VISIBILITY → ENGAGEMENT → CONVERSION → RETENTI

The Growth Constraint Playbook

Before you spend another £1 on marketing, find out where your business is actually losing growth.

LET'S START WITH AN UNCOMFORTABLE QUESTION.

You're doing the marketing. So why isn't growth following?

By the time a service business reaches £1m in turnover, it is rarely short of marketing. There's the SEO retainer. The PPC budget. The content calendar. The social accounts. The website that was rebuilt eighteen months ago. The CRM nobody fully uses. The agency. The salespeople.

Each was bought in good faith, usually to fix a symptom: not enough traffic, not enough leads, not enough visibility. And each probably does something. Yet the growth line refuses to move the way the invoices suggest it should.

When growth slows, the advice you receive tends to follow a familiar pattern. More traffic. More leads. More content. More advertising. Another website. Another agency.

Notice what every one of those recommendations has in common: they all involve buying more. None of them starts by asking what, precisely, is broken.

SEO | PPC | CONTENT | SOCIAL | WEBSITE | CRM | SALESPEOPLE | AGENCIES

You probably already own most of this. That's the point.

But what if the thing you're being told to buy isn't the thing that's broken?

£10,000 × 12 = £120,000

Monthly spend across marketing and growth × one year. An illustrative example not a claim about your business.

Before asking whether £120,000 is enough, ask whether it's being applied to the right constraint.

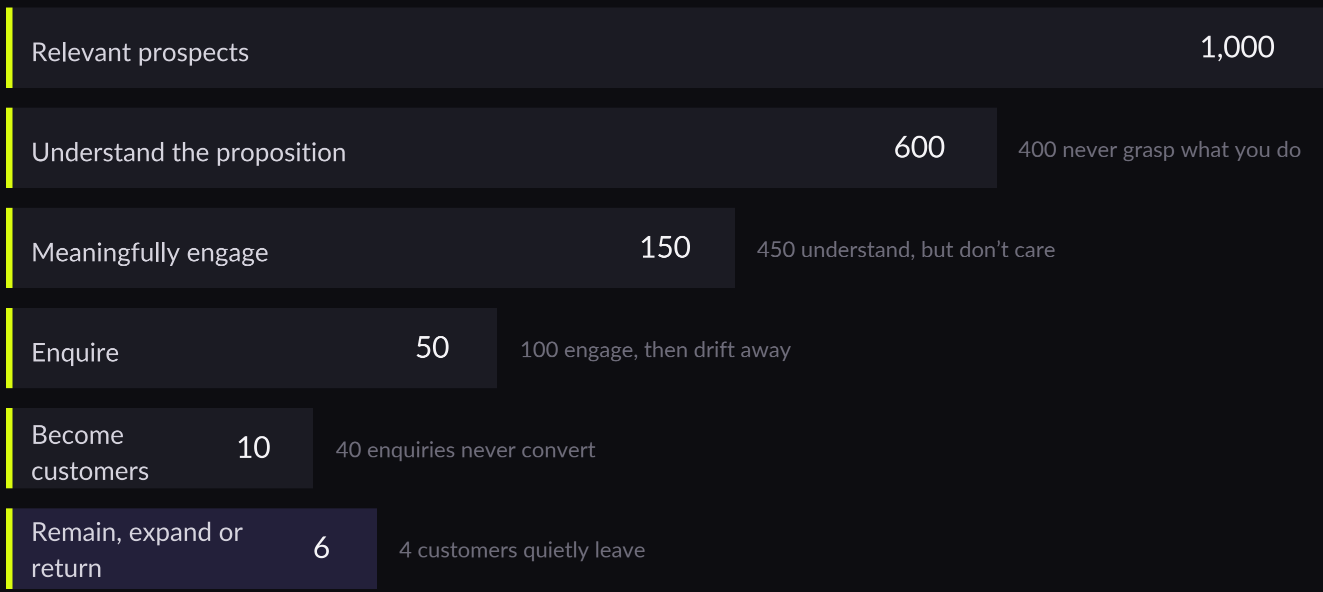
A business spending £10,000 a month on growth is not underinvesting by most standards. But budget applied to the wrong constraint doesn’t just underperform it actively compounds waste. More spend pushes more volume into a system that leaks, and the leak scales with it.

If the real problem is that enquiries go cold before anyone follows up, doubling the advertising budget doubles the cost of every lost enquiry. The spend was never the question. The constraint was.

If you compound s#*t, you get a bigger pile of s#*t to handle

THE GROWTH PIPELINE

Where a thousand prospects actually go



Illustrative numbers. The shape, however, is universal. Losses occur at every stage of this system and increasing the 1,000 at the top does nothing to repair them. It simply pushes more volume through the same leaks, at greater cost.

More isn't always the shortest route to growth.

Visibility → Engagement → Conversion → Retention

These are not four separate marketing activities.They are four stages of a single connected system, and every pound you spend on growth lands somewhere within it. The performance of each stage sets the ceiling for the one that follows.

V		E		C		R
VISIBILITY Can enough of the right potential customers find the business?	→	**ENGAGEMENT** When they find it, do they understand, trust and want what it offers?	→	**CONVERSION** Does interest reliably become commercial opportunity and revenue?	→	**RETENTION** Does the business compound the value of customers it has already acquired?

Each stage inherits everything the previous one gets right and everything it gets wrong.

Growth compounds when these work together. Waste compounds when they don't.

WHY THIS CHANGES THE QUESTION

Every growth problem is a constraint somewhere in this system. The work is finding which one.

A business with a Visibility constraint and a business with a Conversion constraint present the same symptom: growth is slower than it should be. But they need opposite interventions. One genuinely needs more of the right traffic. The other will waste every additional pound of it.

This is why generic marketing advice so often disappoints. It prescribes without diagnosing and the prescription is nearly always the thing the adviser happens to sell.

The next four sections work through each stage in turn. For each, you'll find the questions worth asking and the warning signs that suggest the constraint may live there.

Read them as a founder, not a marketer. The aim isn't to score your marketing. It's to work out where your growth system is leaking commercial value before you spend anything else on it.

PART 01 Visibility	PART 02 Engagement	PART 02 Conversion	PART 02 Retention

Don't ask "do we need more traffic?"

Traffic volume is the vanity layer of visibility. The commercial layer is whether the right people those with the problem you solve and the budget to solve it can find you at the moment they're looking. Ask instead:

- Are enough of the right people finding us?
- Which channels produce qualified commercial opportunities not just visits?
- Can we confidently explain where our best customers originate?
- Are competitors capturing demand we’re missing?
- Is the traffic we already have commercially relevant?

WARNING SIGNS

- Traffic is increasing but revenue isn’t.
- Marketing expenditure keeps increasing.
- The business depends heavily on one acquisition channel.
- Attribution is unclear nobody can say what’s working.
- Traffic appears healthy but qualified opportunities remain weak.

POTENTIAL CONSTRAINT: VISIBILITY

E

Attention means nothing if nobody cares.

Engagement is where visibility either becomes interest or evaporates.It lives in your proposition and how sharply it's differentiated; in the trust and authority your content and proof build; in how well the experience reflects a genuine understanding of the customer. Ask:

Could a prospect explain what we do, for whom, and why us after thirty seconds on our website?

What makes us meaningfully different from the three firms a buyer will compare us against?

Does our proof results, clients, evidence carry the weight of our claims?

Does our content build authority with buyers, or volume for its own sake?

When did we last learn something new about why customers actually choose us?

WARNING SIGNS

Visitors arrive, look briefly, and leave without acting.

You compete on price more often than you'd like.

Your team describes the offer differently from your website.

Prospects describe you as "one of the options".

Content is published consistently but changes nothing.

Case studies and proof are thin, dated or generic.

POTENTIAL CONSTRAINT: ENGAGEMENT

Demand isn't revenue.

Conversionistheleastglamorous stageandoftenthe mostexpensive to get wrong. It spans the website's ability to turn interest into enquiry, the quality of those enquiries, the speed and rigour of follow-up, and the sales process that carries an opportunity to a signed customer. Ask:

What proportion of website visitors take a commercially meaningful action?

How quickly does a new enquiry receive a substantive response in hours or days?

What share of enquiries become genuine opportunities? Of opportunities, customers?

Where in the enquiry journey do people give up and would we know if they did?

Is anyone accountable for follow-up, or does it depend on who's busy?

WARNING SIGNS

Healthy enquiry volume, disappointing revenue.

"Bad leads" is the standing explanation for missed targets.

Proposals go out and silence comes back.

Leads sit unanswered for days.

Nobody can state the lead-to-customer rate from memory.

The enquiry process has steps even you would abandon.

POTENTIAL CONSTRAINT: CONVERSION

The most expensive customer may be the one you keep replacing.

Retention is where growth compounds or where hard-won acquisition quietly drains away. Repeat revenue, upsell, cross-sell, referrals, reactivation of lapsed customers: this is usually the cheapest revenue a business can earn, and often the least managed. Ask:

What share of this year's revenue came from customers we already had?

Do we know the lifetime value of a customer even roughly?

Is there a deliberate process for upsell, cross-sell and referral, or does it happen by accident?

When a customer leaves, do we know why and did we see it coming?

How often do past customers hear from us with something other than an invoice?

WARNING SIGNS

Growth targets rely almost entirely on new customers.

Referrals arrive, but nobody could say how to get more.

Nobody owns retention as a number.

Customer communication stops once the work starts.

Lapsed customers are never contacted again.

Acquisition spend rises while existing customers quietly leave.

POTENTIAL CONSTRAINT: RETENTION

Which area would you investigate first?

Basedon the last foursections, rate each stageof your growth system honestly. Print this page, or mark it mentally either way, commit to an answer.

STAGE	WEAK	INCONSISTENT	STRONG
Visibility Therightpeople can find us	☐	☐	☐
Engagement Theyunderstand,trust and want it	☐	☐	☐
Conversion Interestreliablybecomes revenue	☐	☐	☐
Retention Existingcustomers compound in value	☐	☐	☐

> Your answer is a starting point. It isn't a diagnosis.

PERFORMANCE

Knowing something is wrong isn't the same as knowing how to fix it.

Elite athletes understand performance better than almost anyone alive. They know their sport, their body and their numbers in obsessive detail.

Yet none of them works alone. They surround themselves with specialists not because they don't understand their sport, but because a specialist brings something self-knowledge can't:

- They spot patterns the athlete is too close to see
- They interpret evidence rather than sensation
- They challenge assumptions that feel like facts
- They identify marginal losses that compound
- They know where to look and in what order
- They know which intervention deserves priority, shortening the route to improvement

Performance coach
Strength & conditioning specialist
Nutritionist
Physiotherapist
Sports psychologist
Technical coach
Performance analyst

The advantage of an expert isn't knowing your business better than you. It's knowing where to look.

Awareness ≠ Diagnosis · Diagnosis ≠ Prioritisation · Prioritisation ≠ Intervention ·

Intervention without measurement = Guesswork

You don't need another 47-point marketing audit.

Mostauditsproduce longlists ofobservations andno decisions. Proper diagnosis is narrower and harder. Whatever else it examines along the way, it should ultimately establish three things:

1

What's hurting growth most?

Not everything that’s imperfect the constraint doing the most commercial damage right now.

2

What's the commercial consequence?

What it costs to leave it as it is and what fixing it should be worth.

3

What deserves intervention first?

The order matters. Fixing conversion before visibility is a different business decision from the reverse.

To be clear: this Playbook cannot calculate your Critical Three. No document can. Identifying them reliably requires evidence your analytics, your pipeline data, your customer economics and analysis specific to your business. What this Playbook can do is make sure you never again approve growth spend without asking for them.

Before approving another £1 of marketing spend, ask:

01	What evidence says this is our biggest constraint?
02	What happens if we don’t fix it?
03	What commercial result should improving it create?
04	Is another constraint suppressing its performance?
05	How will we know whether it worked?

If nobody can answer those questions, you're not investing. You're guessing.

IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Before spending another £1 on growth

- [ ] We know our 12-month commercial growth gap.
- [ ] We know our cost per qualified opportunity.
- [ ] We know our lead-to-opportunity conversion rate.
- [ ] We know our average customer value.
- [ ] We know which marketing activities contribute commercially.
- [ ] We understand what improving that constraint could mean commercially.
- [ ] We know where our best customers originate.
- [ ] We know our website conversion performance.
- [ ] We know our opportunity-to-customer conversion rate.
- [ ] We understand customer retention and repeat revenue.
- [ ] We can identify our biggest potential growth constraint.
- [ ] We have evidence supporting our next major growth investment.

> How many could you confidently tick?

WHERE THIS DOCUMENT ENDS

You now know where to look.

The Blueprint establishes what to do.

THE PLAYBOOK
This document · Free

- Recognise symptoms
- Challenge assumptions
- Identify where to investigate
- Understand the growth system

THE COMPOUNDED SUCCESS BLUEPRINT
Evidence-led diagnosis · Business-specific

- Interrogate the evidence
- Identify root causes
- Determine the Critical Three
- Model commercial opportunity
- Prioritise interventions
- Build the 90-day plan
- Identify activity that should stop or be deprioritised

THE NEXT STEP, IF YOU WANT ONE

Compounded Success Blueprint

Find out what's actually holding growth back **before** spending more money trying to fix it.

Commercial discovery	Full VECR diagnostic
Critical Three constraint analysis	Commercial opportunity modelling
90-day priority roadmap	Marketing waste review
Competitive growth gap analysis	Implementation-ready recommendations

Investment: £1,500 + VAT

Book a Growth Constraint Review

A free 20-minute conversation to discuss where growth appears to be getting stuck and establish whether a full Blueprint would create meaningful value. If it won't, we'll say so as we will NOT work with everyone.

Book my Growth Constraint Review →

STOP ASKING

"What marketing should we buy next?"

START ASKING

"What's actually stopping us from growing?"

Diagnose first. Invest second. Compound what works.