

IDEA TO INVOICE · 10

Get Found

Marketing for people who hate marketing. A £0 plan for being visible when the product exists, the customer exists, and neither of them has found you yet.

AUTHOR	EDITION	FORMAT
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READ ME FIRST

Before you start

Read this in five minutes. It will save you five weeks.

You have built the thing. You have tested the thing. You have a small number of people who like the thing. Now you need other people to know the thing exists. This guide is for that bit. It assumes you would rather be doing the work than posting about the work, and it is written for a one-person business that has more hours than budget.

This is for you if

You have a product or service that works and at least one paying customer.

You would rather do focused work for ninety minutes than post on five platforms for an afternoon.

You have a marketing budget of £0, or close to it.

You can write a competent email and hold a conversation.

You are willing to be the face of the business, not a faceless logo.

This is not for you if

The honest summary: pick one channel, get good at it, build a list you own, write things only you could write. None of this is quick. All of it is free. The constraint is your time, not your wallet.

You do not yet have a product. Editions 08 and 09 are for that.

You are looking for paid advertising tactics. This guide assumes paid ads are not in budget.

You want a viral hack. There isn't one. There never was.

You are not willing to write, talk, or show up in person. Marketing for solopreneurs is mostly one of those three things.

You need five thousand leads this month. That is a different problem and a different price tag.

WHAT IS IN HERE

Contents

Four chapters, one worksheet, ten pages. Read in order or skip to the bit on fire.

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How to use this guide

Read the chapter. Fill in the worksheet page when you get to it. None of this is theory: every chapter ends in something to do this week. If a chapter does not apply to your situation, skip it. If two chapters feel relevant, do them in the order they appear.

The four chapters cover the four things a solo business with no audience actually needs to be doing: pick a lane, publish something useful in it, get found when people search, and own the relationship with the people who find you. That is the lot.

Tools used in this guide

Everything in this guide costs £0. The full tool list: Claude or ChatGPT for drafting, Ubersuggest free tier for keyword ideas, Buttondown or Mailchimp free tier for the email list, Canva free for the lead magnet cover, your existing website or a free Notion page for the lead magnet itself. Total monthly cost: nothing.

CHAPTER 1

Pick one channel and ignore the rest

Trying to be everywhere is the same as being nowhere, just with more browser tabs open.

The first marketing mistake solopreneurs make is being on every platform. LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, a blog, a podcast, a newsletter, Reddit, Quora, Medium, Substack. The list grows. None of them get any attention because you have no audience and no time. Each new platform dilutes the one you might have built an audience on. The result, six months in: a presence everywhere and a customer nowhere.

The single-channel rule

Pick one channel. Get good at it. Only add a second one when the first one is producing evidence it works — paying customers, qualified leads, or booked calls. "I get a lot of likes" is not evidence. "I get three enquiries a week from people who have read my posts" is.

The channel-fit question is not "where is my audience?". It is "where is my audience already telling me about their problem?". Customers of B2B services talk to each other on LinkedIn. Buyers of niche software lurk in subreddits. Parents of teenagers with problems are on TikTok. Hobbyists read newsletters. Where the problem gets discussed is where the customers are already listening.

Channel-fit decision table

CHANNEL	BEST FOR	BAD FIT	TIME TO FIRST TRACTION
LinkedIn	B2B services, consultants, agencies, freelancers	Consumer products, low-ticket impulse buys	3–6 months
Newsletter	Niche expertise, B2B SaaS, content-led businesses	Visual products, fashion, food	6–12 months
YouTube	Tutorials, how-to, education, complex products	Quick local services, transactional offers	6–18 months
TikTok / Reels	Local services, B2C, anything a 30-second video can demo	Complex B2B, regulated industries	1–3 months
SEO blog	Searchable problems, evergreen services	Trendy products, time-sensitive offers	6–12 months
Reddit / community	Niche hobbyists, technical buyers, developer tools	Mass-market consumer goods	1–3 months

The "time to first traction" column is the one most people ignore. It is the most important. YouTube is excellent but takes a year to compound. TikTok can work fast but the audience evaporates the moment you stop posting. Pick the column you can tolerate, not the one you wish was true.

Anyone selling you a faster timeline than the table above is selling you something else. The honest truth for solopreneurs: even on the right channel, you are looking at six to twelve months before inbound is real. Plan accordingly.

CHAPTER 2

Content that doesn't sound like AI wrote it

The tells are everywhere. The fix is not to avoid AI. The fix is the workflow.

Most "AI-generated" content reads like AI wrote it. The tells are easy to spot: em-dashes used as commas, "in today's fast-paced world", three-sentence paragraphs that say nothing, lists of five where the first two are filler, "it's not just X, it's Y", and the cheerful empty tone that makes the reader stop by paragraph two. Your reader is not stupid. They can tell. So can Google. So can the people whose trust you need.

The workflow

- 1 Prompt the model for material, not output.** Do not ask for "a blog post". Ask for the five weakest points in your argument, a list of counter-examples, or the questions a sceptical customer would ask. Treat the AI as a research assistant with no taste.
- 2 Write the post yourself.** Type every word. Use the AI output as scaffolding or as ammunition for the opposite point of view. If a sentence reads well in your draft, that is the one to delete — it is also the one a competitor's post would have.
- 3 Delete the first paragraph.** It is always the weakest. It is almost always throat-clearing. Cut it.
- 4 Read it out loud.** Anywhere you stumble, the reader will too. Rewrite.
- 5 Replace abstract claims with specifics.** "It saves time" becomes "it cut my invoicing from two hours to twelve minutes". "Many businesses" becomes "seventy-three of the two hundred practices I surveyed". Numbers, names, dates, screenshots. Specifics are the cheapest voice you can buy.

ON GOOGLE'S AI CONTENT POLICIES

Google's official position is that they do not penalise AI content. Their actual position is that they penalise content that exists to rank rather than to help. If you are publishing forty AI articles a month with no first-person experience, no original data, and no voice, you are not building a brand. You are building a target for the next helpful content update. Slow down. Write less. Say more.

One good post a fortnight beats one bad post a day. The cadence matters less than the consistency. Pick a cadence you can sustain for a year, not one you can sustain for a month.

CHAPTER 2 · CONTINUED

Putting it into practice

A worked example, a prompt you can copy, and the five tests that catch AI writing.

Theory without example is just opinion. Below is a real prompt used to draft this guide, an example post before and after the workflow, and the five tests you can run on your own drafts before publishing.

A prompt you can copy

You are a sceptical reader, not a writer. I am drafting a LinkedIn post about [TOPIC]. My current claim is [CLAIM]. Give me: (1) three counter-examples that would prove me wrong, (2) the two weakest sentences in my draft, (3) the one statistic or named example that would make this post credible, (4) one question a hostile customer would ask in the comments. Do not write the post for me. Just answer those four prompts.

Before and after

BEFORE (AI-SHAPED DRAFT)

In today's fast-paced business landscape, productivity isn't just a buzzword — it's a survival skill. Many professionals struggle with inbox management, and the modern solopreneur faces unprecedented challenges when it comes to email. In this post, we'll explore three game-changing strategies that will revolutionise how you think about your inbox.

AFTER (THE SAME IDEA, WRITTEN BY A PERSON)

I spent 14 hours on email last week. That is almost two working days, and I billed for neither. The fix was not a new app. It was a rule: anything that can be answered in three sentences gets answered in three sentences, and anything that needs a meeting gets a meeting, not an email thread. Inbox time dropped from 14 hours to 4. The rule is the entire strategy.

The second one is a real post because it has a number, a rule, and a result. The first one is a real post because nothing in it is true. Use the second test on every draft.

Five tests before publishing

- ✓ Is there a number, a name, a date, or a screen in the first three sentences?
- ✓ If I deleted the first paragraph, would the post be stronger?
- ✓ Read aloud — anywhere I stumbled, did I rewrite?
- ✓ Could a competitor have written this exact post without changing a word?
- ✓ Is there at least one sentence the reader will disagree with?

Fail three of the five and the post is not ready. The workflow is a loop, not a checklist. Run the draft through the five tests, fix what fails, run it again.

CHAPTER 3

SEO basics that actually move the needle

Most SEO advice is written for someone with a fifty-person team. Here is the version for one person.

Search engine optimisation is a slow channel. It is also a free channel, a compounding channel, and the only channel where a customer raises their hand and says "I want what you sell". The work is unglamorous: write a page for every problem your customer types into Google, put the answer in the first two hundred words, and link those pages to each other. That is most of it.

The three things that actually matter

One page per problem. Not one page per service. Problems. "How do I invoice a US client from the UK" is a problem a real person typed. "International invoicing" is a category nobody searched for. The longer the tail, the easier to rank for, and the better the customer fit.

Answer first, evidence after. The first two hundred words of the page answer the question. The rest is supporting evidence and depth. Most blogs do this backwards — they warm up for four paragraphs before the reader sees the answer. The reader leaves. So does Google.

Internal links. Google's job is to find related content on your site. Your job is to connect it. When you write a new page, link to it from at least three existing pages using the phrase a customer would actually click on. "Read more" is not a link.

Keyword research with free tools

- **Ubersuggest free tier.** Three searches a day. Enough for a starting list of long-tail problems.
- **Google's "People Also Ask" boxes.** Free, instant, and every question is what a real human typed. Mine these for page topics.
- **Answer The Public.** Free tier gives a visual map of question-based searches around a topic. Useful for spotting angles you missed.
- **Google Search Console.** Free, but you need a site first. Once you have traffic, this is where you find what is already working and double down on it.

What to ignore

Domain authority scores from third-party tools — they are useful for selling link-building services and not much else. "LSI keywords" — a term from 2014 that has not been useful for a decade. Backlink outreach as a solopreneur activity — the time you spend begging for links is the time you do not spend writing. Schema markup, hreflang, canonical tags, Core Web Vitals — worth a look in year two. Not now.

If you need customers in the next ninety days, do not start with SEO. Start with direct outreach (see Edition 11) and let SEO compound quietly in the background while you sell.

CHAPTER 4

The email list you own

Followers are rented land. Email subscribers are owned land. Build on what you can take with you.

The day a social platform changes its algorithm, halves your reach, or goes out of business, your followers become a number on a dashboard. Your email list stays. You can move it from Mailchimp to Buttondown to Beehiiv and back again. The names are yours. The addresses are yours. The relationship is yours. None of that is true for any platform you do not pay for.

Why a list beats followers

Open rates for email average thirty to forty per cent. Organic reach on social averages one to six per cent. That is not a small gap. It is the difference between a channel and a hobby.

You can write to the list on Tuesday and be paid on Wednesday. Social has a delay of days, weeks, or "never". The platforms decide what shows up; you do not.

Email subscribers have said "yes, write to me". Followers have not. They saw one post and scrolled past. The first group will open your email. The second group might not.

Free-tier setup

- **Buttondown.** Free up to one hundred subscribers. Clean, simple, written by one person. Built for writers who want to write.
- **Mailchimp.** Free up to five hundred subscribers. The interface is a maze. The deliverability is fine.
- **Substack.** Free. The design is set and the branding is theirs, not yours. Read the small print about ownership before you commit.
- **Beehiiv.** Free up to two thousand five hundred subscribers. The best balance of features and price for newsletters that want to grow.

If you have a website, the signup form should be a single field: email. Asking for name, company size, role, and which planet you live on means most people close the tab.

Pick the tool by subscriber count, not by feature list. You will not hit the paid tier this year. If you do, that is a problem worth having and one you can solve by upgrading the tool then.

WORKSHEET

Your channel, your plan

Fill this in by hand. The act of writing forces the decision.

Below are two short worksheets. The first is the channel decision. The second is a thirty-day plan based on whatever you choose. Both fit on one page for a reason: most of the value is in the deciding, not the doing.

Channel selection worksheet

My customer is _____

Their problem is _____

They discuss it on _____

I can post weekly on _____

For at least six months on _____

My chosen channel _____

My evidence of traction will be _____

My "add a second channel" trigger is _____

Thirty-day plan

Week 1 — publish: _____

Week 2 — publish: _____

Week 3 — publish: _____

Week 4 — publish: _____

Email list tool chosen: _____

Lead magnet drafted by: _____

SEO page written by: _____

The plan above is intentionally short. If you cannot fill it in by hand in fifteen minutes, the channel choice is not settled yet. Sit with it. The decision compounds.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Colophon

Everything you might want to know about where this came from and what to read next.

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Ted Milton, Founder, Expedient AI
An independent practitioner in Bristol writing field guides for one-person businesses that would rather be doing the work.

TOOLS USED

Claude or ChatGPT for drafting and counter-arguments.
Ubersuggest free tier for keyword ideas. Buttondown or Mailchimp free tier for the email list. Canva free for the lead magnet cover. Total monthly cost: £0.

EDITION

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The Idea to Invoice series

01 — Where AI Actually Helps
02 — The 30-Day AI Pilot
03 — Your Data Your Rules
04 — Writing AI Instructions That Actually Work
05 — The AI Vendor Interrogation Kit
06 — Your First AI Employee
07 — Set Up Your Own AI Agent
08 — Is This Worth Doing?
09 — Build the Thing
10 — Get Found (this guide)
11 — Get the Conversation
12 — Close the Deal

The next guide in the series is Edition 11 — Get the Conversation. It covers the work that comes after this one: turning the visibility you are now building into actual conversations with people who might buy.