

The 8–10 Hour Founder

A weekly system for building a real side business — without quitting your 9–5 or burning out.

If you're trying to build something on the side of a full-time job, you don't need more motivation. You need a system that survives your tired Tuesday.

This guide has three things I actually use:

1. A weekly planner organised by energy, not hours
2. A customer conversation script that won't make you cringe
3. A content template for the nights you have nothing to say

Everything here is based on what actually works — not hustle culture. Use what helps, ignore the rest.

Part 1 — The Weekly Planner

Most planners fail because they plan **tasks**. The fix is to plan by **energy**. After a 9–5, you have three kinds of time:

- **High energy** (rare — usually weekends): deep thinking work
- **Medium energy** (most weeknights): execution and conversations
- **Low energy** (late, tired): admin only — no decisions

The weekly template (8–10 hours total):

Day	Energy	Block	What to do
Mon	Medium	60 min	1 customer conversation + follow up last week's leads
Tue	Low	30 min	Reply to DMs. Post 1 thing. No new decisions.
Wed	Medium	60 min	1 customer conversation OR work on your offer
Thu	Low	30 min	Post 1 thing. Engage with 5 people in your niche.
Fri	Medium	60 min	Outreach to 5 new people. Ship one small thing.
Sat	High	2 hrs	Deep work. One big thing. No email, no admin.
Sun	—	OFF	Rest. Actually rest. This is non-negotiable.

Why this works (the psychology)

Decision fatigue is real. A pre-set schedule means your willpower goes into the work — not into deciding what to work on.

Implementation intentions ("When it's Monday 8pm, I'll do a customer call") are 2–3x more effective than vague goals, per research from psychologist Peter Gollwitzer.

Sundays off is a strategy, not a reward. The people who quit side hustles aren't working too little — they're resting too little.

Part 2 — The Customer Conversation Script

Most founders ask bad questions. They pitch too early. They ask "would you buy this?" — and people lie politely.

The fix: ask about **past behaviour**, not future opinions. (Borrowed from the principles in *The Mom Test* by Rob Fitzpatrick — a book I'd buy before any course.)

The opening message (DM or email):

Copy-paste template

"Hey [Name], I'm working on something in the [space] and trying to understand how people currently deal with [specific problem]. I'm not pitching anything — just learning. Would you be open to a 15-min call this week?"

Why it works: low pressure, specific ask, no sales energy. Most people say yes because it flatters them and costs them nothing.

The 5 questions that matter:

1. "Walk me through the last time you dealt with [problem]."

→ Gets real behaviour. Specific stories, not hypotheticals.

2. "What did you try before that?"

→ Reveals what they've already rejected (so you don't build it).

3. "What's the hardest part of this for you?"

→ Finds the actual pain, not the surface one.

4. "What have you tried that didn't work? Why not?"

→ A map of what the market has already failed at.

5. "If you had a magic wand — what would you want?"

→ Gives you the **exact words** to use in your marketing later. Write them down verbatim.

What NOT to do:

- Don't pitch your idea in the first 10 minutes.
- Don't ask "would you pay for X?" — they'll lie to be nice.
- Don't explain. Listen. Shut up and take notes.
- Don't argue when they say something you disagree with — you're there to learn, not win.

The close:

"This was super helpful. Can I follow up in a few weeks when I have something to show? And — is there anyone else in your world you think I should talk to?"

Why this works (the psychology)

Past behaviour predicts future behaviour. Opinions predict nothing. This is one of the most replicated findings in behavioural research.

The magic-wand question gives you marketing copy in the customer's own language — which always converts better than language you invent.

Asking for a referral at the end compounds. 5 conversations become 15, then 30. This is how introverts build networks without "networking."

Part 3 — The Content Template

You don't need to be clever. You need to be clear and consistent. One template, three parts:

HOOK + SPECIFIC INSIGHT + ACTION FOR TODAY

An example (this got me my first 50 followers):

Hook:

"I tried to launch for 4 months. Here's what actually got me my first customer."

Specific insight:

"It wasn't a better landing page. It wasn't more followers. It was one 20-minute call where I stopped pitching and asked: *walk me through the last time you dealt with this.*"

Action for today:

"This week, have one conversation with someone who has the problem you're solving. Ask one question: *walk me through the last time this came up.* Then just listen."

Posting rules that matter:

- Post **three times a week**. Consistency beats volume every time.

- Use **"you"** more than **"I"**. Make the reader the hero of the post.
- Include one specific number (10 customers, 4 months, 20 minutes). Specificity is trust.
- It's okay to post what you're **learning**, not just what you've mastered. Beginners relate to beginners.

Why this works (the psychology)

The hook triggers curiosity — an open information gap that the brain needs to close (George Loewenstein's research on curiosity).

Specificity is believable. "I got 10 customers in 6 weeks" lands harder than "I got a lot of customers fast," even if the vague version sounds more impressive.

A takeaway creates reciprocity. When a post gives the reader a small win they can use today, they start to trust the creator — and trust is what eventually turns into sales.

Part 4 — Your First Week

If you do nothing else in this guide, do this. It's designed to fit around a 9–5 and produce real momentum in 7 days.

When	Time	Do this
Mon night	60 min	Write down 10 people who might have the problem you're solving. DM 3 of them using the template in Part 2.
Wed night	60 min	Have one customer conversation. Write down the exact words they use to describe the problem.
Fri night	60 min	Write one post using the template in Part 3. Use the words from Wednesday's call.
Saturday	2 hrs	Ship one tiny thing. A landing page. A rough offer. A simple tool. Ugly is fine. Done is the point.
Sunday	OFF	Rest. No guilt, no exceptions. This is how you're still doing this in 18 months.

One last thing.

The trap of side-hustle content is that it sells the dream of leaving your job. Most people don't need to quit their job — they need a system they can run for **two years** without burning out.

What matters isn't how hard you work this week. It's whether you're still building 18 months from now.

Rest on Sundays. Talk to real humans. Ship ugly things. Repeat.

— built for the ones who comment "START" and actually read the guide
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