none of which depended on a bigger advertising budget.

That is the whole argument. You do not need to be excellent at all four, but each link has to work well enough to hand the customer to the next. You need to know which one is costing you the most, and you now have a way to find out. Score your four, take the lowest, and change one thing this month rather than four things next year.

About the Authors

Peter Goodman

Co-founder · Strategy and Marketing

Peter has spent his career building businesses from nothing, which means he has done every job in one: sold, marketed, hired, priced, and signed off on the spending. That is the perspective this book is written from, the owner deciding whether the money going out is coming back, without a marketing department to ask. He has built and scaled companies from early-stage startups through venture-backed growth, beginning with a medical software company that was later acquired, and his work spans healthcare, mobile apps, nonprofits and sports.

Brian Bollman

Co-founder · Product and Technology

Brian is a product strategist and technical architect who builds the systems this book is about. He has led the launch of multiple digital platforms, with a particular focus on web security and on building systems that can grow without being rebuilt. His work starts from the customer's experience rather than the feature list, on the principle that a product built around how someone actually decides will outperform one built around what a business wants to say. It is the same argument this book makes about pages.

Chad McDaniel

Paid Media

Chad has worked in digital marketing since 2017 and holds Meta's professional certification for media buying. He currently manages roughly \$800,000 a month in ad spend across client accounts in medspas, education, home services, storage, healthcare and sports, among others. The range matters: what a business can afford to pay for a customer, and what it takes to convince one, changes completely from one of those to the next. He also consults for other agencies and trains their media buyers.

About SignUpEngine

Most businesses buy their advertising from one company and their website from another. The ad gets written without knowing what the page says, the page gets built without knowing what the ad promised, and nobody owns the space between them. That is where the money goes.

We build both. The page, the registration or booking, the checkout, and the advertising that points at it.

Where the sale can finish online, we make sure it does. Where it cannot, which covers memberships, a course of treatment and anything expensive enough that people want to speak to somebody first, the job changes. It is not about more leads. It is about fewer people who are worth calling back, and enough about each one to know what to say.

Because we build the destination as well as the campaign, we can tell you which ad produced a paying customer, rather than only which ad produced clicks.

Who we work with

Sports programs and camps. Medspas and aesthetics. Dental, chiropractic and other practices that fill a calendar. Fitness and membership businesses. Education and training. Home services. Storage.

BEFORE YOU CLOSE THIS

Send us the one that scored lowest

You just scored four stages. We will look at the worst one with you.

1 Tell us which stage scored lowest

Attention, Interest, Action or Follow-up. One line is enough.

2 Send the ad and the page it points to

A link to each, or screenshots. Nothing else.

3 We write back within three days

Where we think you are losing people, what we would change first, and what we would leave alone. In writing, so you can act on it without us.

No call unless you ask for one

If the honest answer is that you should fix two things yourself and come back in a month, that is what we will say. We would rather be useful now than booked now.

SEND IT HERE

peter@signupengine.io

Peter Goodman, co-founder. It comes to me, and I answer it.



signupengine.io