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. Do the 7 steps in order. Each has why it matters, an exercise, two worked examples (Ly, and Mai Coffee from the Brand Builder Playbook) and a one-line check. The Content Planning Playbook then turns your strategy into a weekly calendar. The methods behind it are named in the credits.

One map for every expert. Brand Journey, HEIT, the 4 S's, pond lake ocean, the Eye of Sauron: content experts have a name for everything, and they don't always agree. You don't need to learn the jargon. Each step below is the best of one or two experts, in plain words, with their name on it. Look for the **Fast track** line on every step: whose method it is, and where to go deeper.

First, which reader are you? If you sold the business tomorrow, would your audience follow you, or the shop? Follow you: you're a personal brand, like Ly. Follow the shop: you're a small business, like Mai Coffee (Mai is the face, but the café is the brand). Both? Pick the one you're building for the next 90 days. Where the two differ, you'll see two short columns.

THE BRAND BUILDER SYSTEM

1	2	3	★
Brand Builder Playbook	**Content Strategy Playbook**	**Content Planning Playbook**	**The master step: your in-house marketing team**
Who you are: the 8 steps.	What you stand for and who you talk to. **YOU ARE HERE**	What to post each week, and how to know it worked.	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
1	Your brand statement and journey	One sentence you repeat everywhere, your outcome, and what you must be known for
2	Your one person	One person, and their struggle in their own words
3	Your proof	5 stories you can teach from for years
4	Your takes	3 to 5 hills you repeat every week, and one enemy
5	Your arena	Your pond and your first platform
6	Your show	Recurring shows, names people repeat, the 75 / 20 / 5 mix, a look people know in one second
7	Trust and the ask	The trust loop, the ask ladder, a 90-day goal and a weekly trust scorecard

01

Step 1. Your brand statement and journey

one sentence, repeated everywhere, tells strangers what you stand for before they ever buy. And without a clear outcome, every post is a guess.

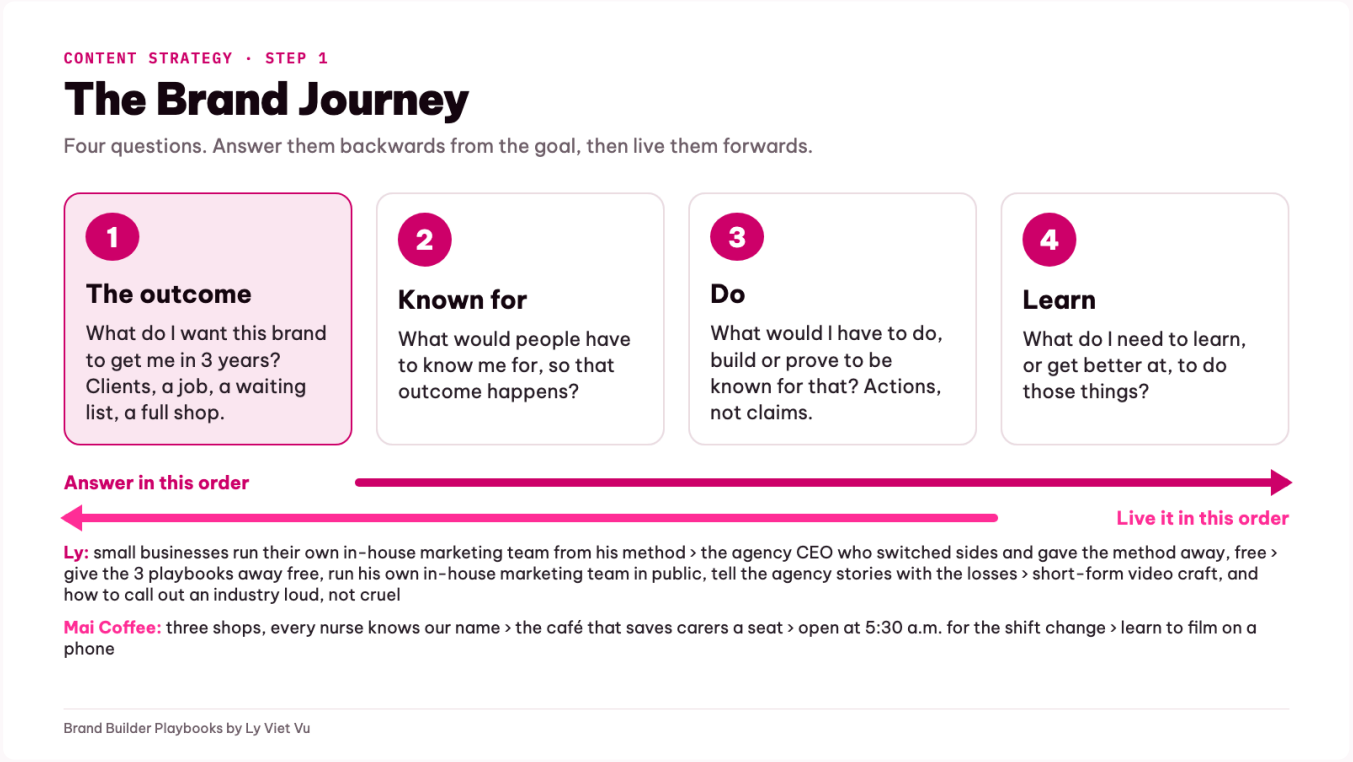
Fast track: This is Caleb Ralston's Brand Journey and his brand statement formula. Answer his questions in order: the outcome you want, what you must be known for, what you'll do, what you'll learn. Go deeper: youtube.com/@calebralston

The sentence. Join three Brand Builder Playbook answers (who you serve, Scene 2; why you're different, Scene 6; what you believe, Scene 7) into one line:

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

Put it in your bio, your pinned post, the top of every YouTube description and every video, until your audience says it for you.

The journey. Answer four questions backwards, from the goal. Then live them forwards: learn, do, become known, get the outcome. Test every new idea: does it move me closer, or further away?



Exercise:

	YOUR ANSWER I believe _____ who want _____ should _____, not _____.
Your brand statement	We believe the people who look after everyone else deserve to be looked after first, not handed a paper cup on the run.
1. The outcome you want in 3 years	Three shops, and every nurse in the district knows our name.
2. What you must be known for to get it	The café that saves carers a seat.
3. What you must do or prove (actions and results, not claims)	Open at 5:30 a.m. for the shift change, know every order by the second visit.
4. What you must learn	Film a 30-second video on a phone; ask regulars for their stories.
One thing you'll stop 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)
Statement	"I believe small business owners who want a brand people choose should build their own in-house marketing team, not rent an agency."	"We believe the people who look after everyone else deserve to be looked after first, not handed a paper cup on the run."
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"
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: a stranger reads your sentence once and knows who it's for and what you disagree with.

02

Step 2. Your one person (and make them feel understood)

"you guys" talks to nobody. Make every post for one person and say "you". People buy when they feel understood, not when you push harder.

Fast track: This step uses Nitya Singh's rule: people buy when they feel understood, not when you push harder. Write their struggle in their words, then the shift, then your solution. Go deeper: instagram.com/dnityasingh

Your one person is Profile 1 from your Brand Builder Playbook (Scene 2). Profiles 2 and 3 overhear.

Exercise: the GET / TO / BY / AT line, plus their struggle. Ly's own briefs carried this line for years.

	YOUR ANSWER
GET (the one person)	The night-shift nurse at the hospital next door.
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 struggle, in their own words (from comments, DMs or the counter)	"I am always looking after other people, and nobody looks after me."

Use it in every post: open with their struggle, in their words. Then the shift: a new way to see it. Then your solution. When they think "that's me", they keep listening.

Worked examples:

- **Ly:** 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, BY seeing an ex-agency CEO give the method away, free, AT Instagram first, with YouTube for the long form. **Struggle:** "You pay for marketing every month and own none of it."
- **Mai Coffee:** GET the night-shift nurse at the hospital next door, 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. **Struggle:** "I am always looking after other people, and nobody looks after me."

PERSONAL BRAND	SMALL BUSINESS
Your person buys your thinking. Listen in DMs and calls: your best clients rarely comment in public.	Your person walks past your door. Listen at the counter and write down their exact words.

CHECK: you can picture their face and write their struggle the way they'd say it.

Step 3. Your proof (the credibility bank) 03

proof makes strangers listen. Write it down once and teach from it for years.

Fast track: This is Caleb Ralston's credibility bank: the stories you can teach from for years, each with 2 or 3 proof lines. Go deeper: youtube.com/@calebralston

Expert or student? Experts teach from results; students share what they test. If your bank is thin, say "here's what I'm testing".

Exercise: write 5 entries with the six parts below. Then add 2 or 3 **credibility lines** per entry: short proof lines matched to one topic. A post about pitching gets a pitching line, not your whole bio.

PART	YOUR ENTRY
Context (where, when, what you were doing)	Why we open at 5:30 a.m. A tiny shop next to the hospital in District 3.
Root problem (what was really wrong)	Night-shift nurses finish or start at 6 a.m. and every café nearby is closed or rushed.
Insight (what you saw that others missed)	Carers spend all day looking after others; nobody looks after them.
Approach (what you did)	Open at 5:30 a.m., learn each order by the second visit, 10% off with a hospital badge.
Outcome (1 to 3 results, with numbers if you have them)	Write it after 30 days: badge orders a week, regulars known by name.
Lesson (what anyone can take from it)	Build your hours around your customer's day, not yours.

Worked examples:

PART	LY: "TEACH BEFORE YOU PITCH"	MAI COFFEE: "WHY WE OPEN AT 5:30 A.M."
Context	2012, Sofresh, a small independent agency in Saigon	A tiny shop next to the hospital in District 3
Root problem	Big brands didn't know us. Cold pitches went nowhere.	Night-shift nurses finish or start at 6 a.m. and every café nearby is closed or rushed
Insight	Clients buy from the person who taught them how to think.	Carers spend all day looking after others; nobody looks after them
Approach	One free workshop, "Marketing to a Digitized Audience", given to Pepsi, Piaggio, a Unilever brand and THP	Open at 5:30 a.m., learn each order by the second visit, 10% off with a hospital badge
Outcome	The workshop helped win THP's work, which became an important client	Write it after 30 days: badge orders a week, regulars known by name
Lesson	Give your thinking away and the briefs come to you	Build your hours around your customer's day, not yours

Ly's credibility lines:

- 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."
- 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)."

Mai's: "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. Your story counts when it explains why the shop exists.

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

04

Step 4. Your takes (two columns, 3 to 5 hills, one enemy)

a belief your industry disagrees with is most of what makes you stand out, and people remember a few beliefs repeated often. Contrarian is not controversial: you must actually believe it.

Fast track: Two experts, one job. Caleb Ralston's Two Column Approach finds the belief your industry gets wrong. Sam Gaudet calls the result the hill you'll die on: 3 to 5 takes you repeat all the time. Go deeper: youtube.com/@calebralston and youtube.com/@samgaudet

A **hill** is a belief you'd defend all day, cut to a line you'll repeat for months. The **enemy** is the concept between your person and their goal: never a person, never a competitor by name.

Exercise:

1. Left: 5 things your space says or does that you disagree with. Middle: what you believe or do instead.
2. Rewrite your 3 strongest middle lines as hills: 7 words or fewer, easy to quote back.
3. Name the enemy. It usually hides in your left column.
4. Use the hills in every hook, caption and story for 3 weeks. Keep the ones people quote back; end with 3 to 5.
5. Keep the tone about 95 percent positive, 5 percent negative.

WHAT MY SPACE SAYS OR DOES	WHAT I BELIEVE OR DO INSTEAD	MY HILL (7 WORDS OR FEWER)
Built for laptops and photos.	Built for people on a 12-hour shift.	Carers come first.
Fast, faceless service.	We know your order by the second visit.	We know your name.
Paper cup, no seat.	We saved you a seat.	A seat, not a paper cup.
Open when it suits the owner.	Open at 5:30 a.m. for the shift change.	
Compete on price with the canteen.	Compete on care.	
The enemy (a concept)	Fast, the same everywhere, and nobody knows your name.	Rushed, faceless coffee.

Ly's branding workshop opened with five lines like this ("think platforms, not campaigns"). **Pro tip:** give your AI your table and ask for 3 versions of each hill. Keep the one you'd say out loud.

CONTENT STRATEGY · STEP 4

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.

Brand Builder Playbooks by Ly Viet Vu

Worked examples:

	WHAT THE SPACE SAYS	WHAT THEY BELIEVE INSTEAD	HILL
Ly	Every brand needs an agency.	You don't need an agency. Build your own in-house marketing team.	**I ran an agency for 14 years. You don't need one.** (his lead)
Ly	Pay a retainer, every month.	Don't rent your marketing. Own it, and it stays yours.	**Don't rent your marketing. Own it.**
Ly	A real team is out of reach.	Every job on that team now fits on your laptop.	**Your agency fits on your laptop.**
Mai	Built for laptops and photos.	Built for people on a 12-hour shift.	**Carers come first.**
Mai	Fast, faceless service.	We know your order by the second visit.	**We know your name.**
Mai	Paper cup, no seat.	We saved you a seat.	**A seat, not a paper cup.**

Ly's fourth hill: **The agency is dying. Build your own.** His enemy: the agency model, renting your marketing on retainer and never owning it (the model, never a name). Mai's enemy: rushed, faceless coffee.

PERSONAL BRAND	SMALL BUSINESS
Hills are opinions about your industry.	Hills are promises about how you treat people, shown in what you do.

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

05

Step 5. Your arena (pond, lake, ocean, and your first platform)

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

Fast track: This is Caleb Ralston's pond, lake, ocean: win a small pond of people who can buy from you before you swim further out. Go deeper: youtube.com/@calebralston

- **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).

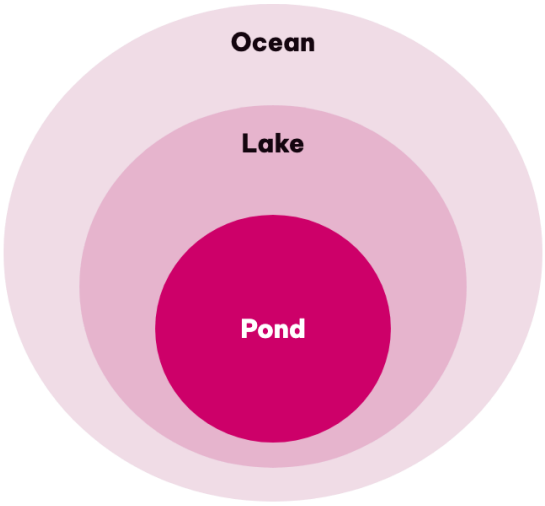
Start in the pond. Move out one level only when your proof justifies it, never because you're bored.

Your first platform: ask 10 people like your one person where they spend time on a break. Make that your primary platform for 8 weeks of experiments, and repost the same pieces everywhere else with no experiments. Add a second primary only when, for 3 to 4 weeks, most posts there beat your normal number and bring real leads.

CONTENT STRATEGY · STEP 5

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 and worked examples:

	LY	MAI COFFEE	YOURS
Ocean	Small businesses everywhere	Food and drink	Food and drink
Lake	Small businesses and personal brands that read English or Vietnamese	Coffee in Ho Chi Minh City	Coffee in Ho Chi Minh City
Pond (and the proof that earns it)	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	Coffee for the nurses, carers and families at the hospital next door. Proof: open from 5:30 a.m.
Primary platform, 8 weeks	Instagram (the only one that shows how many people swipe away in 3 seconds)	Facebook, after asking 10 regulars where they scroll on a break	Facebook, after asking 10 regulars where they scroll on a break. Review Mon 21 Dec 2026.
Reposts	Facebook, TikTok, YouTube Shorts, LinkedIn. YouTube carries the long form.	Google Maps (photos and hours every week), TikTok	Google Maps (photos and hours every week), TikTok

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 your primary platform and its review date, 8 weeks from now.

06

Step 6. Your show (pillars, names, mix and uniform)

treat your channel like a TV show people come back for. A show has recurring segments, names fans repeat, and a set and cast you know in one second. Every episode has stakes (why it matters to them), a question (what they want to find out) and a twist (the answer they didn't expect). And you never start a week at a blank page again.

Fast track: Three experts in one step. Kallaway: your channel is a TV show, and every episode needs stakes, a question and a twist. Sam Gaudet: give your ideas names so people repeat them. Caleb Ralston: the 75 / 20 / 5 mix. Go deeper: youtube.com/@kallawaymarketing, youtube.com/@samgaudet and youtube.com/@calebralston

Your shows (content pillars). Pick 3 to 5 pillars your person cares about. Treat each as a recurring show with a share of your posts and 3 angles you can repeat for a year (the shape of Ly's own social content plan).

Names. Give everything you teach or do the same way every time a 2 to 4 word name that's easy to **remember**, **repeat** and **reference**: familiar words, new combination (like "credibility bank"). Use it in the spoken line, caption, cover and chapter title, every time.

The 75 / 20 / 5 mix. 75 percent **deep** (frameworks, belief shifts, the exact problems your offer fixes) builds trust with buyers. 20 percent **niche-wide** (topics next door) brings new people in. 5 percent **personal**, mostly inside the other 95 (the set, the jokes, the stories), rarely a post of its own. Label every post **width** (graded on plays and follows) or **depth** (graded on saves, replies and leads), never both. Wide pieces bring reach; deep pieces build trust. The Content Planning Playbook calls these the two post jobs: reach and trust.

Uniform and set. Pairing times consistency equals association. Show the same look with the same ideas often enough and people know you in one second of scrolling. Freeze it for at least 8 weeks.

CONTENT STRATEGY · STEP 6

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.

BRAND STATEMENT (LY'S EXAMPLE)

I believe small business owners who want a brand people choose should build their own in-house marketing team, not rent an agency.

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

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

CONTENT STRATEGY · STEP 6

The 75 / 20 / 5 mix

Most of your posts go deep for the people you serve. Some reach next door. Your personal side lives inside the rest.



DEEP

The problems you solve

Frameworks, belief shifts and the exact problems your offer fixes. Builds the most trust with the people most likely to buy.

Ly: how to brief your in-house marketing team on your brand. Mai: why we open at 5:30 a.m. for the shift change.

NICHE-WIDE

Next door to your topic

Topics your person also cares about, wrapped so new but relevant people can use them.

Ly: what I'd tell my 25-year-old self. Mai: how to rest on a 12-hour shift.

PERSONAL

Inside the other 95

Your quirks, family and interests show up in the set, the jokes and the stories. Rarely a post on its own.

Ly: a Kyoto memory in a post about leaving a safe job. Mai: her mother's nursing badge behind the counter.

Brand Builder Playbooks by Ly Viet Vu

Exercise, part 1: your shows.

SHOW (PILLAR)	SHARE	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 hospital street	20%	Shift-change rush	The families waiting	The quiet corner
Regulars' stories	15%	"My order, by the second visit"	A nurse's first coffee	Thank-you notes

Worked examples, the shows. Ly runs five (he calls them lobes), made by his in-house marketing team. Mai runs four.

LY'S SHOW	SHARE	THREE ANGLES
Brand Builder	30%	The 3 playbooks, in order; brand rehab of a real bio; the café and realtor seasons
Chief AI Officer	25%	Meet the team; tools we really use; get named first by ChatGPT
The Agency Years	25%	The pitch we lost; what you were really paying for; selling to WPP
Marketing Champion	10%	Coach's Take on one ad; the play you can copy; 3 ads that taught me
Peptide Lab (education only, never advice)	10%	What the research says; measure before and after; the 10 percent swing

MAI'S SHOW	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	30%	Strong phin coffee; cold brew overnight; the local pastries
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

Exercise, part 2: the rest of your show bible, with both worked examples.

	LY	MAI COFFEE	YOURS
Names	"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); "Ask why three times"	"The Saved Seat"; "Nurses first, from 5:30 a.m."; "the second-visit promise"	"The Saved Seat"; "Nurses first, from 5:30 a.m."; "the second-visit promise"
Mix (next 20 posts: 15 deep, 4 niche-wide, 1 personal at most)	Deep: "how to brief your in-house marketing team on your brand". Niche-wide: "what I'd tell my 25-year-old self". Personal: a Kyoto memory inside a post about leaving a safe job.	Deep: "why we open at 5:30 a.m.". Niche-wide: "how to rest on a 12-hour shift". Personal: her mother's 30 years as a nurse, told while she makes the first coffee.	Deep: why we open at 5:30 a.m. Niche-wide: how to rest on a 12-hour shift. Personal: Mum's 30 years nursing.
Uniform, set and colours	Each show keeps one look for 8 weeks. Brand Builder: the rust shirt and coffee from his homepage photo, the wine colour from his LinkedIn cards. The Agency Years: the 1960s screen-print look. Chief AI Officer: the orchestra conductor.	Mai in her apron at the counter by the window; the quiet corner seat in every third video; the same handwritten signs	Mai in her apron at the counter by the window; the quiet corner seat in every third video; the same signs
Cast	Mai, Ben, and his in-house marketing team by job title	Her regulars, with their OK	Her regulars, with their OK

PERSONAL BRAND	SMALL BUSINESS
Shows are what you teach and believe. Start with 3. Names are often methods. The uniform and the personal 5 percent are you.	Shows are what you sell, how you make it, the people, the place. 3 to 4 is plenty. Names are often promises or rituals. The uniform is the shop: counter, cups, sign, apron. The personal 5 percent is the owner's and staff's stories; pick 1 or 2 regular staff faces, with their OK.

CHECK: you could post for 4 weeks without asking "what should I post today?", and someone who has seen 3 of your posts would know a 4th is yours with the sound off.

07

Step 7. Trust and the ask

trust is how much someone believes you'll meet or beat their expectations next time, based on what you already did. It comes before the sale. Views tell you who saw a post; trust numbers tell you who chose you. A low-view post can still be your best source of clients.

Fast track: This is Caleb Ralston's trust loop and Sam Gaudet's ask ladder: earn trust first, then make each ask feel reasonable. Go deeper: youtube.com/@calebralston and youtube.com/@samgaudet

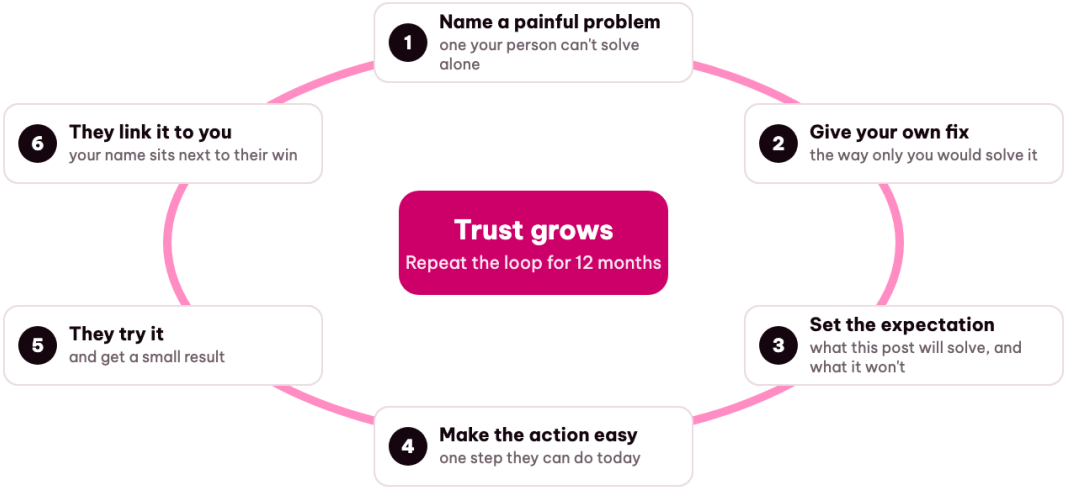
The trust loop. Every post runs one problem through the loop, so strangers get a small win before they ever buy, and each win makes the next post easier to believe. The loop has six steps: the five in the table below, then the sixth, where they link that small result to you. Repeat it for 12 months.

How your AI uses this: the loop is the template for every post your AI drafts. It pulls the problem from your credibility bank (Step 3) and your idea bank (in the Content Planning Playbook), writes in loop order, and checks the post ends with one easy action.

CONTENT STRATEGY · STEP 7

The trust loop

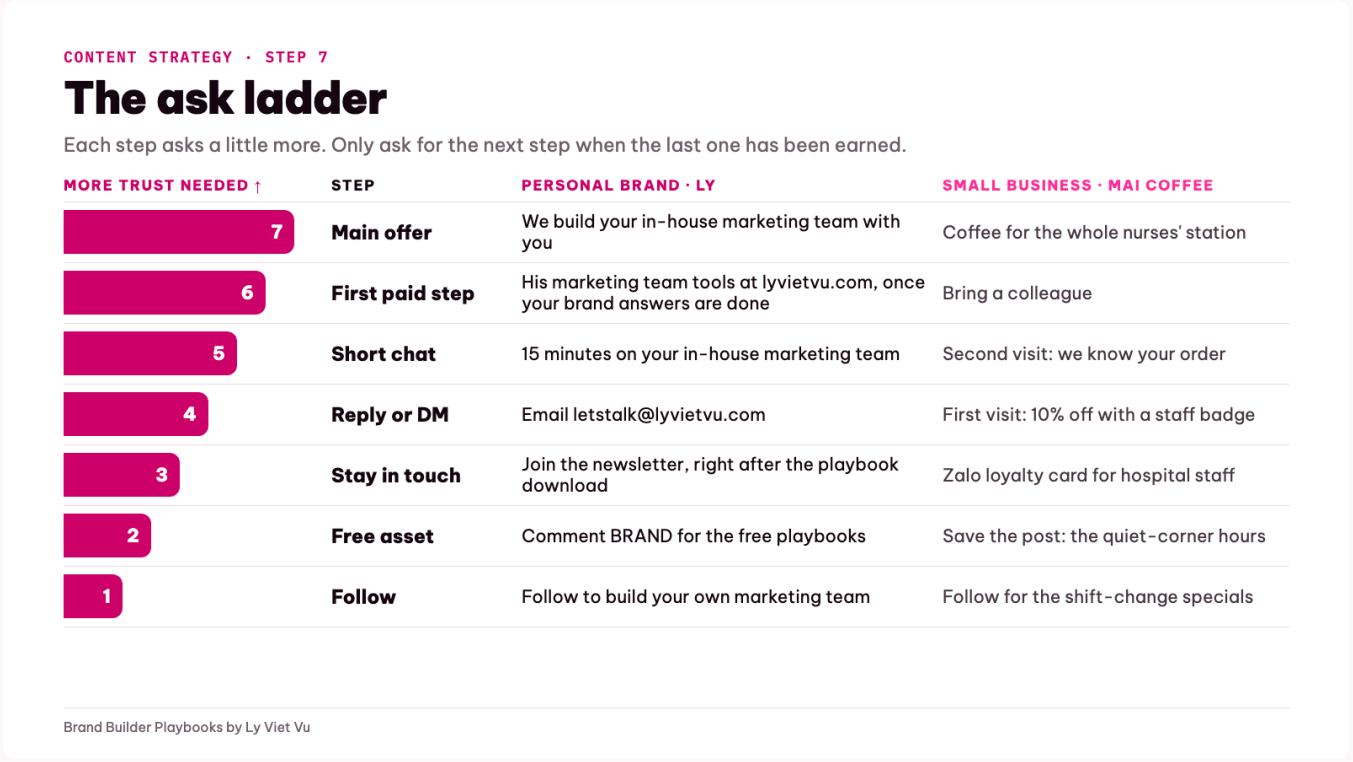
Trust is how sure people are that you'll deliver again, based on what you already did for them.



Brand Builder Playbooks by Ly Viet Vu

LOOP STEP	LY	MAI COFFEE	YOUR POST
1. Name a painful problem they can't solve alone	"You pay for marketing every month and own none of it."	"You finish a 12-hour shift and nobody asks how you are."	"You finish a 12-hour shift and nobody asks how you are."
2. Give your own fix	Write your brand answers once; they brief every job on your team.	A quiet corner and a coffee ready when you walk in.	A quiet corner and a coffee ready when you walk in.
3. Say what it solves, and what it doesn't	It gives your team a brief, not finished posts.	It won't fix the shift; it gives you 10 minutes that are yours.	It won't fix the shift; it gives you 10 minutes that are yours.
4. One easy action for today	Take the free Brand Builder Playbook: 8 questions, about 60 minutes.	Message the order on Zalo before you leave the ward.	Message the order on Zalo before you leave the ward.
5. The small result they get	A brand brief you own.	A seat and a coffee waiting.	A seat and a coffee waiting.

The ask ladder. 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. Ask for the next rung only when the last is earned. Once trust exists, a comment keyword on about 1 post in 4, pointing to something free, is enough.



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

Ly's own rules: follows first, then the playbook. No prices in content. No spoken calls to action: the ask lives on screen, on the end card and in the caption.

The 90-day goal. Set it once; your AI measures and reports it every week. Your 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 ÷ plays × 1,000	Did strangers like you enough to 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: 2,400 plays and 12 follows. 12 ÷ 2,400 × 1,000 = 5 follows per 1,000 plays.

Grade each post 11 days after posting, as a multiple of your 90-day median plays; 2x is a winner. Each month, study your top 10 percent. **No baseline yet?** Use the median of your last 10 posts, or post 9 times over 3 weeks and use week 3. Never copy someone else's numbers. Set first-year targets low: one reach goal, two trust goals, one lead habit.

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

Worked examples:

- **Ly** (trust goals lead; reach is only watched): Instagram median 219 plays per post on 19 Oct 2026. His 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). From 26 Oct 2026 to 23 Jan 2027, with week 1 (26 Oct to 1 Nov) as the baseline: follows per 1,000 plays (his main number) and saves and shares per 1,000 plays each up to 1.5x; real replies (questions, or a hill quoted back) and trust actions (playbook downloads, letstalk emails, BRAND DMs) each doubled. If the Instagram median stays below 219 for 2 weeks running, fix the hooks. Reviews: every Monday, Mon 30 Nov 2026, and Mon 25 Jan 2027.
- **Mai Coffee** (example targets): count this week's hospital-badge orders and local Facebook follows. Then track follows per 1,000 plays from local viewers weekly, staff-badge orders up week on week, and a "which post brought you?" tick sheet by the till.

PERSONAL BRAND	SMALL BUSINESS
The loop's result is a skill. The ladder ends in a call or a program; never "work with me" in a post. Leads are DMs, emails and calls.	The loop's result is an experience. The ladder ends in a habit: the regular who brings friends. Leads are visits, Zalo orders, Google Maps direction requests and loyalty sign-ups.

The weekly version is the Monday scorecard in the Content Planning Playbook.

CHECK: every post names one problem and one easy action, you ask for only one rung above where most of your audience is, and every number has a baseline, a 90-day target and a review date.

Your strategy on one page

Five questions from Ly's own strategic framework, used on every strategy for years.

QUESTION	FILL FROM	LY	MAI COFFEE	YOURS
Where are we?	Step 7 baseline	Instagram median 219 plays	Badge orders this week, local follows	Badge orders this week, local follows
Where do we want to go?	Steps 1 and 7	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, 4 and 7	Build your own; the 3 playbooks, free	Carers come first; a seat, not a paper cup	Carers come first; a seat, not a paper cup
What do we do?	Steps 5, 6 and 7	5 pillars, Instagram as the test platform, BRAND keyword	4 pillars, Facebook first, Zalo loyalty card	4 pillars, Facebook first, Zalo loyalty card
Are we there yet?	Step 7	Follows per 1,000 plays, weekly	Badge orders and "which post brought you?"	Badge orders and "which post brought you?"

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.
- Kallaway: your channel is a TV show people come back for; every piece needs stakes, a question and a twist.
- Nitya Singh: people buy when they feel understood, not when you push harder; their struggle, the shift, then your solution.
- 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