LY'S BRAND BUILDER · PLAYBOOK

Content Strategy Playbook

what you stand for and who you talk to



For personal brands and small business owners who have finished Ly's Brand Builder Playbook.

Written 24 Oct 2026 for Ly Viet Vu's Brand Builder. It draws on proven personal brand methods (named in the credits at the end) and on shapes from Ly's own briefs and plans. Ly's own brand is the worked example and the first trial run. Mai Coffee, the café from the Brand Builder Playbook example, is the small business example.

How to use it: do the steps in order. Each step has why it matters, a fill-in exercise, a diagram, two worked examples and a one-line check. Where a personal brand and a small business do it differently, you'll see two short columns. Where it's the same, it says so in one line.

The companion is the Content Planning Playbook: it turns this strategy into a weekly calendar.

THE BRAND BUILDER SYSTEM

1
Brand Builder Playbook
Who you are: the 8 steps.

2
Content Strategy Playbook
What you stand for and who you talk to.
YOU ARE HERE

3
Content Planning Playbook
What to post each week, and how to know it worked.

★
The master step: your in-house marketing team
Built from all three.



Finish all three playbooks, then build your in-house marketing team. You don't have to do it all yourself.

YOUR NAME OR BUSINESS

Mai Coffee

DATE

25 Oct 2026

The steps at a glance

#	STEP	YOU LEAVE WITH
0	Which reader are you?	Personal brand or small business
1	Your brand statement	One sentence you repeat everywhere
2	The Brand Journey	Your outcome, and what you must be known for
3	Who you talk to	One person, written down
4	Your credibility bank	5 stories you can teach from for years
5	The two-column exercise	Your contrarian beliefs
6	3 to 5 hills and one enemy	The takes you repeat every week
7	Pond, lake, ocean	Your arena and your first platform
8	The trust loop	How every post earns trust
9	Content pillars	3 to 5 buckets, each with angles
10	Named mechanisms	Names people can repeat
11	The 75 / 20 / 5 mix	How deep, how wide, how personal
12	Uniform and set	A look people recognise in one second
13	The ask ladder	What you ask for, and when
14	The 90-day goal and how to measure trust	Targets and a weekly scorecard

Step 0. Which reader are you?

a personal brand and a shop build trust the same way, but the face, the proof and the ask are different.

The quick test: if you sold the business tomorrow, would your audience follow you, or the shop? If they'd follow you, you are a personal brand. If they'd follow the shop, you are a small business. Many owners are both: pick the one you're building first, for the next 90 days.

BOTH PLAYBOOKS · WHICH READER ARE YOU?

Personal brand or small business?

Quick test: if you sold the business tomorrow, would your audience follow you, or the shop?

WHERE IT DIFFERS	PERSONAL BRAND · e.g. LY	SMALL BUSINESS · e.g. MAI COFFEE
Face on camera	You. Your name is the brand.	The owner first. People trust a face more than a logo.
Staff on camera	Rarely. Guests and clients, with their OK.	Yes, once trained. Pick 1 or 2 regular faces, with their OK.
Proof that counts	Your results, your story, your credibility bank.	Customers, the place, reviews, before and after.
Pillars	What you teach and believe.	What you sell, how you make it, the people, the place.
Ask ladder	Follow, free asset, email, call.	Follow, visit, loyalty, repeat, bring a friend.
Platforms	1 primary where your person learns, 1 repost.	1 primary where locals look, plus Google Maps.
Cadence	Your choice. A common start: 3 short videos a week, 1 long piece a month.	Your choice. A common start: 3 posts a week from a 60-minute weekly shoot.

The same for both: the Brand Journey, one person to talk to, the trust loop, the hook surfaces, the 75 / 20 / 5 mix and the Monday scorecard.

Brand Builder Playbooks by Ly Viet Vu

WHERE IT DIFFERS	PERSONAL BRAND	SMALL BUSINESS
Face on camera	You. Your name is the brand.	The owner first. People trust a face more than a logo.
Staff on camera	Rarely. Guests and clients, with their OK.	Yes, once trained. Pick 1 or 2 regular faces, with their OK.
Proof that counts	Your results, your story, your credibility bank.	Customers, the place, reviews, before and after.
Pillars	What you teach and believe.	What you sell, how you make it, the people, the place.
Ask ladder	Follow, free asset, email, call.	Follow, visit, loyalty, repeat, bring a friend.
Platforms	1 primary where your person learns, 1 repost.	1 primary where locals look, plus Google Maps.
Cadence	Your choice. A common start: 3 short videos a week, 1 long piece a month.	Your choice. A common start: 3 posts a week from a 60-minute weekly shoot.

The same for both: the Brand Journey, one person to talk to, the trust loop, the hook surfaces, the 75 / 20 / 5 mix and the Monday scorecard.

Worked examples:

- Ly Viet Vu: personal brand. People follow Ly, not a company. His businesses change; his 20 years of brand building go with him.
- Mai Coffee: small business. Regulars come for the shop next to the hospital, the 5:30 a.m. opening and the seat that's saved for them. Mai is the face, but the café is the brand.

CHECK: you can say in one line which reader you are for the next 90 days.

01

Step 1. Your brand statement

one sentence, repeated everywhere, is how strangers learn what you stand for before they ever buy.

You already have the parts from the Brand Builder Playbook: who you serve (Scene 2), why you're different (Scene 6) and what you believe (Scene 7). This step joins them into one line.

The formula:

> I believe [the people you serve] who want [what they want most] should [your belief], not [what most people do].

Exercise:

PART	TAKE IT FROM	YOUR ANSWER
The people you serve	Brand Builder Playbook, Scene 2, Profile 1	The Night-Shift Hero (nurse, 28 to 40)
What they want most	Scene 2, their motto or insight	Just get me through today
Your belief	Scene 7, "Your point of view"	Carers deserve to be looked after first
What most people do	Scene 7, "The old way"	Coffee shops built for laptops and photos
Your brand statement		I believe _____ who want _____ should _____, not _____. We believe the people who look after everyone else deserve to be looked after first, not handed a paper cup on the run.

The statement sits at the top of the pillar tree diagram in step 9.

Worked examples:

- **Ly (example):** "I believe small business owners who want a brand people choose should build their own in-house marketing team, not rent an agency."
- **Mai Coffee:** "We believe the people who look after everyone else deserve to be looked after first, not handed a paper cup on the run." (Built from her Scene 7: old way "coffee shops are built for laptops and photos"; point of view "the people who look after everyone else deserve to be looked after too".)

Where it goes: your bio, the first lines of every YouTube description, your pinned post, the back of your business card. Put it on every video too. Repeat it long enough and your audience starts to say it for you.

CHECK: a stranger reads it once and can tell who it's for and what you disagree with.

02

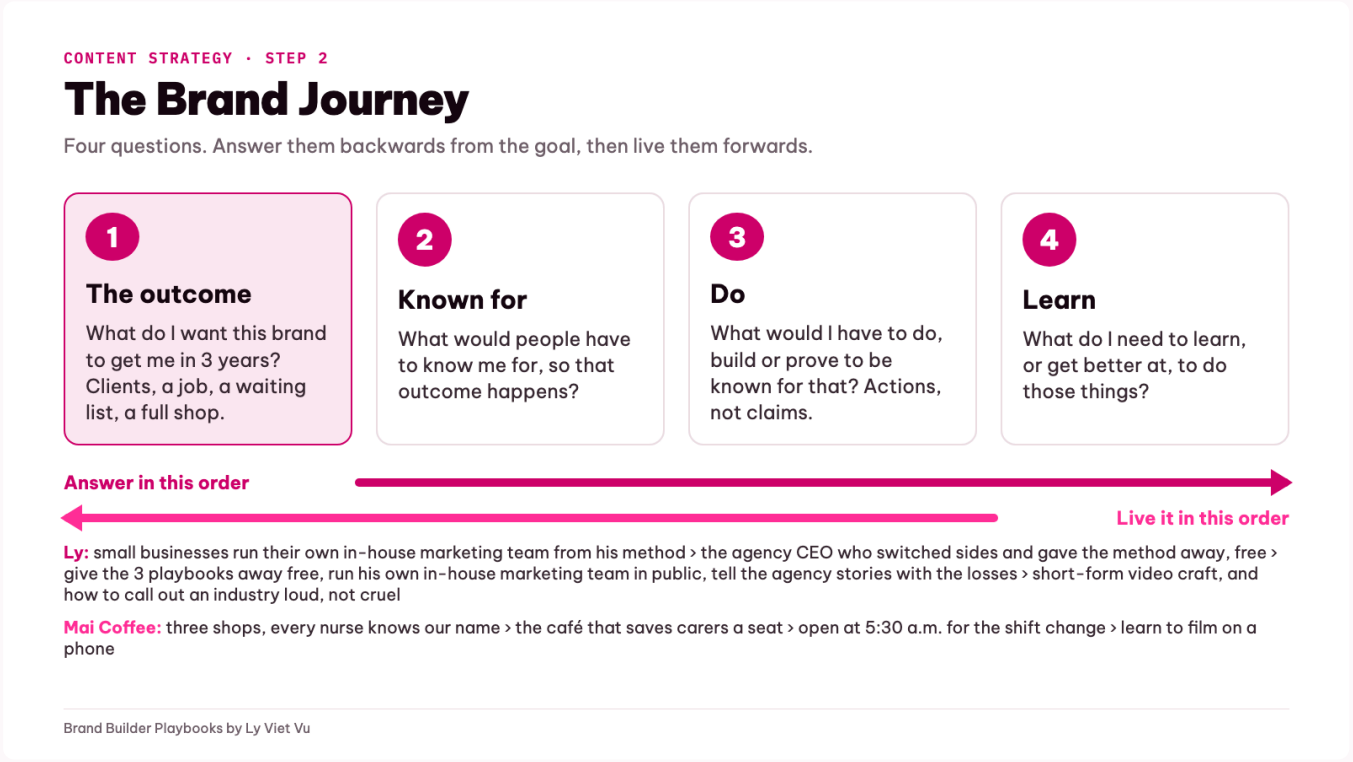
Step 2. The Brand Journey

without a defined outcome, every post is a guess. Almost nobody who posts has one.

The four questions. Answer them backwards, from the goal:

1. What outcome do I want from this brand in 3 years?
2. What would I have to be known for to get that outcome?
3. What would I have to do to be known for that? (Reputation comes from actions and results, not claims.)
4. What do I need to learn to do those things?

Then live them forwards: learn, do, become known, get the outcome. The answers become your to-do list and your yardstick. For every new idea, ask: does this move me closer to the outcome, or further away?



Exercise:

QUESTION	YOUR ANSWER
1. The outcome in 3 years	Three shops, and every nurse in the district knows our name.
2. Known for	The café that saves carers a seat.
3. What I must do or prove	Open at 5:30 a.m. for the shift change, know every order by the second visit.
4. What I must learn	Film a 30-second video on a phone; ask regulars for their stories.
One thing I'll stop doing because it doesn't move me closer	Posting pretty cup and latte-art photos. They make us look like every other café and bring no nurses in.

Worked examples:

	LY (PERSONAL BRAND)	MAI COFFEE (SMALL BUSINESS)
1. Outcome	Small businesses run their own in-house marketing team from his method	"Three shops, and every nurse in the district knows our name" (her Scene 1 vision)
2. Known for	The agency CEO who switched sides and gave the method away, free	The café that saves carers a seat
3. Do	Give the 3 playbooks away free, run his own in-house marketing team in public, tell the agency stories with the losses	Open at 5:30 a.m. for the shift change, know every order by the second visit
4. Learn	Short-form video craft, and how to call out an industry loud, not cruel	Film a 30-second video on a phone; ask regulars for their stories

CHECK: you can name one thing you'll stop posting because it doesn't serve the outcome.

Step 3. Who you talk to (one person) 03

"you guys" talks to nobody. Make every video for one specific person and say "you".

Take Profile 1 from your Brand Builder Playbook (Scene 2). That is the one person you speak to in every post. Profiles 2 and 3 still matter, but they overhear.

Exercise: the GET / TO / BY / AT line. Ly's own briefs carried this line for years. It forces you to say who, what you want them to do, what they must believe first, and where you'll reach them.

	YOUR ANSWER
GET (the one person)	The night-shift nurse at the hospital next door ("I am always looking after other people, and nobody looks after me").
TO (what you want them to do next)	Stop in before the 6 a.m. shift.
BY (what they need to believe or feel first)	Feeling someone saved them a seat.
AT (where they already spend time)	The Facebook groups and the street outside the hospital.
Their words for the problem (from comments, DMs, or what they say at the counter)	"No time for a real break." "Just get me through today." "Nobody looks after me."

Worked examples:

- **Ly (example):** GET busy small business owners and personal brands who do their own marketing at night, or rent pieces of an agency they never own, TO build their own in-house marketing team with the free playbooks (brand strategy, then content strategy, then content plan), BY seeing an ex-agency CEO give the method away, free, AT Instagram first, with YouTube for the long form.
- **Mai Coffee:** GET the night-shift nurse at the hospital next door ("I am always looking after other people, and nobody looks after me"), TO stop in before the 6 a.m. shift, BY feeling someone saved them a seat, AT the Facebook groups and the street outside the hospital.

PERSONAL BRAND	SMALL BUSINESS
The person is a buyer of your thinking. Listen in DMs and calls, because your best clients rarely comment in public.	The person walks past your door. Listen at the counter. Write down the exact words regulars use.

CHECK: you can picture the person's face, and your next post says "you", never "you guys" or "everyone".

04

Step 4. Your credibility bank

your proof is what makes strangers listen. Write it down once and you can teach from it for years.

First, decide: expert or student? Experts teach from results. Students learn in public and share what they test. A student posing as an expert gets found out. If your bank is thin, say "here's what I'm testing", or go do more things worth talking about.

Exercise: write 5 entries. Each entry has six parts:

PART	WHAT TO WRITE	YOUR ANSWER
Context	Where, when, what you were doing	A tiny shop next to the hospital in District 3
Root problem	What was really wrong	6 a.m. shift change; cafés nearby closed or rushed
Insight	What you saw that others missed	Carers look after others; nobody looks after them
Approach	What you did	Open 5:30 a.m.; know orders by visit 2; 10% off badge
Outcome	1 to 3 results (numbers if you have them)	After 30 days: badge orders a week, regulars by name
Lesson	What anyone can take from it	Build your hours around your customer's day, not yours

ENTRIES 2 TO 5, AND 2 OR 3 CREDIBILITY LINES FOR EACH

2. The second-visit promise
Context: the 6 a.m. rush at the counter. Problem: tired nurses have no energy to explain their order. Insight: being known by name feels like care. Approach: learn each order by the second visit. Outcome: after 30 days, count regulars we greet by name. Lesson: remembering is a form of care. Lines: "We know your order by the second visit."

3. Why a nurse's daughter opened a café
Context: Mai's mother was a nurse for 30 years. Problem: she worked for everyone and nobody looked after her. Insight: carers give the most and get a paper cup. Approach: a café built around the hospital's shift times. Outcome: the only one on the street. Lesson: your story explains why the shop exists. Lines: "Mai's mother was a nurse for 30 years." "Started by a nurse's daughter, right next to the hospital."

4. The quiet corner
Context: families wait for hours at the hospital. Problem: nowhere calm to sit. Insight: "I am so busy being strong for my family that I forget I am tired too." Approach: a quiet corner and a family order. Outcome: after 30 days, count family orders a week. Lesson: the seat can matter more than the coffee. Lines: "We saved you a seat."

5. We ask how you are
Context: home carers come in three mornings a week. Problem: nobody asks how they are. Insight: they love caring, but feel unseen. Approach: ask by name, every visit. Outcome: after 30 days, count carers who come back each week. Lesson: a kind question costs nothing. Lines: "Your 5:30 a.m. friend."

Then add 2 or 3 **contextual credibility lines** per entry: short proof lines that fit a specific topic. A post about pitching uses a pitching line, not your whole bio.

Worked example, Ly (from his story bank):

PART	ENTRY: "TEACH BEFORE YOU PITCH"
Context	2012, Sofresh, a small independent agency in Saigon
Root problem	Big brands didn't know us. Cold pitches went nowhere.
Insight	Clients buy from the person who taught them how to think.
Approach	One free workshop, "Marketing to a Digitized Audience", given to Pepsi, Piaggio, a Unilever brand and THP
Outcome	The workshop helped win THP's work, which became an important client
Lesson	Give your thinking away and the briefs come to you

Ly's credibility lines, matched to topic:

- General: "I ran an agency for 14 years. WPP bought our agency in 2012."
- Brand building: "20 years building brands, at Sofresh, Mirum, JWT and Wunderman Thompson."
- Pitching: "In 2019 we tracked 86 new business opportunities: 29 won, 19 lost."
- Losing and coming back: "A diaper pitch told us we were 'furthest off the mark'. We won it in round 3." (Huggies, Kimberly-Clark, signed January 2020.)
- Recognition: "The first Vietnamese person named to Campaign Asia's 40 Under 40 (2016)."

Worked example, Mai Coffee (from her Brand Builder Playbook):

PART	ENTRY: "WHY WE OPEN AT 5:30 A.M."
Context	A tiny shop next to the hospital in District 3
Root problem	Night-shift nurses finish or start at 6 a.m. and every café nearby is closed or rushed
Insight	Carers spend all day looking after others; nobody looks after them
Approach	Open at 5:30 a.m. for the shift change, learn each order by the second visit, 10% off with a hospital badge
Outcome	Write it after 30 days: how many badge orders a week, how many regulars by name
Lesson	Build your hours around your customer's day, not yours

Mai's credibility lines: "Mai's mother was a nurse for 30 years." "We know your order by the second visit." "Open from 5:30 a.m. for the shift change."

PERSONAL BRAND	SMALL BUSINESS
Proof is your track record: results, roles, wins and losses.	Proof is the shop: regulars, reviews, the place, how you make it. Your own story counts when it explains why the shop exists.

CHECK: you have 5 entries and at least 10 proof lines, each matched to a topic.

05

Step 5. The two-column contrarian exercise

a belief your industry disagrees with is most of what makes you stand out. Contrarian is not controversial: it has to be something you actually believe.

Exercise (the two columns):

1. Left column: everything people in your space say or do that you disagree with, find lazy, or hear customers complain about.
2. Right column: the opposite. What you believe or do instead.
3. Write at least 5 rows. Fewer means you're not deep enough in your space yet.

WHAT MY SPACE SAYS OR DOES	WHAT I BELIEVE OR DO INSTEAD
Built for laptops and photos.	Built for people on a 12-hour shift.
Fast, faceless service.	We know your order by the second visit.
Open when it suits the owner.	Open at 5:30 a.m. for the shift change.
Paper cup, no seat.	We saved you a seat.
Compete on price with the canteen.	Compete on care.

This table is the raw material for Step 6: your right-hand column is where your hills come from.

Ly's own branding workshop used the same shape: it opened with five "think this, not that" lines, such as "think platforms, not campaigns". The flip is what made the room lean in.

CONTENT STRATEGY · STEPS 5 AND 6

Two columns, 3 to 5 hills, one enemy

Write what your space says that you disagree with. Flip each line. Keep the 3 to 5 people quote back to you.

WHAT MY SPACE SAYS	WHAT I BELIEVE INSTEAD
~~Every brand needs an agency.~~	You don't need an agency. Build your own in-house marketing team.
~~Pay a retainer, every month.~~	Don't rent your marketing. Own it, and it stays yours.
~~A real team is out of reach.~~	Every job on that team now fits on your laptop.
~~Buy the tool, skip the strategy.~~	A tool without a strategy helps you look like everyone, faster.
~~Hire someone to hold your hand.~~	You need the method, not a hand to hold. Follow it yourself, free.

→

HILL 1
I ran an agency for 14 years. You don't need one.

HILL 2
Don't rent your marketing. Own it.

HILL 3
Your agency fits on your laptop.

HILL 4
The agency is dying. Build your own.

THE ENEMY: A CONCEPT, NEVER A PERSON
The agency model
Renting your marketing on retainer and never owning it. He calls out the model, never a name.

Mai Coffee: "Coffee shops are built for laptops and photos" becomes "The people who look after everyone deserve to be looked after first." Enemy: rushed, faceless coffee.

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Worked examples:

LY: WHAT THE SPACE SAYS	LY: WHAT HE BELIEVES INSTEAD
Every brand needs an agency.	You don't need an agency. Build your own in-house marketing team.
Pay a retainer, every month.	Don't rent your marketing. Own it, and it stays yours.
A real team is out of reach.	Every job on that team now fits on your laptop.
Buy the tool, skip the strategy.	A tool without a strategy helps you look like everyone, faster.
Hire someone to hold your hand.	You need the method, not a hand to hold. Follow it yourself, free.

MAI: WHAT CAFÉS DO	MAI: WHAT SHE DOES INSTEAD
Built for laptops and photos.	Built for people on a 12-hour shift.
Fast, faceless service.	We know your order by the second visit.
Open when it suits the owner.	Open at 5:30 a.m. for the shift change.
Paper cup, no seat.	We saved you a seat.
Compete on price with the canteen.	Compete on care.

CHECK: you have 5 rows, and every right-hand line is something you'd defend in person.

Step 6. 3 to 5 hills and one enemy

06

people remember a few beliefs repeated often, not many beliefs said once.

A hill is a belief you'd defend all day, cut down to a short line you will repeat for months. You already wrote the raw material in Step 5. Now you sharpen it.

Exercise:

1. Go to Step 5's right-hand column, "What I believe or do instead". Circle the 3 lines you feel most strongly about.
2. Rewrite each one as a hill: 7 words or fewer, easy to say out loud, easy to quote back. Cut every word that isn't doing work.
3. Name the enemy: the concept that stands between your person and their goal. Look at your left-hand column; the enemy is usually hiding there. Never a person, never a competitor by name.
4. Put your 3 hills into everything for 3 weeks: hooks, captions, stories.
5. Watch for the signals: people quote the line back to you, DMs go up, or others repeat it.
6. Keep the ones that land. Drop the rest. End with 3 to 5.
7. Keep the tone about 95 percent positive, 5 percent negative. At 50 / 50 you've gone too far.

	YOUR ANSWER
Hill 1	Carers come first.
Hill 2	We know your name.
Hill 3	A seat, not a paper cup.
The enemy (a concept)	Rushed, faceless coffee: fast, the same everywhere, and nobody knows your name.
Signal I'll watch for	Nurses ask us to "save me a seat" at the counter or on Zalo. Regulars say "a seat, not a paper cup" back to us.

PRO TIP give your AI your Step 5 table and ask for 3 versions of each hill. Keep the one you would say out loud.

Worked examples:

- **Ly's hills,** from his Step 5 lines: "You don't need an agency. Build your own in-house marketing team" becomes **I ran an agency for 14 years. You don't need one.** (his lead hill). "Don't rent your marketing. Own it, and it stays yours" becomes **Don't rent your marketing. Own it.** "Every job on that team now fits on your laptop" becomes **Your agency fits on your laptop.** His fourth: **The agency is dying. Build your own. Enemy:** the agency model, renting your marketing on retainer and never owning it. He calls out the model, never a name.
- **Mai's hills,** from her Step 5 lines: "Built for people on a 12-hour shift" becomes **carers come first**. "We know your order by the second visit" becomes **we know your name**. "We saved you a seat" becomes **a seat, not a paper cup**. **Enemy:** rushed, faceless coffee.

PERSONAL BRAND	SMALL BUSINESS
Hills are opinions about your industry.	Hills are promises about how you treat people. They show up in what you do, not just what you say.

CHECK: each hill fits in 7 words, and your enemy has no name and no face.

Step 7. Pond, lake, ocean (and which platform first) 07

you can't be known everywhere at once. Start where your results have already earned you the right to speak.

The arena:

- **Ocean:** the whole field (business, food and drink).
- **Lake:** a discipline (brand building, coffee).
- **Pond:** a sub-niche you've earned with results (brand building for small business owners; coffee for hospital carers).

Start in the pond. Move out one level only when your proof justifies it, never because you're bored. Before adding any new topic, ask three questions: does it help me be known for my one thing? Does it fit my belief or my style? Will my person find it useful, or is it reach for vanity?

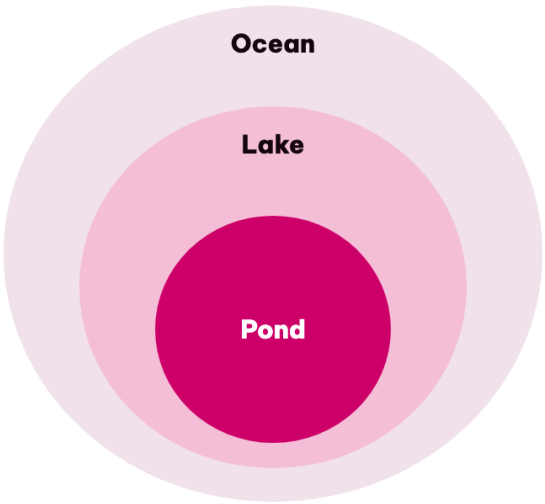
Which platform first: pick one primary platform to experiment on for 8 weeks. Everywhere else, keep posting the same pieces with no experiments. Then rotate. Graduate a second platform only when, for 3 to 4 weeks, most of your posts there beat your normal number and bring real leads.

To choose the first platform, ask 10 people who look like your one person where they spend time on a break. Go there.

CONTENT STRATEGY · STEP 7

Pond, lake, ocean

Start in the pond your results have earned. Move out one level only when your proof justifies it.



PERSONAL BRAND · LY VIET VU	
Ocean	Small businesses everywhere
Lake	Small businesses and personal brands that read English or Vietnamese
Pond	Small business owners and personal brands among the Vietnamese community abroad. Ly is one of them, and works in both languages.

SMALL BUSINESS · MAI COFFEE	
Ocean	Food and drink
Lake	Coffee in Ho Chi Minh City
Pond	Coffee for the nurses, carers and families at the hospital next door, District 3

Brand Builder Playbooks by Ly Viet Vu

Exercise:

	YOUR ANSWER
Ocean	Food and drink
Lake	Coffee in Ho Chi Minh City
Pond (earned)	Coffee for the nurses, carers and families at the hospital next door
The proof that earns the pond	Open from 5:30 a.m. for the shift change. 10% off with a hospital badge. Mai's mother was a nurse for 30 years.
Primary platform for the next 8 weeks	Facebook, after asking 10 regulars where they scroll on a break. Review on Mon 21 Dec 2026.
Repost platforms (no experiments)	Google Maps (photos and hours every week), TikTok reposts

Worked examples:

	LY	MAI COFFEE
Ocean	Small businesses everywhere	Food and drink
Lake	Small businesses and personal brands that read English or Vietnamese	Coffee in Ho Chi Minh City
Pond	Small business owners and personal brands among the Vietnamese community abroad. Ly is one of them, and works in both languages.	Coffee for the nurses, carers and families at the hospital next door
Primary platform	Instagram, the experiment platform for 8 weeks (it's the only one that shows us how many people swipe away in 3 seconds)	Facebook, after asking 10 regulars where they scroll on a break
Repost platforms	Facebook, TikTok, YouTube Shorts, LinkedIn. YouTube carries the long form.	Google Maps (photos and hours every week), TikTok reposts

PERSONAL BRAND	SMALL BUSINESS
Solo: 1 primary plus 1 repost. With a team: up to 3 primaries.	1 primary plus Google Maps. Local search is where a walk-in starts.

CHECK: you can name one primary platform and the date you'll review it, 8 weeks from now.

08

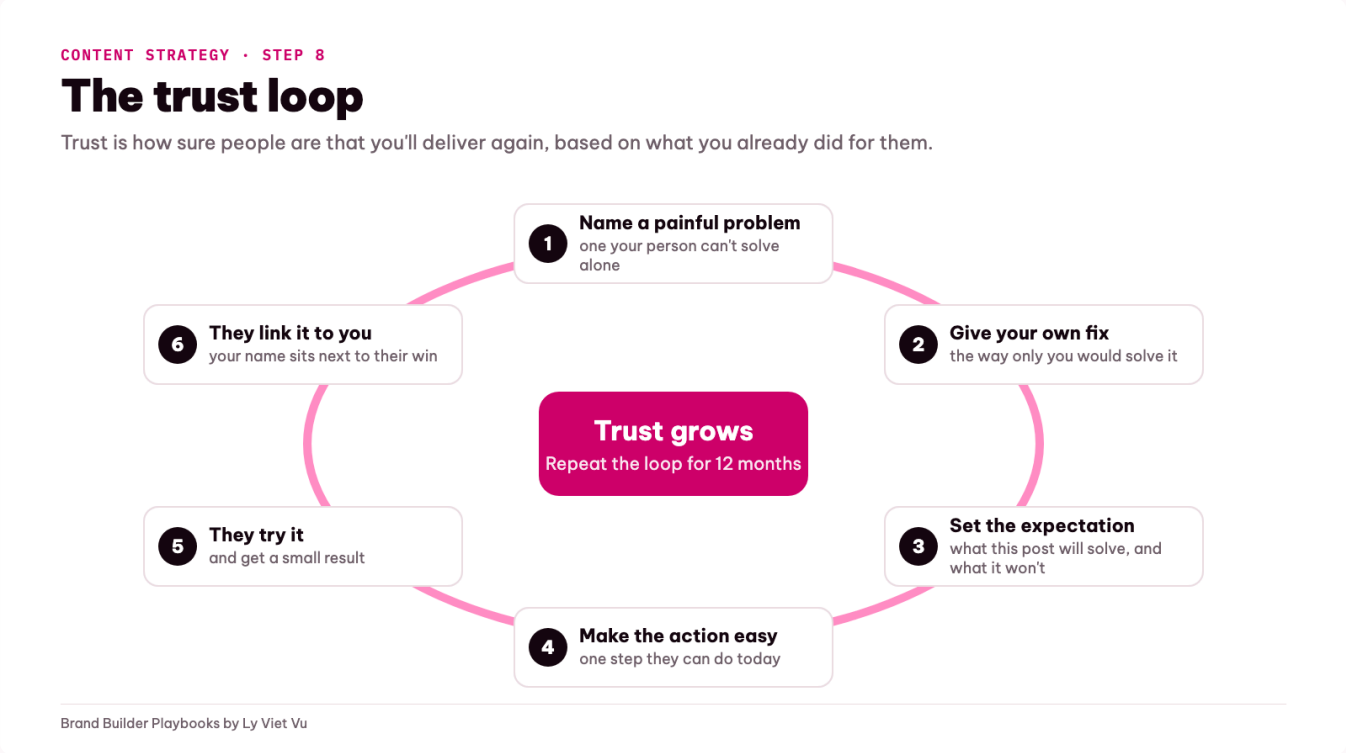
Step 8. The trust loop

trust is how much someone believes you'll meet or beat their expectations next time, based on what you already did. Every post is a chance to deliver once more. Trust comes before the sale, never after it.

What the loop is for: every post runs one problem through the loop. So strangers get a small win from you before they ever buy. Each win makes the next post easier to believe, and trust compounds.

The loop:

1. Name a painful problem your person can't solve alone.
2. Give your own fix, the way only you would solve it.
3. Set the expectation: what this post solves, and what it doesn't.
4. Make the action easy: one step they can do today.
5. They try it and get a small result.
6. They link that result to you. Repeat for 12 months.



Exercise: take one problem from your credibility bank and run it through the loop.

LOOP STEP	YOUR POST
1. The painful problem	You finish a 12-hour shift and nobody asks how you are.
2. Your fix	A quiet corner and a coffee that's ready when you walk in.
3. What it solves, and what it doesn't	It won't fix the shift; it gives you 10 minutes that are yours.
4. The one easy action	Message the order on Zalo before you leave the ward.
5. The small result they'll get	A seat and a coffee waiting.

Worked examples:

- **Ly:** (1) "You pay for marketing every month and own none of it." (2) Write your brand answers once; they brief every job on your team. (3) This gives your team a brief, not finished posts. Those come next. (4) Take the free Brand Builder Playbook: 8 questions, about 60 minutes. (5) A brand brief you own, ready for your in-house marketing team.
- **Mai Coffee:** (1) "You finish a 12-hour shift and nobody asks how you are." (2) A quiet corner and a coffee that's ready when you walk in. (3) It won't fix the shift; it gives you 10 minutes that are yours. (4) Message the order on Zalo before you leave the ward. (5) A seat and a coffee waiting.

Same for both readers. The only difference is what "the result" is: a skill for a personal brand, an experience for a shop.

How your AI uses this: the loop becomes the template for every post your AI drafts. It pulls the problem from your credibility bank (Step 4) and your idea bank (Planning Step 2), writes the post in loop order, and checks that it ends with one easy action. The Monday scorecard then shows whether trust is growing: follows per 1,000 plays, and replies that quote you.

CHECK: every post you plan names one problem and one easy action.

Step 9. Content pillars

09

pillars stop you from starting every week at a blank page, and they teach the algorithm and your audience what you're about.

Exercise: pick 3 to 5 pillars your person cares about. Think of them as content buckets. Give each one a share of your posts and 3 angles you can repeat for a year.

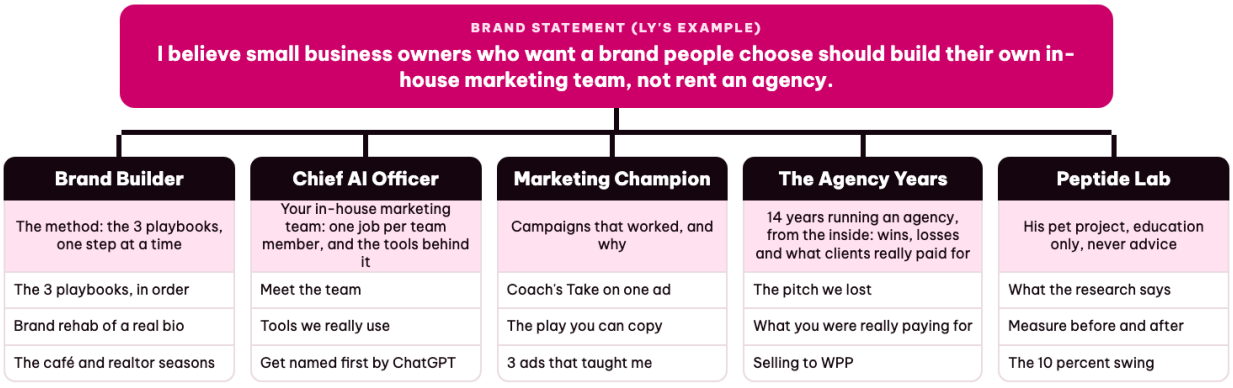
Ly's own social content plan used the same shape: four topics, each with a share of posts and a written angle. His were team life (35 percent), inspiring ideas (30), digital trends (20) and the work itself (15).

PILLAR	WHAT IT COVERS	SHARE OF POSTS	ANGLE 1	ANGLE 2	ANGLE 3
	Small kind moments	35%	A seat saved	A note on the cup	The 5:30 a.m. welcome
	Behind the counter	30%	Strong phin coffee	Cold brew overnight	The local pastries
	The neighbourhood	20%	Shift-change rush	The families waiting	The quiet corner
	Regulars' stories (with OK)	15%	My order, by visit 2	A nurse's first coffee	Thank-you notes

CONTENT STRATEGY · STEP 9

The pillar tree

One statement at the top. 3 to 5 pillars under it. Each pillar holds the angles you'll repeat for a year.



Mai Coffee, four pillars: Small kind moments (the mission) · Behind the counter (how we make it) · The neighbourhood (the hospital street) · Regulars' stories (with their OK)

Ly runs five pillars because his in-house marketing team makes the volume. A one-person shop starts with three.

Brand Builder Playbooks by Ly Viet Vu

Worked examples:

Ly runs five pillars (he calls them lobes). Brand Builder gets about 30 percent of his posts, Chief AI Officer and The Agency Years about 25 each, Marketing Champion and Peptide Lab about 10 each. His in-house marketing team makes the volume:

PILLAR	WHAT IT COVERS	THREE ANGLES
Brand Builder	The method: the 3 playbooks, one step at a time	The 3 playbooks, in order; brand rehab of a real bio; the café and realtor seasons
Chief AI Officer	Your in-house marketing team: one job per team member, and the tools behind it	Meet the team; tools we really use; get named first by ChatGPT
Marketing Champion	Campaigns that worked, and why	Coach's Take on one ad; the play you can copy; 3 ads that taught me
The Agency Years	14 years running an agency, from the inside: wins, losses and what clients really paid for	The pitch we lost; what you were really paying for; selling to WPP
Peptide Lab	His pet project, education only, never advice	What the research says; measure before and after; the 10 percent swing

Mai Coffee runs four:

PILLAR	SHARE	THREE ANGLES
Small kind moments (the mission)	35%	A seat saved; a note on the cup; the 5:30 a.m. welcome
Behind the counter (how we make it)	30%	Strong phin coffee; cold brew overnight; the local pastries
The neighbourhood (the hospital street)	20%	Shift-change rush; the families waiting; the quiet corner
Regulars' stories (with their OK)	15%	"My order, by the second visit"; a nurse's first coffee; thank-you notes

PERSONAL BRAND	SMALL BUSINESS
Pillars are what you teach and believe. Start with 3.	Pillars are what you sell, how you make it, the people and the place. 3 to 4 is plenty.

CHECK: you could post for 4 weeks from your pillars without asking "what should I post today?"

10

Step 10. Named mechanisms

a name makes an idea feel new, makes it easy to repeat, and lets your audience spread it for you.

These are named concepts, also called unique mechanisms. A good name passes the **three R's**: easy to **remember**, **repeat** and **reference**. One more test: the words sound familiar, but the combination is new (like "credibility bank" in Step 4).

Exercise:

1. List 5 things you already teach or do the same way every time.
2. Give each a 2 to 4 word name.
3. Use the name in the spoken line, the caption, the cover and the chapter title, every time.

WHAT YOU DO	THE NAME	REMEMBER?	REPEAT?	REFERENCE?
Save seats	The Saved Seat	Yes, 3 words, a picture	Yes, nurses say it	Yes: "my Saved Seat"
Know orders	The second-visit promise	Yes, a clear promise	Yes, staff say it daily	Yes, on the loyalty card
Open early	Nurses first, from 5:30 a.m.	Yes, a time and a who	Yes, on the door sign	Yes, "nurses first"

Worked examples:

- **Ly:** "the rent-or-own test" (mark every marketing job rent or own); "the 3 playbooks" (brand strategy, content strategy, content plan, always in that order); "the master step" (your in-house marketing team, the last step). From his Brand Builder Playbook and seasons: "Ask why three times"; "the 3-pair voice test" (from the Mai episode "Find your brand voice in 3 pairs", 332 YouTube views); "the Brand Blueprint".
- **Mai Coffee:** "the Saved Seat"; "Nurses first, from 5:30 a.m."; "the second-visit promise" (we know your order by then).

Here is how both filled in the exercise table. A café fills it the same way as a personal brand: what you do, the name, and the three R's.

WHO	WHAT YOU DO	THE NAME	REMEMBER?	REPEAT?	REFERENCE?
Ly	Ownership	The rent-or-own test	Yes, a simple pair	Yes, works on any job	Yes, "rent or own?"
Ly	Method	The 3 playbooks	Yes, it has a number	Yes, same order always	Yes, in every ask
Ly	Team	The master step	Yes, the last step	Yes, one job per team member	Yes, "our in-house team"
Ly	Purpose	Ask why three times	Yes, 4 short words	Yes, it's an action	Yes, in hooks and covers
Ly	Summary	The Brand Blueprint	Yes, alliteration	Yes, ends every playbook	Yes, "my Blueprint"
Mai Coffee	Save seats	The Saved Seat	Yes, 3 words, a picture	Yes, nurses say it	Yes: "my Saved Seat"
Mai Coffee	Know orders	The second-visit promise	Yes, a clear promise	Yes, staff say it daily	Yes, on the loyalty card
Mai Coffee	Open early	Nurses first, from 5:30 a.m.	Yes, a time and a who	Yes, on the door sign	Yes, "nurses first"

Same for both readers. A shop's names are often promises or rituals; a personal brand's names are often methods.

CHECK: someone could tell a friend about your idea using only its name.

Step 11. The 75 / 20 / 5 mix

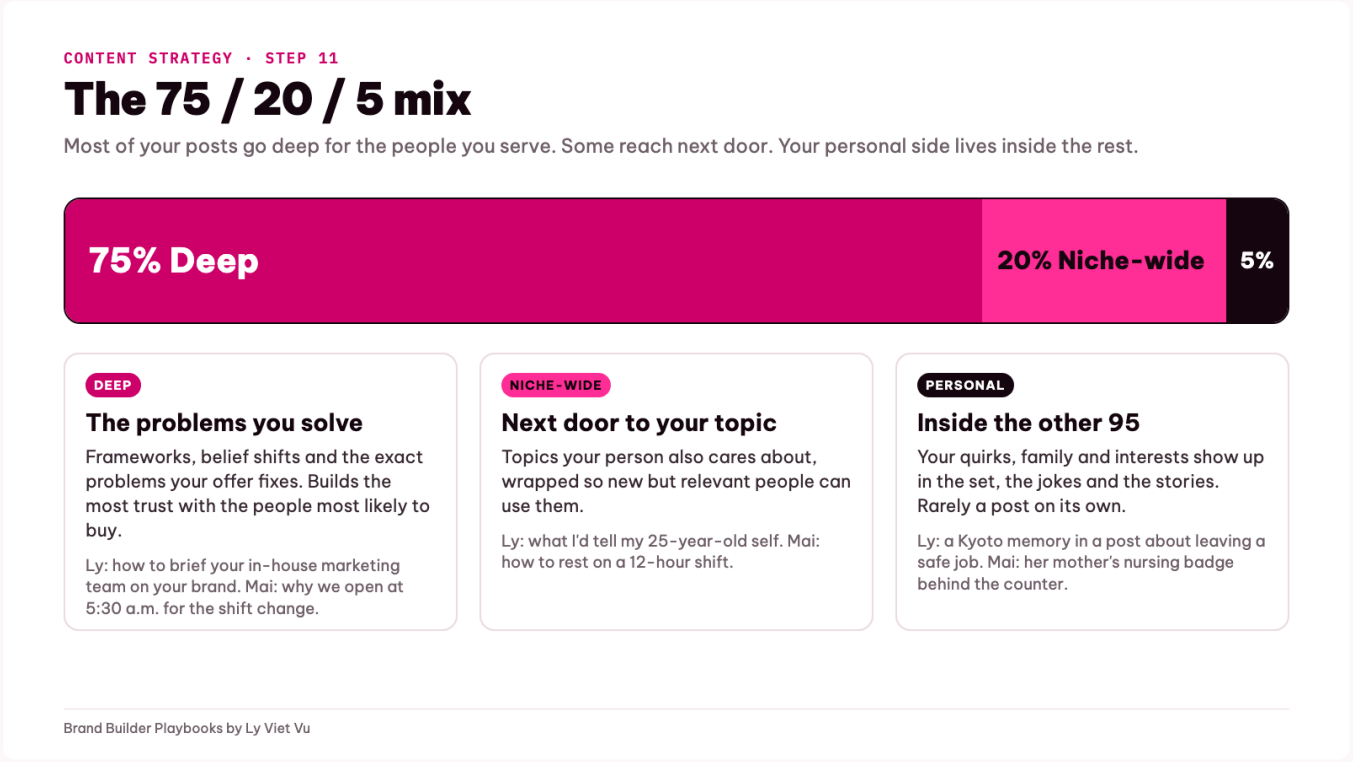
11

deep content builds trust with buyers; a little wider content brings new people in; your personal side makes you human. Getting the balance wrong either stalls growth or attracts the wrong crowd.

The mix:

- **75 percent deep:** frameworks, belief shifts and the exact problems your offer fixes.
- **20 percent niche-wide:** topics next door that new but relevant people care about.
- **5 percent personal:** your quirks, family and interests, mostly inside the other 95 percent (in the set, the jokes, the stories), rarely as a post of its own.

Also label every post before you make it: **width** (reach new people, graded on plays and follows) or **depth** (deepen trust, graded on saves, replies and leads). Never both.



Exercise: take your next 20 posts.

TYPE	TARGET	YOUR NEXT 20 POSTS
Deep	15	15: why we open at 5:30 a.m. for the shift change
Niche-wide	4	4: how to rest on a 12-hour shift
Personal as its own post	1 at most	0: Mum's 30 years as a nurse, told inside posts
Width or depth label on every post	20 of 20	20 of 20, tagged before filming

Worked examples:

- **Ly:** deep, "how to brief your in-house marketing team on your brand"; niche-wide, "what I'd tell my 25-year-old self"; personal inside a lesson, a Kyoto memory in a post about leaving a safe job.
- **Mai Coffee:** deep, "why we open at 5:30 a.m. for the shift change"; niche-wide, "how to rest on a 12-hour shift"; personal inside a post, her mother's 30 years as a nurse, told while she makes the first coffee of the day.

PERSONAL BRAND	SMALL BUSINESS
Your story is the personal 5 percent.	The owner's and staff's stories are the personal 5 percent.

CHECK: you've labelled your next 20 posts deep, wide or personal, and width or depth.

Step 12. Uniform and set

12

pairing times consistency equals association. Pair the same look with the same ideas often enough and people recognise you in one second of scrolling.

Familiarity works in your favour: same shirt, same set, same way of speaking, every time.

Exercise: freeze these for at least 8 weeks.

	YOUR CHOICE
What you wear (one uniform)	Mai in her apron; staff wear the same apron on camera
Where you film (1 or 2 sets)	The counter by the window; the quiet corner seat in every third video
Your colours (2, plus one accent)	Coffee brown and cream; one accent colour from the cup design
Your on-screen text style	The same handwritten sign style, 1 to 3 words at a time
Your opening line habit	Name the shift or the seat in the first 8 words. Never "hey guys".
Recurring people or things (your cast)	Her regulars (with their OK), the quiet corner seat, the phin

Worked examples:

- **Ly:** each pillar keeps one fixed look for 8 weeks at a time. Brand Builder uses the rust shirt and coffee from his homepage photo and the wine colour from his LinkedIn cards. The Agency Years keeps the 1960s screen-print look; Chief AI Officer keeps the orchestra conductor. Recurring cast: Mai, Ben, and his in-house marketing team, each member by job title.
- **Mai Coffee:** Mai in her apron at the counter by the window; the quiet corner seat in every third video; the same handwritten sign style; her regulars (with their OK) as the cast.

PERSONAL BRAND	SMALL BUSINESS
The uniform is you: clothes, set, voice.	The uniform is the shop: the counter, the cups, the sign, the apron. Staff wear the same thing on camera.

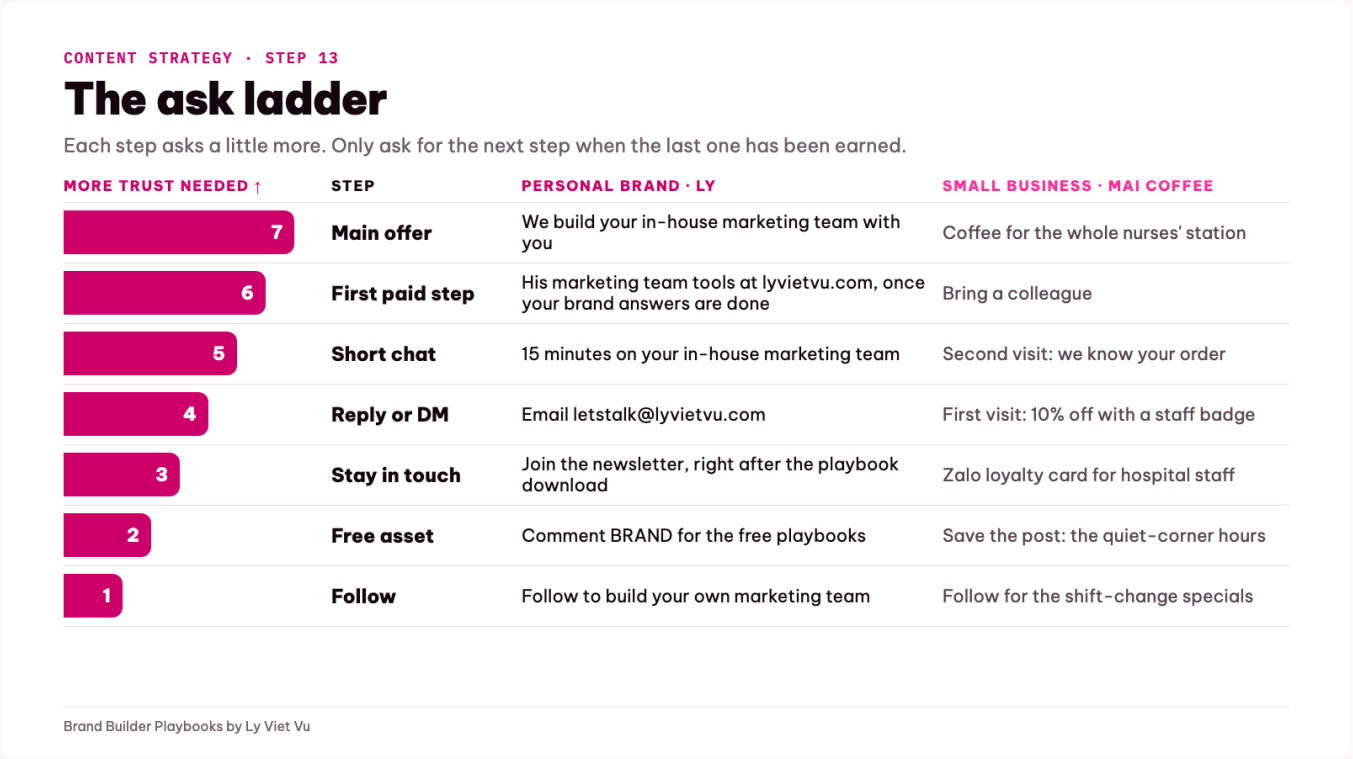
CHECK: someone who has seen 3 of your posts would know a 4th is yours with the sound off.

Step 13. The ask ladder

13

asking too much too soon breaks trust. This is the reasonability rule: the size of the ask must match the trust you've earned. Give for months before you ask for anything big. Give away the plan for free, and sell the help to build it.

The ladder: each step asks a little more. Only ask for the next one when the last one has been earned. Once trust exists, a comment keyword on about 1 post in 4, pointing to something free, is as often as you need to ask.



CONTENT STRATEGY · STEP 13

The ask ladder

Each step asks a little more. Only ask for the next step when the last one has been earned.

MORE TRUST NEEDED ↑	STEP	PERSONAL BRAND · LY	SMALL BUSINESS · MAI COFFEE
7	**Main offer**	We build your in-house marketing team with you	Coffee for the whole nurses' station
6	**First paid step**	His marketing team tools at lyvietvu.com, once your brand answers are done	Bring a colleague
5	**Short chat**	15 minutes on your in-house marketing team	Second visit: we know your order
4	**Reply or DM**	Email letstalk@lyvietvu.com	First visit: 10% off with a staff badge
3	**Stay in touch**	Join the newsletter, right after the playbook download	Zalo loyalty card for hospital staff
2	**Free asset**	Comment BRAND for the free playbooks	Save the post: the quiet-corner hours
1	**Follow**	Follow to build your own marketing team	Follow for the shift-change specials

Brand Builder Playbooks by Ly Viet Vu

Exercise:

STEP	WHAT YOU ASK	WHEN YOU'LL START ASKING
1. Follow	Follow for the shift-change specials	Week 2, on screen in every post
2. Free asset	Save the post with the quiet-corner hours	Week 3, with the SEAT keyword
3. Stay in touch	Zalo loyalty card for hospital staff	Week 4, once regulars reply
4. Reply or DM	First visit: 10% off with a staff badge	Week 2, in the caption
5. Short chat or visit	Second visit: we know your order	Month 2, after the first visit
6. First paid step	Bring a colleague	Month 2, regulars only
7. Main offer	Coffee for the whole nurses' station	Month 3, once the wards know us

Worked examples:

STEP	LY	MAI COFFEE
1. Follow	"Follow to build your own marketing team"	Follow for the shift-change specials
2. Free asset	Comment BRAND for the free playbooks	Save the post with the quiet-corner hours
3. Stay in touch	Join the newsletter, right after the playbook download	Zalo loyalty card for hospital staff
4. Reply or DM	Email letstalk@lyvietvu.com	First visit: 10% off with a staff badge
5. Short chat	15 minutes on your in-house marketing team	Second visit: we know your order
6. First paid step	His marketing team tools at lyvietvu.com, once your brand answers are done	Bring a colleague
7. Main offer	We build your in-house marketing team with you	Coffee for the whole nurses' station

Ly's rules for his own ladder: follows first, then the playbook (he says people only take the playbook once they trust his voice). No prices in content. No spoken calls to action: the ask lives on screen, on the end card and in the caption.

PERSONAL BRAND	SMALL BUSINESS
The ladder ends in a call or a program. Never "work with me" in a post.	The ladder ends in a habit: the regular who brings friends. The best ask is often "come in".

CHECK: you know which rung you're asking for this month, and it's only one rung above where most of your audience is.

Step 14. The 90-day goal, and how you measure trust

14

views tell you who saw it. Trust numbers tell you who chose you. A low-view post can still be your best source of clients.

This step is your 90-day KPI setter. You set these targets once. Then your AI measures, monitors and reports them every week. Set it and forget it: your only job is to read the Monday report and make the one change.

Sam Gaudet and Caleb Ralston's trust formula (the four trust numbers):

NUMBER	HOW TO WORK IT OUT	WHAT IT TELLS YOU
Follows per 1,000 plays	follows from the post ÷ plays × 1,000	Did strangers like you enough to stay? Views without follows means people saw you and didn't stay.
Saves per 1,000 plays	saves ÷ plays × 1,000	Was it useful enough to keep?
Replies	comments plus DMs, and how many quote your hills or names back	Is your thinking spreading?
Leads	keyword DMs, emails, calls (or visits, for a shop)	Did trust turn into a next step? Ask every lead: "which post brought you?"

Example of the maths: a post gets 2,400 plays and 12 follows. 12 ÷ 2,400 × 1,000 = 5 follows per 1,000 plays.

How to grade a post (the multiplier): take the median plays of your last 90 days on that platform. Grade each post as a multiple of it, 11 days after posting (content often pops around day 7). A post at 2x your median is a winner. Study only your top 10 percent each month and find what they all share.

No baseline yet? If you have posts but never tracked them, take your last 10 posts (or your last 90 days) on your main platform and use the median as your baseline. If you have fewer than 10 posts, post 9 times over 3 weeks first; your week 3 numbers become the baseline. Until then, your targets are habits, not numbers.

No content yet? Your first 30 days have input goals only: posts published on schedule, every post scored before filming, every comment answered, and every lead asked "which post brought you?". On day 30, set your number targets from your own first month. Never copy someone else's numbers.

Set the 90-day goal. Money results come slowly, so set first-year targets low. Set one reach goal, two trust goals and one lead habit.

	YOUR ANSWER
Today's median plays (last 90 days, primary platform)	Count it this week on the Facebook page. Also count this week's hospital-badge orders and follows from the hospital street.
90-day reach goal	Watched, not targeted. If the Facebook median drops 2 weeks running, fix the hooks.
Follows per 1,000 plays: week 1 baseline, then target	Week 1 (26 Oct to 1 Nov) sets the baseline from local viewers. Then up week on week, checked every Monday.
Saves per 1,000 plays: week 1 baseline, then target	Week 1 sets the baseline. Then up week on week. Saves on the quiet-corner hours post count most.
Lead habit (how you'll ask "which post brought you?")	A "which post brought you?" tick sheet by the till. Ask every new face and every Zalo order.
Review date	Monday scorecard every week. 30-day check Mon 30 Nov 2026. 90-day review Mon 25 Jan 2027.

Worked example, Ly (set 24 Oct 2026, kept when his position changed on 29 Oct to "build your own in-house marketing team"; Ly: trust is the priority, so trust goals lead and reach is only watched):

- Start: Instagram median 219 plays per post (pulled 19 Oct 2026). Facebook 113, TikTok 115, YouTube 15, LinkedIn 15.
- Proof it can be done: his channel launch post, "For 20 years I built brands for everyone else. Now I'm giving it all away, free", reached 1,383 plays on Instagram and 1,308 on Facebook (9.9x his Facebook median).
- **90-day trust goals, 26 Oct 2026 to 23 Jan 2027.** Week 1 (26 Oct to 1 Nov) sets the baseline for every number.
- **Follows per 1,000 plays** (his main number): up by half, to 1.5x the baseline.
- **Saves and shares per 1,000 plays:** up by half, to 1.5x the baseline.
- **Real replies:** comments that ask a question or quote a hill back to him ("build your own"). Double them, to 2x the weekly baseline.
- **Trust actions:** playbook downloads, letstalk emails and BRAND keyword DMs each week. Double them. Ask every lead "which post brought you?" and log the answer against that post.
- **Reach is watched, not targeted.** If the Instagram median stays below 219 for 2 weeks running, fewer new people are coming in, so fix the hooks.
- **Reviews:** the Monday scorecard every week, a 30-day check on Mon 30 Nov 2026, and the 90-day review on Mon 25 Jan 2027.

Worked example, Mai Coffee (example targets):

- Start: count this week's hospital-badge orders and Facebook follows from people on the hospital street.
- 90-day goals: follows per 1,000 plays from local viewers, measured weekly; staff-badge orders up week on week; a "which post brought you?" tick sheet by the till.

PERSONAL BRAND	SMALL BUSINESS
Leads are DMs, emails and calls.	Leads are visits, Zalo orders, direction requests on Google Maps and loyalty sign-ups.

The weekly version of these numbers is the Monday scorecard in the Content Planning Playbook, step 12.

CHECK: you have a baseline for every number, a target for 90 days, and a date in your calendar to review it.

Your strategy on one page

This page borrows the five questions from Ly's own strategic framework, which he used on every strategy for years: where are we, where do we want to go, how do we get there, what do we do, are we there yet?

QUESTION	FILL FROM	LY	MAI COFFEE	YOURS
Where are we?	Step 14 baseline	Instagram median 219 plays	Badge orders this week, local follows	Badge orders this week, local follows
Where do we want to go?	Steps 2 and 14	Small businesses own their marketing team	Every nurse on the street knows our name	Every nurse on the street knows our name
How do we get there?	Steps 1, 5, 6, 8	Build your own; the 3 playbooks, free	Carers come first; a seat, not a paper cup	Carers first; a seat, not a paper cup
What do we do?	Steps 7, 9, 11, 12, 13	5 pillars, Instagram as the test platform, BRAND keyword	4 pillars, Facebook first, Zalo loyalty card	4 pillars, Facebook first, Zalo card
Are we there yet?	Step 14	Follows per 1,000 plays, weekly	Badge orders and "which post brought you?"	Badge orders, "which post?" ticks

Credits and sources

- Caleb Ralston: Brand Journey, branding as pairing times consistency, pond / lake / ocean, credibility bank, three levers, two-column exercise, brand statement formula, trust loop, three R's, 75 / 20 / 5, Eye of Sauron, multiplier sheet.
- Sam Gaudet: hills, content buckets, unique mechanisms, familiarity, the ask ladder (reasonability), follows per 1,000 plays.
- Ly's facts: his own proof and story records, his bio and his tone. Performance numbers: Ly's own channels (19 Oct 2026 pull).
- Mai Coffee: the example Brand Builder Playbook at lyvietvu.com/brandbuilder.

Shapes used from Ly's 20 years of past work with more than 140 brands across 11 industries:

- The digital creative brief formula (GET / TO / BY / AT; data, observation, insight)
- Ly's strategic framework (the five strategy questions)
- Ly's social content plan (topics, shares and angles)
- Ly's branding workshop ("think this, not that")

YOUR PATH

Playbook 2 of 3, done.

Next: the Content Planning Playbook turns this strategy into a weekly calendar. Free at lyvietvu.com/brandbuilder.

THE BRAND BUILDER SYSTEM

1
Brand Builder Playbook
Who you are: the 8 steps.

2
Content Strategy Playbook
What you stand for and who you talk to.
YOU ARE HERE

3
Content Planning Playbook
What to post each week, and how to know it worked.

★
The master step: your in-house marketing team
Built from all three.



Finish all three playbooks, then build your in-house marketing team. You don't have to do it all yourself.

THE MASTER STEP: YOUR IN-HOUSE MARKETING TEAM



Brand strategist



Social media strategist



Copywriter



Art director



Creative director



Video editor



Social media manager



Community manager

YOU HAVE THE BLUEPRINT

want it built and running for you?



I build the implementation with you: your own in-house marketing team, a set of AI agents trained on your three playbooks, planning, writing and reporting your content every week. You make the calls.

1. **We talk first.** 15 minutes on your business or personal brand and where you are stuck.
2. **We set up your in-house marketing team.** Strategist, copywriter, art director, creative director, video editor and social media manager.
3. **You approve, it runs.** Your agents plan, write and report. You keep the final say.

One step: email **letstalk@lyvietvu.com** with the word **BUILD** and one line about your business.

EMAIL
letstalk@lyvietvu.com

INSTAGRAM
@lyvietvu

FACEBOOK
lyvietvu

LINKEDIN
Ly Viet Vu

BRANDS I BUILT WITH

Unilever · PEPSI · Nestlé · SAMSUNG · SONY · HSBC · Vietnam Airlines · Grab
L'ORÉAL · Ford · KFC · VINFAST · TECHCOMBANK · Shell · DIAGEO · vietjetAir.com

AND MORE ACROSS 11 INDUSTRIES, AT SOFRESH, MIRUM, JWT AND WUNDERMAN THOMPSON