



THE SECOND BRAIN PLAYBOOK

Bonus · the long game

Systems are strategy.

Tactics are the noise on the surface. The system underneath is the strategic choice.

30 seconds to start · 30 minutes to set up · 30 days to compound

WHO THIS IS FOR

For the founder who finished the trilogy and wants the long game.

For the operator ready to choose who they want to be in twelve months.

For anyone who suspects the system underneath matters more than the next tactic.

PART 1 · THE WHY

Expand your
mind

PART 2 · THE HOW

Build the brain

PART 3 · THE
WHAT

Give it hands

BONUS · THE LONG
GAME

Systems are
strategy

READ THIS WHEN You have finished the trilogy and you are ready to play the long game.

How to read this: About 15 minutes, nothing to install. This is the bonus. It is why the brain is the strategic choice, once the three parts are behind you.

BEFORE YOU READ

Tactics pay back this week. The substrate underneath pays back across the year.

This is the layer beneath the trilogy. The why under the why.

Four pieces. One choice. The brain is the thing you build first.

01 · SYSTEMS ARE STRATEGY.

Systems are strategy.

Tactics are the noise on the surface. The system underneath is the strategic choice. 30 seconds to start. 30 minutes to set up. 30 days to compound.

Who is it for. What is it for.

Seth Godin asks two questions in *This is Strategy*.

Who is it for. What is it for.

Seth Godin, *This is Strategy*

He asks them about the things you make. The product, the company, the next decision on the table.

I want you to ask them about your brain.

Who is your brain for, right now, today, in this week of this year? Whose questions does it hold? Whose decisions does it carry from week to week? Whose context does it load when you sit down on Monday morning?

For most founders the honest answer is the brain is for whoever has been loudest in the queue. The buyer who pinged at 11pm. The senior who escalated at 3pm. The client who replied to a thread you started two weeks ago. The brain is whoever shouted last.

That's who it's for. That's also why nothing strategic gets built. The strategic work needs a brain that's for *you*. The version of you who is trying to make a different business in three years. The version of you who is trying to make a different life across the next decade. That work can't get done by a brain that's for the loudest voice in the inbox.

What is it for. The next reply? The next deal? Or the next twelve months of who you want to be?

If you can't answer those two questions about your own brain, you aren't making strategic choices. You're reacting at high speed. There's a difference.

Tactics are the surface

A founder I spoke to last month told me she'd read four books on prompting in 90 days. She had two prompt libraries. She could quote three productivity systems from memory.

I asked her what she'd decided about her business in that time.

The pause was long.

She'd been doing tactics for three months. The tactics felt like progress because they produced visible output, better drafts, faster emails, sharper one-pagers. She hadn't made a single strategic call in that time, because she'd never built the thing underneath the tactics that would let a strategic call hold.

Tactics are the surface. The surface is the part you can see, and it pays back this week. So the surface gets all the attention, and the foundation underneath stays small.

The trouble is that tactics build on substrate. A founder with a thin substrate and ten tactics has the same output ceiling as a founder with no tactics, because every tactic still routes back through the same head with the same gaps. A founder with a thick substrate and three tactics has output the first founder can't reach in a year.

Tactics are visible. Substrate isn't. The market rewards what it can't see, and the week rewards what it can. So most founders work for the week and wonder why the year keeps looking like the last one.

Time is the medium

Strategy is a long game. That phrase has been used so often it's lost its weight.

What it actually means is that strategy plays out in a medium called time. Tactics play out in a medium called the week. The two are different shapes, and you can't move from one to the other by working harder.

A week has 168 hours. Half are sleep, family, eating, moving from one place to another. You have maybe 60 productive hours left if you're willing to give up the rest of your life, and 45 if you want to keep it. That's the budget.

A year has 52 of those weeks. The strategic question isn't how to fit more into a week. It's what you build in week three that means week 38 doesn't start from zero.

The brain is the answer. Not the only one. The most general one.

Anything you write into a brain page in February is there in September. The reasoning behind a decision you made in March is there in November. The pattern you noticed in week 10 is sitting in week 40, waiting to remind you that the situation in front of you is the same shape as something you've already settled. The brain carries the past forward without you carrying it.

Tactics don't have this property. A tactic that worked in week three has no presence in week 38 unless you wrote it into the brain.

Strategy pays back in the medium of time. A tactic is spent the week you use it. The brain is still working in the week you forgot you built it.

If you've ever wondered why your life looks the same in November as it did in February despite working flat out the whole time, this is the answer. The brain is what would have made February's work present in November's calendar. You didn't build it, so the work expired.

Games you play. Games you can change.

There's a game you can play. There's a game you can change.

The game you can play is your business as it currently runs. The clients you have, the team you have, the pricing you charge, the week you keep. You can play that game well. You can win small moves inside it. A lot of founders spend years playing inside the existing game with increasing skill and almost no leverage.

The game you can change is the one you stop playing the same way because you decided to. You stopped taking the kind of client who drains the team. You stopped pricing by the hour because you noticed it punished competence. You stopped opening your inbox before your daily anchor because that was where the day was being eaten. The game changes when you stop accepting the constraint that was producing the result.

Most founders never change the game. They get better at it. They tune the surface, sharpen the tactics, and never go down a layer.

The reason they never go down a layer is that going down a layer takes longer than the week pays back. The week pays back fast and visibly. The layer pays back slow and silently for six months and then carries the rest of your year.

You can keep playing the game you have, getting marginally better. Or you can change the game by building the substrate that lets you operate from a different position. The brain is what lets you change the game. Without it you stay inside the game forever, no matter how good your tactics get.

The game you play is the game your current self can win. The game you can change is the game your future self gets to play. You only reach the second one by building forward into it.

This is the computer moment again

When computers arrived in the office, two kinds of business met them. One group bolted a PC onto the process they already ran, typed the same forms into a screen instead of a typewriter, and kept the work exactly as it was. The other group asked the harder question: now that the machine can do this, what should the work even be? They redesigned around the machine. A decade later the two were not in the same league.

Josh Kaufman, in *The Personal MBA*, quotes the rule Bill Gates built Microsoft on.

Automation applied to an efficient operation magnifies the efficiency.

Automation applied to an inefficient operation magnifies the inefficiency.

Bill Gates, via Josh Kaufman, *The Personal MBA*

The machine never fixes the process. It amplifies whatever process it finds.

AI is that moment again, and most founders are making the first group's mistake. They bolt a chat window onto the week they already run, then wonder why the output got faster while the business stayed the same size. They are amplifying a process that was never worth amplifying.

The founders who win this shift redesign around a brain that remembers. They build the floor first, so when the speed arrives it lands on a process worth multiplying. That is the whole difference between AI that makes you faster and AI that makes you bigger.

Why founders pick tactics, and what it costs in five years

I want to be honest about why this is hard.

Tactics are addictive. They feel like work. They produce a visible artefact at the end of every hour. You can show your work, post about it, compare yourself to other founders by what tactic they're running this month.

Substrate is the opposite. It's invisible for the first six weeks. There's no artefact. Your peers can't see what you're building. Your team can't see the leverage forming under the floor. You spend a Friday afternoon writing into pages that look like nothing, and the only feedback you get is the absence of a problem six months later.

That's a brutal feedback loop. Most humans can't stay on a task that pays back in six months when there's a task that pays back in 60 minutes. So most founders pick tactics. The wiring rewards the work that shows a result today, even when the work that pays back all year is sitting right next to it.

In year one, the founder running on tactics and the founder building the brain look the same. Same revenue, same team, same hours. Maybe the brain-builder is a little behind on revenue, because the first six months went into the brain.

By year three, the gap widens hard. The brain-builder has a business that runs without them in the room for two-week stretches. The tactical founder has hit a ceiling at the size of their own working week, and is now hiring more people to wear hats that should have been written into a system years ago.

By year five, the two founders are in different lives. The brain-builder has time. They built the thing they meant to build. They've written, travelled, parented, slept. The tactical founder is still running the same week they ran in year one, with more revenue, more obligation, and no clear way out except to grind harder.

This isn't a moral story. The tactical founder isn't lazy. They're smart, capable, and worked harder than almost anyone they know. They picked the wrong layer to work on, and the layer you choose either compounds for you or quietly works against you.

Five years is the horizon where the cost of skipping the brain becomes the cost of your one life. That's what's at stake. The week feels small. Five weeks feel small. Two hundred and sixty of them stacked on top of each other is the life you're building, whether you're doing it on purpose or not.

The strategic choice

So back to the two questions. Who is the brain for. What is it for.

If you answer those two questions today, and you build the brain to serve the answer, you've made the only strategic choice that matters this year. Every tactic flows out of those two answers. Every skill the brain has, every page in it, every decision logged, every flag raised, every retro run, is downstream of who you said the brain was for.

THE CHOICE THAT PAYS BACK FOREVER

The brain is the artefact of who you've chosen to become in twelve months.

You aren't tuning the current you. You're building the foundation the future you will live on top of. Capture three things today. Three more tomorrow. Run the first retro on Friday. That's the whole strategy.

The trilogy showed you the trilogy. "Expand your mind." was the why. "Build the brain." was the mechanics. "Give it hands." was what the brain does in your Tuesday. This essay is the layer underneath all three. Why you would do it, why you would do it now, why you would do it in a week where you have a hundred other things and only one of them is the one that pays back.

The tactical work will still be there in the morning. It always is. The foundation work has to be made on purpose, because nobody and nothing in your week will ask you to do it. The week is built to crowd it out. Only the founder can build it.

The seven functions, expanded.

The matrix from "Give it hands." in long form. One function at a time. One paste-ready prompt per function. Same names, same order. Pick the function where the pain is loudest. Run that one.

The matrix gives you the shape. Seven functions. The 20% capture. The 80% leverage. One row each. A row is enough to see the idea. It isn't enough to start. So this expands each row into what to capture, what week one looks like, what week four feels like if it's working, what breaks if you skip it, and one prompt you can paste into Claude or ChatGPT today.

01 · Sales

The 20% capture

A list of the top ten objections you've ever heard from a buyer, with the reply you'd give to each. One column for the objection, one for the reply you'd actually send if it was 9pm and you had to type it from your phone. Replies in your voice, caveats included. If the answer changes by industry or deal size, write the version for your most common buyer first.

Week one

You have the ten rows in a brain page. The next objection that lands, you ask the brain to draft a reply. The draft already knows the buyer is raising procurement friction, not budget friction, because you wrote that distinction in row four. It won't be perfect. You'll edit. You update the row. The next draft is closer.

Week four

Drafts come back tight. The team starts replying to objections without escalating, because the brain has the answer and the team trusts it. The queue of replies that need the founder shrinks for the first time in years. You're still the closer on the deals that matter. You're no longer the bottleneck on every routine objection.

If you skip this

Every deal still routes through you for the same five replies you've given a hundred times. Your senior salespeople won't push back, because they don't have the reply and would rather forward you the email than risk getting it wrong. The cost is that you can't leave for a week without three deals stalling.

Sample prompt

I sell <one sentence>. My ICP is <one sentence>. List the 10 most common objections a buyer in this ICP raises in the last third of the sales cycle. For each, suggest a reply structure (not the words) a seasoned founder would use. Ask me one clarifying question per objection so I can fill in the reply in my voice. Hold off on writing any final replies until I have answered.

02 · Marketing

The 20% capture

Three things, captured once. Your voice profile: the words you use, the words you refuse, the tone someone hears when they get an email from you, the way you start a story and end one. Your ten stories that always work: the anecdotes you've told from stage or on a call that always land. Your anti-AI list: the words that would never appear in your writing, the phrases that make you cringe. Three different things, same page. Together they're the marketing brain.

Week one

You ask the brain to draft a LinkedIn post about a thing that happened this week. The post comes back in your voice. The story it pulled is one of your ten. The words you'd never use aren't there. You edit one line and hit publish. The first time it happens it's jarring. You read it twice. That's the working state.

Week four

Your output has stopped sounding like every other LinkedIn post. Drafts arrive in 20 seconds and ship in five minutes. You post twice as often without spending more time. The team can draft on your behalf without you sounding like a different person every Tuesday.

If you skip this

You keep paying for marketing in two currencies. Time, because you draft from scratch. Voice, because nothing the team writes for you sounds like you. The brand stays small because the output can't be trusted to anyone else, however good the work behind it is.

Sample prompt

I want to capture my voice profile so an AI can draft in my voice from now on. Ask me 20 questions across: (1) words I use, (2) words I refuse, (3) how I start a story, (4) how I end one, (5) the emotion I want a reader to leave with. One at a time. Do not move on until I answer. At the end, summarise my voice in 200 words and ask me to correct anything that is off.

03 · Delivery

The 20% capture

Definition of done for each thing you sell, one sentence per offer. Scope guardrails: what's in, what's out, the common requests that arrive mid-project and the script for how the team responds. Escalation rules: who decides what, what's a flag the team can hold, what's a fire that needs you in the room.

Week one

The team hits a scope request and asks the brain instead of asking you. The brain knows the line. It returns the answer with the script. The team responds to the client without your input. You see the ping land and resolve without a single message from you.

Week four

Scope creep gets named on the call where it appears, not on the invoice three weeks later. Your team holds the line more consistently than you would, because the line is in writing and the brain

reads it the same way every time. Delivery margin improves. You didn't raise prices. You stopped giving away work for free.

If you skip this

Delivery becomes the place where the business leaks. Every project is slightly different. Margins drift. The team carries the cost of every ambiguous moment because asking you takes more energy than just doing the extra hour of work. You won't see it on a P&L. You'll see it in the team's exhaustion at the end of every quarter.

Sample prompt

I want to write the definition-of-done, scope guardrails, and escalation rules for my main service offer. Ask me one question at a time: (1) what single sentence means this engagement is complete, (2) the 10 most common things a client asks for mid-project that I am not sure how to handle, (3) the three situations my team has escalated in the last 90 days where I wished they had decided themselves. Do not move on until I answer each.

04 · Finance

The 20% capture

The five to seven numbers you should be reading every Monday morning. For most service businesses: cash position, pipeline coverage, revenue against plan, gross margin trend, days sales outstanding, headcount cost as a share of revenue, and one or two leading indicators that matter for your model. The exact list is yours. The point is the list is short, named, and the same every week.

Week one

You ask the brain on Monday for the seven numbers. It returns them in a short table. You read them in two minutes. You see cash position is below your floor. You see pipeline coverage is short for the quarter. You decide what to do about both before your first meeting.

Week four

Sunday-night spreadsheet hunting stops. The team starts surfacing the numbers without being asked, because they've seen the page format four weeks running and know what good looks like. You catch trends in week two instead of in month two. The "I should have caught this earlier" moments drop to near zero.

If you skip this

You keep running the business by feel. Some weeks the feel is right. Some weeks the feel is two months behind reality. The first time you catch a serious problem late, the cost is bigger than every other function in this matrix combined.

Sample prompt

I run a <one sentence on the business>. Help me write the list of 5 to 7 numbers I should be reading every Monday to know if the business is healthy. Ask me one question at a time: the failure mode I most want to catch early; the numbers I currently look at and which I trust; the leading indicators specific to my model. Do not give me a generic finance dashboard.

05 · Hiring

The 20% capture

The pattern bank. The reasoning behind every hire and every exit you've made in the last two to three years. Who lasted. Who drifted. What you wish you'd asked in the final interview. The early signs you missed. The 90-day moment where you knew this was going to work, or knew it wasn't. This is uncomfortable to write down. It feels like grading people you cared about. The honest version is where the value lives.

Week one

You start the pattern bank, one past hire at a time. Three lines each. You notice midway through that you've hired the same archetype four times. Two worked. Two didn't. You write the difference. That difference is now in the brain.

Week four

You're interviewing again. The brain pulls the pattern bank. It surfaces the three questions you wish you'd asked the last hire who didn't work out. You add them to the interview. The candidate gives an answer you wouldn't have noticed mattered six months ago. You make a different call.

If you skip this

You make a version of the same hiring mistake every 18 months. Each one costs you a year of payroll, a quarter of team morale, and the trust of the team members who watched you hire someone who shouldn't have been hired. The pattern bank is the cheapest insurance you can buy against your own blind spots.

Sample prompt

I am going to walk through the last 5 hires and 3 exits. For each, ask me: (1) the role, (2) what made me say yes, (3) what I know now that I did not know then, (4) the one question I wish I had asked in the final interview. At the end, identify the 3 patterns that repeat across people who worked out and the 3 patterns that repeat across people who did not.

06 · Decisions

The 20% capture

The decision log. With the reasoning written down. Not just the outcome. You think you already have this because you remember the decisions. The memory is the problem. You remember the decision. You forget the reasoning. Six months later the same trade-off shows up, and you settle it differently because the context is gone. Each entry has the date, the question, the answer, the reasoning in two or three sentences, and the conditions under which you'd revisit it.

Week one

You start logging. Every meaningful decision gets three lines. The reasoning is the load-bearing line. You'll resist this because writing the reasoning takes 45 seconds longer, and 45 seconds feels like a lot between meetings. Do it anyway. The 45 seconds in week one save the hour you'd have spent in month six rethinking it from scratch.

Week four

A trade-off shows up that feels familiar. You ask the brain. It pulls the decision from February. It shows you what you concluded, why, and what would have to change for you to revisit it. Nothing has changed. You make the same call in 30 seconds instead of re-running the analysis from zero.

If you skip this

You re-decide the same question two or three times a year. Each time, you spend an hour reproducing reasoning you already had. Sometimes you land on a different answer than the original, for no reason except that you forgot the context. The team watches you contradict yourself and learns to wait you out.

Sample prompt

I want to start logging decisions with reasoning. For the next 5 decisions I tell you about, ask me: (1) the question, (2) the answer, (3) the reasoning in 2-3 sentences, (4) what would have to change for me to revisit this. Then format each as a 4-line entry I can paste into my decision log. Push back if the reasoning is hand-wavy or if the conditions for revisiting are vague.

Push back is the load-bearing instruction. A decision log full of soft reasoning is the same as no log.

07 · Self

The 20% capture

The weekly retro. The open-flag system. The decay window. The retro is three lines on Friday: what shipped, what stalled, what's rolling forward. Five minutes. No theatre. The open-flag system is a place to write down the things that feel off but aren't yet a decision. The senior who's stopped pushing back in meetings. The client whose tone in the last three emails has shifted. The quiet feeling on Sunday evening. Flags are early sensors. The decay window keeps flags honest. A flag that sits two weeks without movement surfaces. You escalate it to a decision, kill it because nothing came of it, or re-flag it with a note on why it's still parked.

Week one

You write the first retro. Three lines. You write the first three flags. None are dramatic. One is about how a deal has been moving. One is about a recurring scheduling friction with the team. One is about how you've been feeling at the end of the day.

Week four

You have four retros and 12 to 15 flags. Three flags decayed and were killed. Four became decisions. The pattern across four weeks is one you wouldn't have noticed week to week. This is the function where the brain catches things you'd have missed alone. The brain isn't wise. It remembers what you were saying three weeks ago, and notices when the same thing has come up four times.

If you skip this

You catch burnout late, and team drift later. The slow erosion of a client relationship you usually catch last of all. None of these announce themselves in a single moment. They announce themselves across weeks, and only if something is keeping the record.

Sample prompt

I want to start a weekly retro and an open-flag system. For this Friday, ask me: (1) what shipped, (2) what stalled, (3) what is rolling forward. Then: (4) what felt off this week that is not yet a decision. For each thing that felt off, log it as a flag with a 14-day decay date. Push back if my retro is more than 6 lines. The shorter the retro, the more likely I keep doing it.

This is the prompt you will not want to run, because Self always feels self-indulgent until the week the brain catches something you would have missed. Then it never feels self-indulgent again.

How to use this

You'll be tempted to start with all seven. Don't. The matrix is a menu. You pick one. You run the capture for that one this week. You let it pay back for two weeks before you add the next.

The function you start with is the one where the pain is loudest right now. For most founders that's Sales or Delivery, because those are the two that bleed money fastest when they're broken. For some it's Self, because the body has already told them where the problem is and the body is rarely wrong about that.

The wrong way to start is to capture three rows of every function in week one. You'll end up with seven half-formed substrates and trust in none of them. The capture work is small. The pay-back isn't.

From second brain to business OS.

The personal layer and the company layer. They stack. You install the brain first because the company layer doesn't work without it.

A founder asked me the obvious question after she finished the trilogy. Is this the whole thing? Or is there a company-level version? There is. The trilogy is the personal layer. The 32-chapter business playbook is the company layer. This piece is the bridge. It names what each layer holds, where they meet, and which parts of the company-level work can't move until the personal brain is installed.

The two layers

The personal layer is what the trilogy built. Your judgment, your decisions, your voice, your client patterns, your hiring patterns, your weekly rhythm. It lives in your brain, in your laptop, in plain text. It pays you back across weeks. It's the thing you'd still own if you sold the company tomorrow.

The company layer is what the 32-chapter playbook builds. The business as a system. The five levels every service business has to operate well to grow past the founder. Revenue, Cost, Risk, People, Systems. Each chapter walks through one level with the moves a founder makes to lift it.

The two layers carry different memory. The personal brain holds you. The company layer holds the way the business runs. They talk to each other. The company layer tells the personal brain what the next quarter needs. The personal brain tells the company layer what you've already decided about how it should run. Both layers are necessary. Neither is sufficient alone.

The five levels

The 32-chapter playbook organises a service business into five levels. Each is a stack of work that has to be in place before the level above it can move.

LEVEL	WHAT IT COVERS	WHAT IT NEEDS FROM THE BRAIN
Revenue	Pricing, offers, sales motion, retention	Your buyer patterns, objection replies, voice
Cost	Margin, vendor mix, fixed versus variable, cash runway	Your weekly numbers, your historical spend decisions
Risk	Client concentration, legal exposure, single points of failure	Your flags, your decay window, your retro rhythm
People	Hiring, onboarding, performance, exits	Your pattern bank on who lasts and who drifts
Systems	How work moves between people, how decisions get made, how knowledge accumulates	The brain itself

Read the right column. Every level needs something from the brain. The first three (Revenue, Cost, Risk) can move with a thin brain layer because the founder is still in the room for most of the decisions. The bottom two (People and Systems) can't move at all without the brain. That's the load-bearing claim. Here's why.

Why People and Systems can't move without the brain

People is the level where the founder stops being the only person who carries the business. The team starts answering questions you used to answer. The senior hire starts making calls you used to make. The new joiner gets onboarded into a context they didn't invent. None of that works if the context lives in your head.

The senior hire from six months ago won't make the call you'd have made unless they can access the reasoning behind your past calls. The new joiner can't be onboarded into a context that exists only in scattered Slack threads. The team can't escalate well to you if they don't know your tolerance for what counts as a fire. The People level needs the brain to hold what only you have held, in a place where the team can reach it without reaching for you.

Systems is the level above People. It's where the work itself moves on rails. The process for taking on a new client, for closing out an engagement, for pricing a deal that doesn't fit the standard offer. These are systems. They're the way work moves between humans without you in the room.

A system can't exist without a brain underneath it. Every system has decisions inside it. Every decision needs reasoning. Every piece of reasoning has to live somewhere. The brain is where it lives. Without the brain, the system is a script the team follows for two weeks before it drifts back to "ask the founder".

So the People and Systems levels are downstream of the brain. The first three (Revenue, Cost, Risk) can be lifted with the founder in the room. The bottom two can't. This is why the trilogy comes first. You install the personal brain because it's the substrate the company-level work runs on top of. The business runs without you only when the brain holds what you held and the team can query it. The 32-chapter playbook is the work above. The brain is the floor that work stands on.

How they meet on a Tuesday

You open the day. The brain loads the personal layer. Your priorities, your open commitments, the flags that need a keep-or-kill call.

A call comes in about pricing a new engagement. That's a Revenue question. The brain pulls your past pricing decisions, your voice on margin, the patterns from similar deals. You make the call faster than you would alone.

Your delivery lead asks whether to escalate a scope question. That's a People question. The brain pulls your escalation rules, the definition of done, the script for handling a change request. The lead resolves it without your input.

A flag fires. The senior who joined three months ago has been quieter in the last two retros. That's a Risk signal. The brain surfaces it because the pattern is already in the record, before anyone has consciously named it.

Friday, the retro reads the week's log and asks what should be promoted to permanent knowledge, what flags decayed, what decisions need revisiting. The Systems-level memory of how the business runs gets a little sharper every week, because the retro is where personal-layer events become company-layer patterns. That's the stack working. Personal brain underneath. Company-level work above. Both layers touch every day.

The order of installation

The brain comes first. Always. Without the personal layer, the company-level work has nothing to stand on. You can read every chapter of the business playbook and you won't install the moves, because the moves require a brain that holds your judgment between sessions. No brain, no install.

1 Install the personal brain

The trilogy walks you through the why, the how, and what it does on a Tuesday. Two to four weeks of light capture work. You're running on it by the end of month one.

2 Pick the most painful level on the company side

Revenue, Cost, or Risk for most founders. Read the chapters that cover it. Run the moves. The brain holds the reasoning as you go.

3

Move to the next level after the first stabilises

Repeat. One level at a time, in order of pain.

4

People and Systems are the long game

They lift once the first three are running cleanly and the brain has 90 days of memory behind it. They can't be rushed, and they can't be skipped either.

The wrong order is to read the business playbook first and try to install the People and Systems moves without the brain in place. You'll burn out, the team will lose trust because the standards keep drifting, and you'll conclude that the playbook doesn't work. The playbook works. The foundation underneath it wasn't built.

What you do this week

Decide whether you're going to install the personal brain. That's the choice. Everything downstream of it follows once the choice is made. The trilogy gives you the how. This bonus pack gives you the deeper material. The 32-chapter playbook gives you the company-level moves once the brain is in place.

Start with the brain

The trilogy and this bonus pack are the personal layer. Two to four weeks of light capture work. The brain is the work until it's running.

[Go to the starter checklist →](#)

The company layer, when you're ready

The 32-chapter business playbook is the company-level moves. Read it once the brain is installed. Until then, the brain is the work.

[Read the business playbook →](#)

The starter capture checklist.

Twelve things to write down this week. If you do nothing else, do these. One printed page. One sitting. Roughly 90 minutes if you go slow.

These are the captures the brain wants first. They're concrete. They don't need a tool. A blank document and an honest hour is enough. When you're done, you have the foundation that lets every skill in the trilogy work on day one.

- 01** **Your last 5 lost deals and why.** Name each one. Write the one sentence that explains why it didn't close. Be honest. "Wrong fit" isn't an answer. "They wanted a fixed price, we quoted day rate" is.

- 02** **The 3 questions your team asks you most.** The ones that hit your phone twice a week. Write the question and the answer you give every time.

- 03** **The 5 numbers you wish you saw every Monday.** Not 20. Five. The ones that would tell you if the week is going to be a good one or a bad one before it starts.

- 04** **Your voice rules.** Words you never use. Phrases you always use. The tone someone gets when an email lands from you. The way you start a story. The way you end one.

- 05** **Your top 5 buyer objections plus the reply you'd give to each.** Not the generic reply. The reply you'd actually type from your phone at 9pm if you had to close the deal.

- 06** **The 3 things that mean a project is finished.** Definition of done for your main offer. One sentence each. If you can't write three, write one. The line is what matters.

- 07** **The 5 senior hires or exits from the last 3 years plus what you wish you'd known.** Three lines each. The one question you wish you'd asked in the final interview.

- 08** **The 3 decisions you've made twice in the last 12 months.** The ones you re-litigated because nobody wrote the reasoning down. Capture each one now,

with the reasoning, so the next time it shows up you don't pay the same hour again.

09 **The 2 client patterns you can already see.** The kind of client that drains the team. The kind that lifts it. One paragraph each.

10 **The 3 things you feel responsible for that you shouldn't be.** The work you keep doing because nobody else has the context. Naming them is the first step to writing them out.

11 **The 1 thing that breaks if you take a week off tomorrow.** Just one. The single point of failure that holds you in the building. Knowing it is half the work of fixing it.

12 **The one-sentence answer to "who is the brain for, and what is it for".**
Borrowed from the essay. Your answer becomes the filter for every page you write into the brain from here on.

What to do with this once it is done

Open a folder. Call it whatever you want. Write the twelve captures into 12 short pages, one per item. Plain text. No formatting. The next AI session you open, point it at the folder and ask it to summarise what it can see about your business.

It'll give you a paragraph that surprises you. The brain isn't smart yet. It surprises you because you've never had your own thinking reflected back to you with that much pattern in it.

That's your starting foundation. It is yours. The brain is the long game.

THE BRAIN IS THE LONG GAME

We help founders who are ready to play it.

Capture three things today. Three more tomorrow. Run the first retro on Friday. Build it yourself with the free repo, or bring your real business to a free 30-minute call and leave with one useful answer, whether or not we ever work together. We give it away so you can build a system that builds your own systems.

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Processes fail people.