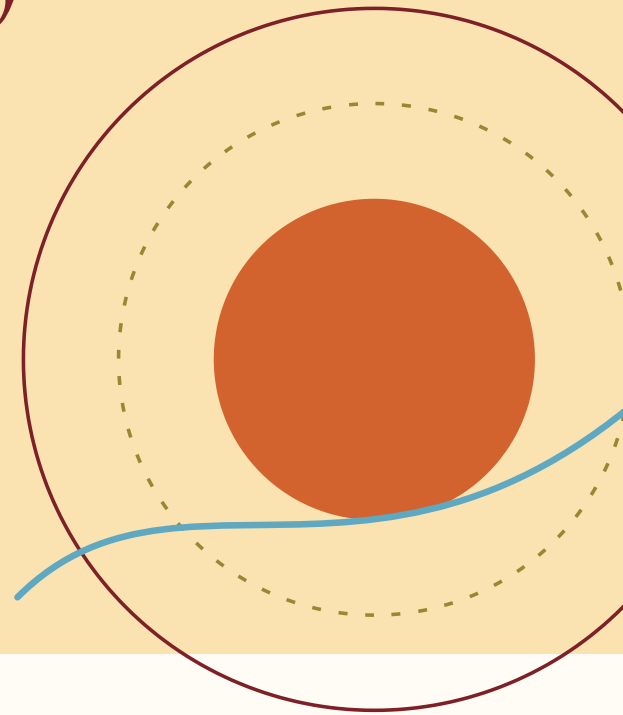


The Modern Marketing *Playbook*

How startups really win customers, and how to do the work faster with AI. Twenty chapters, thirty-two exercises, eleven build projects and one plan you can start on Monday.



20 CHAPTERS
32 EXERCISES
53 TOOLS EXPLAINED
30-DAY PLAN

FOR PEOPLE
WHO BUILD.

How to use *this workbook*

This is not a book to finish. It's a book to use up. Write in it, print the worksheets, cross things out.

Every chapter has the same rhythm: a short idea, an example, an "In short" box, and exercises. The first exercise is about understanding, the second is about doing. If you only have twenty minutes, do the second one.

You don't need a startup to use this. Pick a project now and keep it the whole way through. It can be your own idea, a club or side hustle, the company you intern at, or a brand you admire and want to reverse-engineer. Exercises build on each other. By the last page you'll have a go-to-market plan, a voice file for your AI tools and a list of real people to talk to.

Your project

QUESTION	YOUR ANSWER
What is it called?	
What does it do, in one line?	
Who pays for it?	
What does it cost them?	

Signs you'll see

EXERCISE	Something to do. Time estimates are honest, not optimistic.
PROMPT	Copy it into ChatGPT, Claude or Gemini. Replace the [brackets].
FREE	A course, tool plan or resource that costs nothing.

A PROMISE

No filler chapters, no "the future is now". If a page doesn't help you act, it isn't in here.

ON AI

AI shows up in every chapter, but as a tool, not a topic. It makes the work faster. It doesn't tell you what's worth doing.

LINKS

Every link in this PDF is clickable, including the contents. Tools change quickly; prices are approximate, so check before you buy.

TIME

All 32 chapter exercises: roughly 20 hours. Spread over the 30-day plan, that's about half an hour a day.

Five parts. *One route.*

Read it front to back the first time. Each part builds on the one before, and each ends with something finished in your hands.



Pick your path

IF YOU ARE...	DO THIS	TIME
New to marketing	Everything in order, following the 30-day plan in Part 5.	30 days
Building something now	Chapters 2, 4, 6, 7 and 10, then the outreach and landing-page projects.	1 week
Here for the AI	Chapter 4 for context, then all of Part 4 and the tool guide.	3-4 days
Studying for an exam	Read the "In short" box of every chapter, then the glossary.	1 evening

Every chapter looks the same

1 • THE IDEA

One page you can read in five minutes, with a real example.

2 • IN SHORT

Three lines to remember. Perfect for revision.

3 • EXERCISES

One to understand it, one to do it. Write your answers right in the boxes.

What's inside

Every line is a link. The coloured tab on the edge of each page tells you which part you're in.

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1

Foundations

Before any post, ad or tool: who exactly are you for, how many of them are there, and why would they choose you?

00	The Monday test	START
01	Marketing, the startup way	2 EX.
02	Find one customer	2 EX.
03	How big is it, really?	2 EX.
04	Positioning & strategy	2 EX.

BY THE END

You have a one-sentence description of your project, a beachhead customer you can reach, a market estimate you can defend, and a positioning statement.



START HERE

The Monday test

A quick, honest check of where you are. You'll redo it on the last day.

Most marketing advice fails one test: on Monday morning, do you know what to do?

Courses teach you the vocabulary. Social media teaches you the hacks. Neither tells you which three things to do this week for your specific product. That gap is what this workbook is for.

Rate yourself from 1 (no idea) to 5 (could explain it to a founder). Be strict; nobody sees this but you.

I CAN...

DAY 1

DAY 30

describe my customer so precisely I could find ten of them this week

explain why someone would choose my product over the alternative

estimate my market size from the bottom up

name the one channel I'm focusing on, and why

calculate what a customer costs me and what they're worth

write a hook that stops someone scrolling

write a cold message people actually reply to

get useful, non-generic work out of an AI assistant

tell when a tactic crosses an ethical or legal line

EXERCISE 0.1 • 10 MIN

Write down what you believe today

Complete the sentence: "The biggest reason my project doesn't have more customers is..." Don't fix it yet. You'll come back to this answer in chapter 7 and see if it still holds.

WHY RATE YOURSELF?

It's harder to fool yourself with a number. A 2 that becomes a 4 is proof you learned something.

"Almost every failed startup has a product. What failed startups don't have are enough customers."

GABRIEL WEINBERG, TRACTION

01

Marketing,
the startup way

Why the textbook definition breaks down when nothing is certain yet.

Marketing is creating and satisfying demand for a product. In a startup, it mostly means one thing: traction.

In a large company, the product, price and customer are already set. Marketing maintains campaigns and manages budgets and agencies. That's not wrong, it's a different situation.

A startup has ten times the expectations and a tenth of the resources. You're not managing demand, you're finding out whether it exists. So the first goal isn't "brand awareness". It's **product-market fit**: the right thing, for the right people, at a price they'll pay.

Growth is built in, not sprinkled on

You can't add growth to a finished product like seasoning. The startups that grow early build for it from the start: they engage an audience before launch, give value for free, release a beta to the community they built, listen, and repeat until people pull the product out of their hands.

Four words you'll hear every week

TERM	WHAT IT ACTUALLY MEANS
PMF	Product-market fit. Customers would be genuinely disappointed if you disappeared.
GTM	Go-to-market. Which market you pick and how you reach it.
Traction	Evidence of demand you can show: users, revenue, waitlist, retention.
Default alive	On current numbers you reach profitability before the money runs out.

IN SHORT

- In a startup, marketing means traction: proof that people want it.
- Product-market fit comes before growth tactics.
- Know if you're starting (first 10 customers) or scaling.

BRANDING ≠ MARKETING

Branding is how you're perceived. Marketing creates demand and sales. A beautiful logo has never paid a salary on its own.

REAL EXAMPLE

Facebook started with one university. Not "students", not "young people": Harvard students only. Small enough to dominate, and the exclusivity did the marketing.

Starting vs. scaling

When you're starting

- The goal is your first ten customers.
- Your plan looks like an experiment list.
- Do things that don't scale: DMs, calls, hand-delivered onboarding.

When you're scaling

- The goal is market share and margin.
- Your plan looks like a marketing plan.
- Budgets, attribution and repeatable channels matter.

Most people copy scaling tactics while they're still starting. A five-person startup running brand campaigns like Nike is burning money it doesn't have. Know which phase you're in.

EXERCISE 1.1 • 15 MIN

The one-sentence company

Fill in the sentence, then read it aloud to someone outside your field. If they ask "so what is it?", rewrite it.

We help _____ who struggle with _____ by _____, so they can _____.

EXERCISE 1.2 • 30 MIN

Traction audit

List every customer, user or sign-up you have, or for a brand you study, every way you can see them acquiring people. Where did each one come from? If you have none yet, list the ten people you'd ask first and how you know them.

#	WHO	WHERE THEY CAME FROM	COULD THIS REPEAT?
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Look at the last column. The answers that say "yes" are the beginning of your channel strategy in chapter 6.

END OF THE FREE SAMPLE

That was chapter one. *Nineteen more* are waiting.

The full script has 80 pages in five parts: twenty chapters with 32 exercises, eleven build projects, a guide to 53 tools, step-by-step setup, the prompt library, videos, free courses, a glossary and a 30-day plan.

[GET THE FULL SCRIPT →](#)