FOUNDER SELF TALK

notes and plays on go-to-market, fundraising, systems, pain and money, from thousands of conversations with founders

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3,000+
FOUNDER INTERVIEWS

3x
IRONMAN

2017
IN OUTBOUND SINCE

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A NOTE BEFORE YOU START

I've been in lead gen since 2017. I started out doing lists and prospecting for realtors. Covid killed that business in a single week, and I had to pivot hard and fast. Since then I've built gtm.ventures, RaaSRocket and PodPire, and I've hosted thousands of founders, CEOs and investors on my podcast. At my peak I was doing 15 interviews a day.

Over those years I wrote a lot. Thousands of LinkedIn posts and hundreds of newsletters. Most of it was written fast, between calls, after a long run or at 6am in Oaxaca. Some of it was smart, and some of it was me thinking out loud.

This book is the best of it. I cut it, edited it and put it in order.

I didn't write it like a textbook, and you don't have to read it front to back. Open it anywhere. Each part has two kinds of pages:

- **notes:** short lines, the stuff I'd text a founder friend at midnight
- **plays:** longer pieces with the actual system, the numbers and how I run it

It's for founders, the people who stay in the game for 10 years when a normal person wouldn't last 30 days.

If something in here makes you money, tell me. If something in here is wrong, tell me louder.

charles

> *"I don't want to get lucky. I want to build a solid base and grow, ground up, through day by day habit building."*

01

PART 1

GO TO MARKET

NOTES

Cash in the bank beats vanity points on the scoreboard.

Most founders go for ego, not cash. Forbes features, vanity podcasts, make-believe PR. It looks good on LinkedIn, but it doesn't build a pipeline.

The real game is sending cold emails, getting hard nos and grinding through rejection until you get enough yeses to hit product market fit. Then you stack those yeses into cash.

You don't have a cold email problem. You have a GTM problem.

Personalization doesn't equal conversion. "Loved your podcast from 2021 where you mentioned your dog Rocco" followed by a generic offer is just lipstick on a cold email.

A great offer is an instant pattern match. No icebreaker needed. Pain -> solution -> reply.

The biggest bottleneck in B2B outbound isn't sending. It's what you're asking for.

Hype is not conversion. Hype gets you leads, maybe. Conversion comes from clarity plus ICP alignment.

If I need to stop and think to understand your offer, most people will just walk by.

Cold email doesn't kill your brand, it exposes it. Most people can't handle that level of honesty from the market.

Cold email is a stress test. It doesn't destroy strong systems, it reveals weak ones.

Amateurs send from their main domain, get blacklisted, then blame outbound. They damaged themselves by not understanding infrastructure.

Being repelled by cold outreach is a net loss, just like being turned off by ads. That's your ego in the way. Tell it to move a bit, it's blocking the sun.

Deep thinkers skip the apologies. Drop the "I hate to bother you" and the "I'm sure you get this a lot". Go in with a precise intention and take one slice.

Your prospect will tell you when it's time for the meeting link. Sending it too early makes you sound like a shark.

If the only reply you get is "what's the cost?", you can already discard it. Serious buyers want copy samples, ICP fit, proof. Nobody makes a decision off one cold email and a price tag.

Most people talk about meetings before they talk about interest. They skip five steps and then complain they have no meetings.

Serious offer, funny email. That's been my most consistent combo for opens and replies.

Most outbound sounds like a CRM sneezed.

The wallets aren't in the future, they're in the present. The money is in fixing last decade's problem for today's decision makers.

You're pitching autonomous agents to people who still struggle with email segmentation. Meet buyers where they actually are, not where you wish they were.

The #1 mistake isn't pricing. It's client selection. If you sell to high level operators, you don't need manipulation tactics.

Once your business reaches a certain level, avoid high-resistance prospects. Resistance means the person thinks you're a salesperson, and you're actually a doctor.

A healthy dose of resistance is fine, say 5 to 20 percent. When a meeting goes way over that and you can feel it, part ways politely.

Disqualifying is as important as qualifying, especially when your time is the finite resource.

"Get to a no fast" is great advice once you have 10 to 30 meetings a month. Before that, it's just ego, and ego doesn't equal revenue.

Success is a staircase, not a jump. The only people winning from extremist advice are the ones selling it.

Most software companies should run an agency arm until they find product market fit. Clients confirm their pain by paying you with their hard earned money.

Reverse the filter on your clients. A great lead gen system will absolutely generate leads... if the client has product market fit.

More pitches means more money. It also means more resistance. Haters don't pay bills, clients do.

You need an A, B, C, D, E, F, G plan. One channel as the cause of all your success is a feeding tube that can be unplugged at any moment.

I force serendipity to happen constantly. The moguls on this planet don't wait for things to come to them. They reach out relentlessly.

Reaching out kills the ego, just like stand-up comedy does.

PLAY

THE 5 X 5 X 5 EMAIL MATRIX

If you can't get meetings with this system, you're in the wrong place at the wrong time.

1. Write down your ICPs. Start with 5. Example: fintech CEOs with $5M in funding, 7 people on the sales team, using HubSpot, headcount growing.
2. For each ICP, write 5 pain points. Cost, hiring agencies, staff turnover, broken internal comms, broken systems.

3. For each pain point, write 5 solutions. Lower cost, an integrated agency, an agency that stays, a shared Slack channel, a Zapier setup.

5 ICPs x 5 pains x 5 solutions = 125 emails.

That's 5 pain campaigns per ICP, each with 5 emails, one solution per email. 25 emails per ICP.

Send it, and the market tells you which ICP, which pain and which solution are real. That's what I call the product market fit machine. It pays the bills while it gives you market data in real time.

PLAY

THE MATH OF A SIMPLE OUTBOUND ENGINE

When I first packaged my system, the stack cost me about $135 a month.

- 10,000 emails a month
- 3% positive reply rate
- = 300 leads a month in your calendar

Of course it can be less. Of course it takes iteration. But outbound is infrastructure plus iteration:

- domains, warmed and rotated
- lists built from multiple sources

- 3 to 5 angles tested in parallel
- follow-ups across months

That isn't a free lottery ticket. It's a system. That's also why I don't do commission-only deals with founders who don't have cash in the bank. Commission-only is usually a signal of no cash flow and no skin in the game.

PLAY

WHY SOME EMAILS GET REPLIES

I once had a campaign getting 2 to 5 positive replies a day on autopilot. Here's why it worked:

1. People were very interested in AI outreach but didn't know where to start. Most weren't ready to buy, but they were ready to learn. My job at that stage was to educate.
2. The email was lightly personalized.
3. It was informal, short and simple. It wasn't formatted like a cold email, so people didn't read it as one.
4. No links in the email, so it stayed away from spam filters.
5. It mentioned YouTube, which people trust.
6. The call to action was tiny: "can I share it here?"
7. The signature was light.

My thesis: people are all in for free stuff. You have to fight for free, meaning that even if the top of your funnel is free,

you still have to earn the attention.

And here are some of my best angles from a strong year of campaigns:

- **"no better city than my city":** drop their city name in the subject. Successful people consciously choose where they live. They love their city.
- **"no better days than uni days":** homo sapiens are really homo feelians. People still remember their uni days. The reply rate showed it.
- **niched niches:** femtech and female CEO campaigns. Hyper-specific beats broad every time.
- **the podcast invite:** "hey {{first_name}}, would love to have you on the CEO Wisdom Podcast to talk about {{company}} and {{vertical}}, mind if I send you more info?" More on this one in part two.

PLAY

MAP THE WHOLE FUNNEL

The leap from someone interested to someone booking a call is massive, and it's getting wider as attention spans shrink and trust drops.

Map every step:

- cold reply -> soft interest

- soft interest -> content consumed
- content consumed -> value received
- value received -> meeting booked
- meeting -> closed deal

If you don't give before you ask, you get ghosted. If you don't optimize each step, your income will be capped forever.

Stop manifesting. Stop crying "no meetings". Engineer the actual conversion path.

PLAY

MONEY DAYS

About 2 or 3 years into entrepreneurship, I was traveling the world with my wife and cash flow was sometimes tight because I had a big team.

So I scheduled MONEY DAYS. A full day in Google Calendar devoted to one thing: generating cash. Selling, going after leads. Back then I cold called a lot.

And it worked. Cash flow always came at some point.

Energy flows where focus goes. When you're starting out, get your ass to work on what's important, which is sales.

A lot of founders cruise along depending on one big client or a referral partner. When the storm comes and they get cut

off, they panic.

Business is mostly cash. Stray from that and you're in danger.

PART 2

02 THE PODCAST IS THE FUNNEL

NOTES

Stop thinking you're the next Joe Rogan and that you'll make a fortune from podcast ads. Put "lead gen" in the podcast equation.

If you cold DM someone, their guard is up. If you invite them onto a podcast, their guard drops immediately.

Interviewing your ideal clients as podcast guests is one of the highest ROI moves in business. You get 45 minutes with your exact ICP. They show up prepared, in a good mood, and they talk openly about their problems.

On a podcast you learn their language, their objections and how they make decisions, and you build rapport in the best possible context.

I don't go to networking events. My podcast does that work for me.

Charging guests to appear doesn't scale. Use the podcast as the first step toward your paid offer.

My sequence: podcast -> mastermind -> paid offer -> client becomes an affiliate.

Immediate money gluttony caps you at 6 or 7 figures. Patient podcasting goes for Everest revenue.

Most people treat the end of the interview as the end of the relationship. It should be the beginning.

If you want someone to trust you, spend time with them. A podcast lets you spend hours with your market every month.

Sponsors don't care about you. They care about your audience.

The podcast funnel checks every box of human psychology. It reverse-sells like no other tool out there.

In a world clouded by direct sales, lead gen podcasting stands out and sells out.

Every guest is a potential client, partner, investor or friend.

The trap with podcasts is impatience. People think it's hard, they struggle to find the right guests, and they don't stay in touch with the ones they had.

PLAY

WHAT THOUSANDS OF INTERVIEWS ACTUALLY DID FOR ME

When people asked why I was interviewing 15 CEOs a day, here's what I told them.

Podcasts have been life-changing for me:

- 50% of my customers came from there
- 25% of my deep business insights came from there

- I made lifelong friends who support my journey
- I got paid to do it, through sponsors and AdSense

I haven't found any other use of my time with a higher long-term ROI.

At one point I ran the numbers on my first 2,000 or so episodes: around 30 clients, and about 10 of them became close friends and business partners. That's the part people don't price in. A client is worth a few thousand a month. A friend who is a founder is worth a lot more over 10 years.

It also replaced my reading. I've read more than 1,500 books on Kindle, Audible and Scribd. Then I stopped, because interviewing 15 CEOs a day and asking them the exact questions that serve my business is way better. It's like getting $30,000 of consulting a day, free. Billionaires answered my money questions. A guy with 5 IPOs answered my M&A questions. People sent me AI apps that replaced parts of my team.

PLAY

THE INVITE THAT BUILT THE NETWORK

My template was this simple:

> *hey {{first_name}}, would love to have you on the CEO Wisdom Podcast to talk about {{company}} and {{vertical}},*

> *mind if I send you more info?*

No link. No pitch. One question.

That one approach got me in front of billionaires, top scientists and future cofounders. People who are not on the monetized podcast trend are missing out.

PLAY

THE PODCAST FUNNEL, STEP BY STEP

1. Pick guests like you pick clients. Most founders invite people based on name recognition, not client potential, and they waste months interviewing people who will never buy. Target your ICP: founders, CEOs, high ticket buyers. Use cold email to filter on revenue, funding and niche.

2. Run a great interview. The goal is to make your guest shine. Prep custom questions. Know their niche so they trust you immediately. Keep it organic. Study Joe Rogan for rapport that feels real and Diary of a CEO for story.

3. Follow up for a year, not a day. This is where the money is (see the follow-up play below).

4. Repurpose everything. One episode becomes YouTube, shorts, LinkedIn posts, newsletter ideas. Shorts are the gateway to long form.

5. Turn trust into partnerships. Some guests become clients. Some refer clients. Some come into your mastermind. Some become cofounders.

Treat your podcast like a sales pipeline, not a side hustle.

PLAY

THE FOLLOW-UP SYSTEM

Most people drop the ball after the first interaction, assuming "if they're interested, they'll follow up". Wrong.

After every podcast and every call:

Right away

- "follow me, I'll follow back"
- "any founders you'd refer to the show?"
- "do you have a newsletter I can follow?"

1 to 30 days later

- a free strategy or insight tied to their business
- case studies and testimonials
- an invite to something with peers, like my CEO meditation club

30 to 120+ days later

- a free list or a resource that's useful right now
- "how's business?"
- an ROI calculator that triggers action

I once went on a full Calendly follow-up rage: texts and emails days, hours and minutes before each call to kill no-shows, then a long value email after every call. Lists, my best campaigns, my newsletter, my masterminds, a referral offer. Long, because once I know you, going long is the goal.

Most people send one follow-up and give up. I send many over months and close deals other people would have lost.

The game isn't just about generating leads. It's about staying in the game long enough to win.

PLAY

WHY THE PODCAST BEATS THE BILLBOARD

The best example of all this happened in 2026. OpenAI bought TBPN, a daily live tech show started by two founders, for a reported nine figures. It was one of the most remarkable bootstrapped exits in media history.

You don't need to sell your show to OpenAI. The lesson is that attention plus trust plus a specific audience is an asset.

A podcast built around your buyers builds that asset every week while it fills your calendar.

03

PART 3

SELLING AND CLOSING

NOTES

Have a great product, then sell the heck out of it. Jordan Belfort skipped the first step. Plenty of founders skip the second. I've had miserable startup failures with the best product and zero sales.

"Sell me this pen" is the lowest IQ sales challenge there is. Sales has one job: to help someone decide on something that could be valuable to them.

You're not there to convince the world your product works. You're there to talk to an educated person and guide them, like a consultant.

I can't sell someone a dream I don't believe in. It has cost me business, but only the wrong kind.

Avoid the clients who expect magic without effort, want shortcuts but reject real systems, and drain energy, demand hand-holding, then disappear.

Cash flow is king.

Random holiday promos don't scale. They cheapen what you do.

Swap discounts for partnerships. You promote me, I promote you. You refer a friend, you get a credit.

If I can't personally use your product, I don't want to sell it. Exchange services, so you understand the thing you're helping grow.

For founders I really believe in, I'd rather take commission or equity than a bigger fee. It aligns us on the moonshot instead of the short-term cash grab.

People who are in the game to win buy differently from people in it for the lifestyle. If your goals are mostly money-focused, sell to the ones in it for the big win.

I respond to almost every pitch that makes me even slightly curious. It shows me whether the tool fits, what their pitch does better than mine, whether they follow up, and it lets me practice being the buyer.

When an angry message comes in, first write the reply your ego wants to send. Then remove everything negative. Then send what's left.

Most people fall in love with what they sell. Fall in love with who you sell to.

PLAY

PICK YOUR VICP

I started out working with realtors. Most were making $100k a year, some $300k. Almost all of them looked unfulfilled, working for demanding homeowners who

negotiated their commissions down and threatened to go to a competitor. And they mirrored the same behavior onto me.

So why would I keep working with them?

About five years in, I made a big pivot. I'd only work with my **Very Ideal Customer Persona**: serial tech entrepreneurs with deep pockets and a high tolerance for risk. Growth-minded. Experimental in business and in life.

Since then, I work with people I want to be like. They pay me, and they feed my fire while I feed theirs.

Your ICP is not just demographics. Industry, age and location are table stakes. The real filter is psychographics: how they think, how they decide, how they behave when things go wrong.

I am my own ICP. I build for people wired like me.

PLAY

THE PRICE HIKE

I once raised prices and it cost me about 5% of my usual close rate. I didn't worry about it, because the floor kept going up.

Then one day a client negotiated me down to two weeks of work instead of my one-month minimum. Normally I don't

feel good doing anything under three months. But I asked one question, "how soon are you able to start?", went with my gut and accepted.

I launched the campaigns fast, the work took a few hours, and I effectively banked $1,500 an hour. I put it straight into ads.

The lesson isn't "be cheap" or "be expensive". It's: have a floor, know your numbers, and be flexible when speed is the asset.

PLAY

YOUNG FOUNDERS, FAST RESULTS

At one point I stopped taking on older execs who came with baggage. Younger founders had no false preconceptions slowing them down, no ego resistance to new systems and no identity crisis when change was needed. They just executed, and they got results faster.

This isn't about age. It's about coachability. Look for people who got promoted in their last job, then promoted again. Being promoted many times shows someone is coachable, adaptable and a strong communicator. Hire and sell to those people.

PLAY

CONTRACTS AND TRUST

For small engagements, I don't obsess over contracts. If someone wants to cheat me upfront, I haven't lost much, and they've given up a relationship that could have been worth millions.

When it's many hours of my time and six figures on the line, I send a simple contract.

Controlling your ICP is how you eliminate drama. The right clients don't need a 40-page agreement to behave well.

04 PART 4 RAISING MONEY

NOTES

Fundraising isn't pure merit, pure storytelling or pure traction. It's a messy mix of psychology, timing, positioning and process.

Most founders treat fundraising like a side quest: "let me build the product, then I'll go raise". Then it becomes a second full-time job with no rules.

VCs don't fund relationships. They fund momentum, clarity and outcomes.

Fundraising is a sales process. Lead gen, qualification, follow-ups, closing, urgency, scarcity, narrative control. Treat it like a pipeline, not a coffee chat tour.

Investors don't want information. They want inevitability.

Don't say "here's what we're building". Say "this market is shifting, and we're the only rational outcome." Your job isn't to convince. It's to make the alternative feel illogical.

Almost nobody cold emails VCs correctly. "Hi, do you have 15 minutes?" with a deck attached is noise.

Outbound to investors works when it's precise: positioning, targeting, investor fit.

Intros are overrated and meetings are cheap. The hard part is the closing infrastructure.

The fundraising market has a temperature. Hot windows open and hot windows close. If your process takes 4 months to start, the market may already be gone.

Momentum is a weapon.

Interest and conviction are different things. Most investors will stay interested forever. Very few will move first.

Investors don't lead because of a perfect deck. They lead because they're afraid of missing something that's already moving.

The founders who close fastest aren't the best storytellers. They manufacture the conditions where waiting feels like a mistake.

Maximum leverage is when capital chases you. When a company turns down a preemptive round because it doesn't need it, that's what leverage looks like. Most founders have the opposite problem.

A hundred noes is not a verdict. Plenty of founders were rejected by every fund in the room and built the company anyway.

PLAY

THE FUNDRAISING MACHINE

Investor demand -> narrative -> pipeline -> process -> close.

1. Demand. Build a list of funds and angels that actually invest in your stage, your sector and your check size. Not

"VCs". Your VCs.

2. Narrative. One paragraph that frames the shift in the market and why you're the obvious winner. Test it in emails before you put it in a deck.

3. Pipeline. Run outbound to investors like you'd run outbound to customers. Multiple angles, real follow-ups, tracked in a CRM.

4. Process. Control the timeline. Batch the meetings. Set dates. Handle objections the same day.

5. Close. Create competitive pressure honestly, follow up relentlessly and close clean.

With RaaSRocket we've run this for founders as a sprint. One client got to $18M in term sheets in under 4 weeks. That doesn't happen by begging for intros. It happens because the process is engineered.

PLAY

SOLVING THE LEAD INVESTOR PROBLEM

Here's how most seed rounds die. A founder spends three months taking meetings. Investors say "we love the space" and "keep us posted". Some say "we'd love to participate". Nobody says "we'll lead". The founder waits, follows up and

gets polite non-answers. And a room full of interested investors slowly goes silent.

That isn't a pitch problem. It's a momentum problem.

The commitment cascade:

1. Stop looking for a lead first.
2. Go to 20 to 30 investors aligned with your thesis and ask one question: "if a lead closes, are you in?"
3. Collect soft, conditional commitments. No pressure, no terms.
4. Now go to lead candidates with this: "I have this much ready to close behind you. You set the terms and you get the best deal. Your job is to lead a round that's already won, not to take a lonely first bet."

You've changed the whole conversation. The lead's risk drops dramatically and their upside stays intact. They aren't going first into the dark. They're leading a room that's already full.

PLAY

BUILD THE ROOM

I like putting founders and investors in the same room, on camera, with structure. That's why we built Spark Tank: startups pitch in a few minutes, VCs give fast "in or out"

decisions live, and the whole thing streams on LinkedIn, X and YouTube.

It isn't a demo day. It's structured signal. Every founder and every investor is vetted, and distribution is shared, so everybody wins.

If you're raising, find or create rooms where investors watch each other react to you. Momentum is contagious.

PART 5

05 SYSTEMS, AI AND LEVERAGE

NOTES

LinkedIn influencers talk about systems, but what is a system? A system is something that keeps generating outcomes (cash) once it's set. A bot, an automation, an AI agent doing work while you're away.

You don't rise to the moment. You fall back on your systems.

Most people try to "handle" life, and that breaks fast. Design a life that handles itself.

Being busy is a weak flex. If you're always busy, your systems are broken.

Your business should run without you. If it needs you every day, it's a job.

Most entrepreneurs are really entrapreneurs, trapped in their own business. They forgot why they wanted to be entrepreneurs in the first place.

Stop putting all the responsibility on yourself. That's an ego thing. Yes, your team will mess up. Yes, your name might get a stain or two. It's fine.

It took me 6 years and OpenAI to understand that employees wouldn't scale the way I wanted.

The most toxic thing about hiring the wrong people isn't the salary. It's the opportunity cost of coaching people who don't want to climb the tree.

Founder mentality doesn't transfer by declaration. It's earned through ownership, risk and consequences.

Early on I treated low-level hires like founders, with the same incentives and the same expectations. That mistake cost me years. Once I had predictable systems and repeatable lead flow, full-commission reps started coming to me. The system de-risks execution.

AI will go as far as your brain goes. If you're not sharp, the AI you're commanding won't be either.

It's still about the best offer for the best ICP, and no AI can tell you that yet.

Most people saying "ChatGPT sucks" don't realize they suck at prompting. "Give me a sales strategy" gets you something generic. "Give me a 3-step cold email sequence for B2B SaaS CTOs at $10M+ ARR" gets you gold.

Give the model as much context as possible, evaluate its answers and keep going in the same chat. It keeps getting better.

Agencies that sell hours are squeezed to death. The next wave sells agents, not hours. Productize your brain.

One human brain managing many AIs. If your business isn't built that way, restart the clock now.

AI will compress execution, commoditize skills and reward leverage. It won't replace obsession, long-term thinking or pain tolerance. That's the new moat.

"Your emails have em dashes, must be AI." Clients don't care how the words were written. They care if it lands, resonates and converts.

Stop being stubborn about your old thesis. Plenty of stubborn people died trying to prove a wrong thesis right.

PLAY

MY THREE BEST SYSTEMS

The three systems that paid me the most while I slept:

1. **The podcast.** Episodes keep getting watched without me doing much. Guests reshare them, shorts get cut, search engines index them.
2. **Cold outreach.** Emails go out to my ICP every single day and book meetings automatically.
3. **LinkedIn on autopilot.** Content, outreach and comments handled by AI, so I stay present without living in the app.

Later these grew into a mostly agentic outbound stack generating 20 to 30 positive replies a day. The principle didn't change. Build it once, let it run, improve it every week.

PLAY

SOPS WITHOUT A CHIEF OF STAFF

One of my last attempts at the "hire a human for this" model was hiring a chief of staff to write SOPs. Thousands of dollars, a lot of my time and a lot of frustration.

Then one day, riding my motocross bike, it hit me: record all my calls, feed the transcripts to an AI and let it write the SOPs.

That's the pattern now. Before you hire for a process, ask: can I record it, document it with AI and hand it to an agent?

PLAY

THE DAD STACK

Becoming a dad reinforced something I already believed: systems keep you alive, and systems let you thrive.

People thought I was crazy. A kid, five dogs, a company. "Good luck surviving that."

Here's how it works:

- **Dogs** -> walk or run twice a day. Non-negotiable.
- **Family** -> real support, nannies included. Energy over ego.
- **Life** -> buy leverage. Tech, help, anything that removes friction.
- **Health** -> still locked in.

Did things go wrong? Of course. Scares, emergencies, chaos moments. But we didn't collapse, because we don't rely on hope. If plan A fails, plan B kicks in. If X happens, we already know Y.

Being an Ironman, being a founder and being a dad run on the same principle.

PLAY

MY OFFICE

I'm a productivity nut. Here's what's in my office:

- **A pull-up bar.** If I pass under it, I do a pull-up, and at least 10 a day.
- **A treadmill under the standing desk.** If you're going to stand, you might as well walk. It looks funny, it starts conversations and it helps after leg day.
- **A screen looping my vision board.** The properties, the things I want to launch.
- **Water and tea** all day.
- **A journal** to scribble and visualize.

Your environment is a system too. Design it so the right behavior is the default.

PLAY

21 QUESTIONS FOR YOUR NEXT PLANNING SESSION

1. What did I miss yesterday that actually matters today?
2. What's the deeper structure underneath this problem?
3. What assumptions am I making that might be wrong?
4. What's the opposite of my assumption, and could it be true?
5. If this idea failed, what would be the real reason?
6. If it succeeded wildly, what made it work?
7. What question should I have asked instead?
8. Where is my biggest leverage bottleneck right now?
9. If I 100x this plan, what breaks first?
10. If I 0.1x this plan, what becomes trivial?
11. If I had to solve this in 24 hours, how would I do it?
12. With zero budget?
13. With 10x the budget?
14. What would the highest version of me optimize for right now?
15. What would make this problem irrelevant a year from now?
16. What's the one move today that creates the most leverage tomorrow?
17. What breaks if this suddenly scales to 10,000 users?
18. And to 100,000?
19. Where am I still thinking like an operator instead of an architect?

20. What's the simplest way to do this at a world-class level?
21. What am I avoiding looking at because I know it's the real issue?

06 PART 6 THE FOUNDER MIND

NOTES

I've been in startups for 10 years and watched founders drop like flies. Winners delay gratification, and not in a cute, motivational way. In a brutal, irrational way.

They stay in the game for 10 years when a normal person wouldn't last 30 days. That's the real filter. Not intelligence, not ideas, not timing. Can you keep going when there's no reward?

Pick your foxhole carefully. You don't need more people. You need people who'll still be there in 10 years.

Patience is the ultimate cheat code. But most people are patient in the wrong places. They quit a business after 3 months and stay in a dead-end job for 10 years.

It took me 7 years to really improve my relationship, 10 years to build a business that prints cash, and 3 months, 3 broken doors, a wrecked bed and 4 vet visits for a rescue dog to adapt to a new life. Some things take years and some take months. Impatience in the wrong place kills both.

I take 200 times more shots than most people. I don't give an emotional damn about negative responses. Hate is just a data point on the experiment.

Reputation is a temporary human construct. Results last.

If you're not a bit quirky, you're probably not onto something. Every highly successful CEO I've met was openly odd. They don't reboot themselves to fit in. They adapt their environment to their quirks.

The best CEOs are open books. They share everything, because sharing gets feedback, and once it's out it's old news, which forces them to go find something better.

Intellectuals and independent thinkers make great CEOs. Everything relates to business in the end. Cross-pollinate from other fields and connect the dots.

The best thing a loser can do is hate. Instead of hating from the sidelines, come play on the field.

Copy, paste, improve. That requires leaving your ego in the stands, even if a 20-year-old is doing YouTube better than you.

Quality doesn't scale on its own. Quantity of reps is how you get quality. I've passed thousands of "quality lane" high performers by doing more reps and improving faster.

Execution beats ideas. A bad plan executed beats a genius idea collecting dust.

Perfectionism is procrastination dressed up as discipline.

High performers keep their perfectionist on a tight leash. Low performers let their perfectionist leech on them.

Your inner coach is everything. Mine is calm, fatherly and honest. It boosts me in the low moments and reinforces patterns in the high ones. The last thing it does is throw a pity party.

Let the visionary set the impossible goal. Let the planner handle the small final details.

If you set hard goals and expect to hit every one with zero flexibility, you'll suffer more than you benefit. Long-term goals stay fixed. The weekly and the daily stay flexible.

Most goals we set at first aren't relevant. In a world changing daily, revisit the plan constantly.

Faith matters in the arena. Early on I was often anxious about money, but the universe never disappointed me. There were always lessons in the making.

If you do what you're supposed to do and give your maximum effort, there's nothing to worry about on the outcome side. That's stoicism.

Staring at the bank account, angry about the leads that didn't come, is a scarcity state. You attract flies with it. Fall in love with the game, the grind, and the rest happens by itself.

Business is enlightenment. The greatest benefit of being an entrepreneur isn't cash or freedom. It's becoming a better human being.

Ask better questions. "Am I in the right niche? What am I missing? How can I see this differently?" Questions are the key to the magic.

What fairy tale could I be stuck in right now?

PLAY

THE EXPERIMENTAL MINDSET

If I had to pick one mental tool that's responsible for an outsized share of my results, it's this one.

On paper it's simple: I take way more shots than most people. That doesn't just mean discipline. It means not getting emotionally knocked over by negative responses.

I'm constantly taking bets and noting the outcome. In business, in fitness, even in dog training. "Today I'll take one of the four dogs out alone right after he eats and see what happens to his behavior and the other three's." Outcome: the dog behaves better. Noted.

When I need pure data, I give my experiments to an AI and argue with it for a while. Otherwise I trust my gut.

The result: I hit most of my moonshot goals sooner or later, and the negative feedback in between is just noise.

It's the same as the voices during an ultra. They're part of the adventure, but they don't get the wheel.

PLAY

LESSONS FROM A 70K TRAINING RUN

1. Overthinking kills energy. The less you think, the more power you keep. Most entrepreneurs burn fuel obsessing

over things they can't control. Meditation trains you to think about what matters and drop the rest.

2. Don't let your frontal brain hijack the ride. At km 45 I started to bonk, and my brain asked the wrong question: "how the hell are we getting through the next 25k?" Ultras, like business, are waves. Ten highs and twenty lows. If you assume a low will last forever, you trap yourself.

3. Adversity is fuel. At km 55 it started pouring. Most people would quit, and that's where I doubled down. Extra challenge, extra credit.

4. Finish strong, no matter what. The last climb up my street, the right song, my wife cheering, a bit of hallucination, and I don't think I've ever run faster. Finishing strong gives you confidence for the next event.

PLAY

WHAT A 24-HOUR TEAM RACE TAUGHT ME ABOUT LEADERSHIP

I signed up for a 24-hour Spartan endurance event in winter in Vermont because I felt myself plateauing. Physically it wasn't the hardest thing I've done. But it taught me more than most races.

- **Regulation beats intensity.** I threw up early, misread a gear requirement, equipment didn't arrive and the tasks

kept changing. None of it rattled me. Not panicking saved more energy than any fitness advantage could.

- **Team over individual.** I showed up a lone wolf and left with a pack. The next level isn't heroics, it's orchestration.
- **Kindness is a force multiplier.** Under pressure, being calm and kind bought us grace, flexibility and trust. Being an asshole isn't toughness. It's inefficiency.
- **Courage without discernment is just ego.** Knowing when not to push is part of maturity.

PLAY

WHAT 1,000 CEOS TAUGHT ME

After a long stretch of 15 CEO interviews a day, here's what I saw beyond the surface-level advice:

1. **The best use deep tech stacks and AI heavily.** It's less "outsource, outsource" and more "systems on systems on systems". That takes a hacker mindset.
2. **Endurance athletes make great CEOs.** Some days are a barrage of pain. Top CEOs go through them without permanent damage. Pain tolerance and patience correlate.
3. **Independent thinkers make the best CEOs.** They talk about everything, because everything is business in the end.

4. **They're open books.** They share data in the name of experimentation.
5. **They're weird, and they lean into it.**

07

PART 7

MONEY AND FREEDOM

NOTES

My definition of wealth is radical independence. Not depending on anyone or anything, from money to time to my values to who I spend my days with.

It took me a good 10 years to get there. Lots of hard work, lots of friction, lots of heart-wrenching moments.

Freedom means choosing. Money gives you the wings to choose good over bad.

Most people bend their ethics to fit how they make money. FU money is noble for one reason: you're nobody's hostage. To keep high ethics at scale, you have to get rich.

As long as you depend on one client's satisfaction to pay your people, you'll agree to be "the nice guy" even when the client is wrong.

Rich people think in decades. Broke people think in paychecks.

You get rich by owning, not earning.

High-income skills beat frugality. Cutting coffee won't make you rich. Learning to sell will.

You don't need more money. You need more leverage.

Your first $100k is pure suffering. Everything after that is easier, because the hard part is momentum.

Your network is an ATM. Rich people help rich people make money. Build a high-value network.

People who chase only profit risk emotional bankruptcy. It's not passion or profit. Nerd out on your passions, see if you can monetize them, and A/B test them with pure cash flow ventures.

Following the money and nothing else is an endless quest. You get the never-enough type.

Overnight millionaires fall harder. I don't want to get lucky.

The only non-obscene answer to "what would you do for a million dollars" is: provide value. That's what society was built on.

If you're reading this, you have the internet. That means you can start a business with zero capital, learn any high-income skill for free and build a network of top operators without leaving your house. Fifty years ago that was impossible. The biggest wealth gap today isn't money. It's mindset.

Partner with ambitious cofounders instead of starting everything from scratch. You give up equity, but it's energy-efficient, avoids total losses and scales.

One needs about ten moonshot attempts before one hits.

Money buys freedom, not happiness. The goal is what it unlocks.

PLAY

THE FOUNDER WHO'S MAKING MONEY BUT ISN'T SATISFIED

Lots of founders make good money and still feel empty. Usually it's because of who they serve. If your buyers negotiate every dollar, compare you to cheaper alternatives and threaten to leave, you'll start to look and feel like them.

The fix isn't a bigger number. It's a better customer. Work with people you want to be like. When they pay you and also feed your fire, money and satisfaction stop being opposites.

PLAY

DIGITAL NOMAD MATH

My Canadian passport lets me stay six months or more in lots of places. I spent years living mostly in Mexico, running a company built to work from anywhere.

Freedom isn't a visa or a citizenship. It's a business model. If your income needs you in one specific office, you're not free yet. Design the company so your location is a choice.

PLAY

FROM PARTNERS TO EMPIRE

I met Sunny Ray about four years ago. He was first a client, and I generated 300+ leads for two of his companies. He listened to my feedback, we tried a bunch of things and it worked.

Then he referred me 50+ clients. So I said: "I like you, you like me, why not team up?" He came in as a cofounder at RaaSRocket, then at gtm.ventures and PodPire.

We agree on about 95% of things business-wise, which is rare given the thousands of micro-philosophies under my macro mental model. We disagree often and invite the debate. Just like in a marriage, that's healthy.

Our moat is a funnel most people don't understand: convert clients into partners, then share revenue or equity in the best projects. It's a venture studio meeting a consulting firm.

The best clients become friends. The best friends become partners. That's how you compound.

PART 8

08 THE BIOHACKED FOUNDER

None of this is medical advice. It's what I did to my own body. Talk to a doctor before you copy any of it.

NOTES

Energy is everything in the productivity game.

Your body is a system. Run it like one.

If you chase comfort, you get pain. If you chase pain, you get comfort.

Pain is wisdom. It brings your traumas out, exposes your flaws and shows you the shortcuts you've been taking, so you can replace the broken parts with titanium.

Sport has saved my life many times. It pulled me out of drinking and trouble and turned me into someone I'm proud of.

I have obese genes, and I was always outpaced at sports when I was younger. I took it into my own hands.

Endurance sport taught me to slice long, impossible things into small, doable chunks. That's also how you build a company.

We run because it's boring, not because we like it. A 30k means at least 300 "f*** offs" to the demons telling you to stop.

Go into the hard stuff with no expectations. Reality is always different from the plan. If it hurts more than expected, don't make a drama of it. Stay flexible and move on.

The greatest growth a seasoned CEO can get is through painful endurance events done together. If we connect through pain, we may be adventure partners for life.

I don't eat for flavor. I eat for clarity. One wrong meal can cost you a whole day of brain.

Caffeine was my crutch. Quitting it didn't give me more energy. It stopped me borrowing energy from later.

The real flex isn't more energy. It's calm, controlled execution.

Coffee makes you go, go, go. Not every problem is solved by going faster.

Once I quit coffee, I noticed how many other dopamine loops I was stuck in.

Sleep routine: look at the stars, lavender, and read Wikipedia instead of business books. Business books inject cortisol. Pirate history puts me to sleep.

Play reduces cortisol and increases creativity. Play with your dogs, make your partner laugh, make yourself laugh.

PLAY

WHAT 1,000 LUNGES TEACH YOU

One weekend while everybody else was chilling, I did 1,000 lunges, 1,000 jump ropes, 500 jump lunges, 500 dips, 500 push-ups and 500 jackknives.

What I learned:

- **Pain brings the child out.** "Help me, save me." Being an adult means handling pain and protecting your family from too much of it. Leading is carrying something on your back and going for more.
- **No expectations.** Reality never matches the plan. Re-adapt the strategy to get through the reps.
- **Keep cortisol low and ride the endorphins.**
- **The inner coach takes over.** You say you'll do something, you do it. You finish it, whatever the time and whatever the form.

I later did 2,100 jump squats, 1,100 push-ups and 600 jackknife crunches on a YouTube live. Two and a half hours of pain and seven days of a crippled body. Why? Because the long-term grit outweighs the short-term damage.

PLAY

FASTING, MY WAY

I've done multi-day water fasts. Here's what I noticed:

- The brain handles stress better in a fasted state. I had brutal days during one fast and still slept well.
- The first time is hard. Headaches, sluggishness. It gets easier once you've done other hard things. Ultras, Vipassana, climbing a mountain all add layers to the mindset.
- The mind thinks about food constantly, just like it wanders during meditation. Keep it busy with work and light movement.
- The most dangerous moment is "celebration time" after. Break the fast gradually.

PLAY

THE ENDURANCE RÉSUMÉ

3 Ironmans. A 100k in the mountains of Puerto Vallarta. The 110k UTMB Paraty in Brazil, with 4,800 meters of climbing, much of it run half in a dream state. Spartan Ultras. A 24-hour winter Spartan in Vermont. Climbing Mexico's highest peak.

I'm not telling you this to flex. I'm telling you because every one of those events taught me something I later used in business:

- **Waves.** Ten highs and twenty lows. A low never lasts forever.

- **Regulation first, action second.**
- **Teams beat heroes.**
- **Finish strong.** It sets up the next one.

PLAY

THE FOUNDER PACK

I've been trying communities for years. I'm not naturally a community guy, I'm the alien in most rooms. So I started my own CEO groups. Here's what I learned about which ones survive:

- You need a growth engine bringing you enough high-level founder leads to hand-pick each group.
- People need financial skin in the game. Accountability gets stronger when it costs something.
- You have to prove the ROI of the group. Plug big shots in with other big shots.
- You have to be a great mediator so everyone gets their time.

Then add pain. We've done ultra HIITs on Zoom, 100k park loops, mountain climbs, Spartans, ice-cold rivers and saunas in Montreal, and masterminds in the mountains of Oaxaca.

People reveal their best selves under shared hardship. That's where the real network is built. Not at a networking event.

LAST PAGE

That's it for now.

Everything in here came out of the same loop: take a lot of shots, write down what happened, keep what worked, share it, go again. This book is just the loop printed on paper.

If we met on the podcast, thank you. A lot of these lines exist because you answered a question honestly at 7am your time.

If you want to talk GTM, fundraising, podcasting or which ultra to sign up for next, hit me up. I reply.

Go take 200 shots.

charles

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