THE CUSTOM HOME MARKETING PLAYBOOK

How Clark Custom Homes Generated 130 Qualified Leads and a $32.5M Pipeline

A tested, step-by-step system for generating qualified custom home leads, booking consultations, and closing preconstruction agreements.

By Cody Clark, CEO of Clark Custom Homes

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DOES THIS SOUND LIKE YOU?

You're good at building. Maybe the best in your area. Your finished homes speak for themselves. But the pipeline? That's the part that keeps you up at night.

Some months the phone rings. Some months it's dead silent, and you start wondering where the next job is coming from. You've watched tire-kickers waste your time asking for "ballpark numbers" they never act on. You've drawn and bid jobs for free, only to lose them to a cheaper builder who'll cut corners. You've maybe even paid a marketing company a small fortune and gotten nothing but excuses.

Meanwhile, you're doing everything yourself—running the jobs, answering the phones, putting out fires—and "marketing" is the thing that always falls to the bottom of the list. You know you should have a system. You just haven't had one that actually works for custom home builders.

> **If any of that hit a nerve, you're exactly who this was written for. Keep reading.**

INTRODUCTION: WHAT THIS IS & WHO IT'S FOR

Last month, about a thousand dollars in Facebook ads produced fifty-four qualified leads and five signed preconstruction agreements. That's the kind of return this system is built to deliver—predictable, repeatable, and profitable.

This playbook is the exact system that produced those numbers. It's written for custom home builders who want a predictable pipeline of qualified clients—whether you're getting zero leads today, or getting leads but have no system to convert them.

Here's how to use it. First, you'll build your Ideal Client Avatar so every word of your marketing speaks to the right buyer. Then you'll follow the 30-Day Roadmap to stand the system up. After that, each section breaks down one piece of the funnel in detail—the philosophy, the lead magnet, the ads, the sequences, the calls, and the close.

> **Read the roadmap first so you know where you're going. Then come back and work through the detailed sections as you build each piece.**

HOW I LEARNED THIS THE HARD WAY

I didn't set out to build a custom home company. I built my own house. Then a buddy asked if I'd build his, so I did. Then I built one for another buddy. Before long, that word-of-mouth had turned into Clark Custom Homes, and for years we ran almost entirely on referrals.

Referrals are great—until they aren't. They're unpredictable. You can't forecast them, you can't scale them, and when they dry up, you're stuck. So at some point we decided to get serious about the business side and actually market ourselves. That's where the expensive lessons started.

I did what most builders do: I hired the "experts." First, a done-for-you marketing company at about three thousand dollars a month. It was a complete joke—I was throwing money away every single month for nothing. Then I hired another outfit, Thrive Media. Paid them eight thousand dollars up front, then spent another twelve thousand on Facebook ads through them. The result? One lead. One. And he didn't even convert—he went with someone else.

By the time the dust settled, I'd burned somewhere around fifty thousand dollars on marketing companies and ads that went nowhere.

> **Here's what I finally understood: none of those companies knew how to sell custom homes. They sold a custom home like it was a three-dollar widget.**

They didn't understand that a custom home buyer watches you quietly for eighteen to twenty-four months before they ever raise their hand. They didn't understand the nurture, the trust-building, the long game. They ran the same generic playbook they'd run for a pizza shop or a chiropractor, and it failed—because building a million-dollar home is nothing like selling a widget.

So I built my own system from the ground up, specifically for how custom home buyers actually think and buy. Everything in this manual is what came out of that—tested with my own money, on my own company, in a real market. I already paid the fifty-thousand-dollar tuition. You don't have to.

THE REAL COST OF STAYING STUCK

Most builders think doing nothing is free. It isn't. It's the most expensive choice you can make—you just never see the bill.

Every month without a real pipeline is a month you're at the mercy of referrals and luck. It's the feast-or-famine cycle: slammed one quarter, scrambling the next. It's the stress of not knowing where the next job comes from. And it's the slow bleed of bidding jobs for free and losing them to builders who compete on price because you never built a system to attract better clients.

Run Your Own Numbers

Let's make it concrete. Say your average custom home nets you around one hundred fifty thousand dollars in profit. Now imagine this system brings you just *two* extra builds a year that you wouldn't have gotten otherwise. That's three hundred thousand dollars in profit you left on the table every year you waited.

Two extra builds is a conservative number. But even at two, the math is staggering: the cost of *not* having a pipeline isn't the few hundred dollars a month you'd spend on ads—it's the hundreds of thousands in builds that quietly went to the builder down the road who showed up in the prospect's feed when you didn't.

> **The question isn't whether you can afford to build this system. It's whether you can afford another year without it.**

And remember the seven percent—the buyers who are twelve to twenty-four months out right now. They're in your market today, watching builders, deciding who to trust. If you're not showing up in that window, someone else is. Every month you wait, you forfeit another batch of those future closings to a competitor who started nurturing them before you did.

STEP 1: BUILD YOUR IDEAL CLIENT AVATAR (START HERE)

Before you write a single ad, build a single funnel, or send a single email, you need to know exactly who you're talking to. This is the step almost every builder skips—and it's why their marketing sounds generic and attracts the wrong people.

Your Ideal Client Avatar (ICA) is a detailed profile of the exact buyer you want more of. Not a made-up persona—real patterns pulled from your best past clients. What they feared, what they valued, why they said yes, and what made them a dream to work with.

Niche Down Twice: Your Client AND Your Product

Most builders try to build everything for everyone. They'll do a custom home, a patio, a deck, a pool, a remodel—whatever walks in the door. That makes them forgettable. They're competing with every other generalist in town.

The best builders niche down twice: once on *who* they serve, and once on *what* they build.

Think of a builder who only builds lake homes. That's it. When someone wants a lake home, there's only one obvious call. At Clark Custom Homes, we specialize in rural luxury—farm and ranch homes. That's our thing. We don't do patios. We don't do decks. We don't do pools. We don't chase ultra-high-end spec work. We do rural luxury ranch and farmhouse builds, and we do them better than anyone.

When you niche your product like this, three things happen: your marketing gets sharper (every ad speaks to one buyer wanting one thing), your operations get simpler (you're not relearning a new build type every job), and your reputation compounds (you become *the* name for that specific thing).

> **As you build your ICA, ask the second question too: What is the one thing you want to be known for building? Then have the discipline to say no to everything else.**

How To Build Yours

Work through your real-world differentiators, the problems you actually solve, and detailed mini case studies of your five favorite clients of all time. Look for the patterns: income level, personality, how they found you, what they feared, what made them say yes. To make this easy, contact us for a niche down workbook that walks you through the entire process step by step.

> **Once your ICA is complete, upload it to Claude or ChatGPT and say: "This is my ideal client. This is who we're marketing to. Please use language that attracts this exact buyer." Every ad, email, and piece of content should be written through this lens.**

Clark Custom Homes ICA — A Real Example

Here's what ours looks like, so you can see the level of specificity you're aiming for:

Who they are: High-net-worth individuals and families building custom ranch homes, luxury modern farmhouses, and estates in Texas. Typically CEOs, entrepreneurs, or professionals worth ten to one hundred million dollars or more. Often relocating or building on large acreage, frequently to be closer to family. They value trust, faith, and a personal relationship with their builder. They want turnkey execution—shop, house, pool—under one trusted roof. They are not chasing the cheapest bid; they want peace of mind, reputation, and integrity.

What they complain about: "Contractors don't answer the phone." "We had a nightmare builder who took our money and disappeared." "Nobody seems trustworthy or aligned with our vision." "It's exhausting to manage multiple vendors for house, shop, and pool." "We don't live in town, so we worry about being taken advantage of."

What they fear: Anxiety about entrusting millions to the wrong person. Fear of being overcharged or cheated. Distrust from past contractor nightmares. Overwhelm from decision fatigue. Stress about building from out of state.

What they want to feel: Confidence in their financial decision. Relief that their builder is trustworthy. Pride in a high-quality custom home. Peace of mind even when living out of town. Joy in sharing their finished home with family.

The belief shifts we sell: From "the lowest bid saves me money" to "the only way to protect my investment is a builder with integrity, reputation, and transparency." From "I need to micromanage to ensure quality" to "the only way to get peace of mind is a builder whose word and systems guarantee accountability." From "all builders are the same" to "the only way to build a ranch estate is with someone who shares my values."

Our marketing angle, in one paragraph: Most builders promise integrity. We prove it—with transparent accounting, consistent crews, and a reputation built on seventeen years of public service. Our clients aren't chasing the lowest bid; they want a builder who will stand by their word, answer the phone, and deliver their dream ranch or estate with pride. At Clark Custom Homes, your home isn't just a project—it's our promise.

> **Notice how specific this is. When you know your buyer this well, your ads write themselves—and they attract the exact people you want while repelling the bargain-hunters you don't.**

STEP 2: YOUR FIRST 30 DAYS — THE IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

Now that you know who you're targeting, here's the path to standing up the whole system. Read this first so the detailed sections that follow make sense in context.

Step 0: Hire Your Implementer

Before anything else, hire someone to execute this system. Most builders are visionaries—great at big-picture thinking, terrible at implementation. You need someone trained in Meta ads and GHL who can follow a roadmap without hand-holding.

Options: a virtual assistant (six to eight dollars per hour, highly trained in marketing automation), a freelancer from Fiverr or Upwork with Meta ads and GHL experience, or a marketing agency (pricier, but they know what they're doing). Your job is to hand them this playbook and oversee while they execute.

What To Brief Your Implementer On

1. **The philosophy:** Great marketing does the selling for you. We're building a system that qualifies prospects before they ever talk to sales.

2. **The full funnel:** Lead magnet to hot sequence to consultation call to in-person meeting to preconstruction close—with long-tail nurture keeping cold leads warm for twelve months.

3. **The monthly rhythm:** First Monday of every month, pull reports, see what's winning, plan next month's creative tests.

Week 1 — Foundation: Set up GHL with basic automations. Build your lead magnet (or have Claude build your cost calculator). Create your thank-you page with video. *Deliverable: lead magnet live and trackable.*

Week 2 — Sequences: Build the 48-hour hot sequence in GHL. Build the long-tail nurture from your best emails. Set up the six-month re-engagement email and the Friday update template. *Deliverable: all sequences built and ready to trigger.*

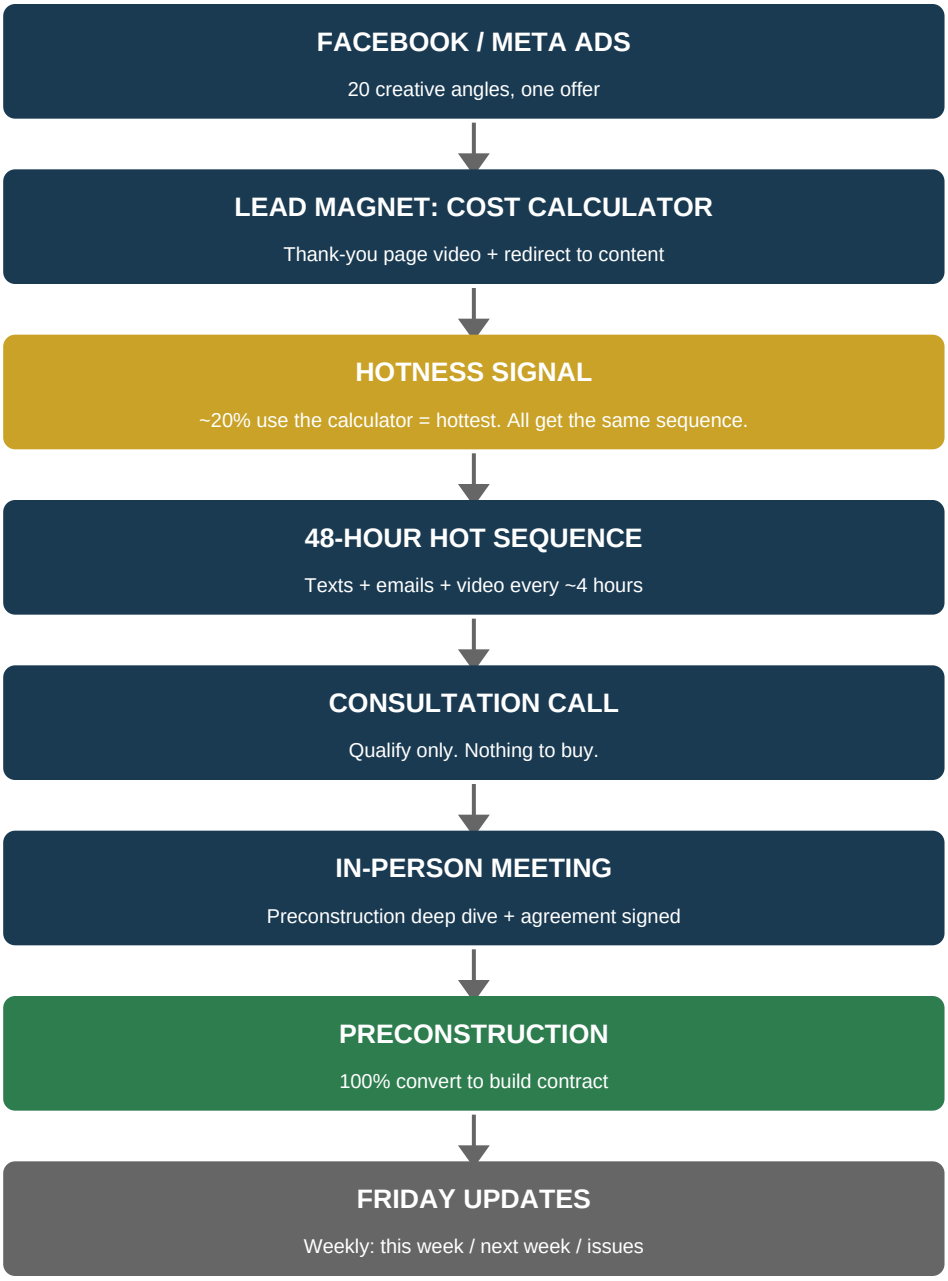
Week 3 — Paid Ads: Create five to ten Facebook ad hooks (use the AI prompts in the Content section). Build the Meta campaign with at least five ad sets. Set up tracking. Launch at a budget you're comfortable with—twenty to forty dollars a day. *Deliverable: ads live, leads coming in.*

Week 4 — Optimize & Document: Review week-three data. Add three to five more creatives based on what's working. Schedule a month of organic content (fifty videos minimum). Book your first monthly reporting meeting. *Deliverable: system dialed in, reporting scheduled.*

What To Expect

Expect slow starts. A trickle of leads week one, real volume by week three, enough data to optimize by month two. Don't kill the system at two weeks. The real magic comes when long-tail nurture starts converting people who've been watching you for months.

> **Your role isn't to execute this—it's to oversee it. Every Friday, your implementer sends a quick report: leads, cost per lead, sequences sent, conversions. You review, ask questions, and decide what to test next. You're not in the weeds. You're in the cockpit.**



THE PHILOSOPHY: GREAT MARKETING DOES THE SELLING FOR YOU

Those five clients this month didn't feel sold to. They felt *chosen*. They went through a system that qualified them before they ever talked to a salesman. By the time they sat across from us, they already knew we were different, understood our process, and believed in the value.

Most builders think marketing is about getting eyeballs. Run enough ads, push people through a funnel, and some percentage buys. That game is exhausting. Your sales team works constantly.

Your budget burns on vanity metrics. Nobody wins.

> **Bad marketing requires a great sales team. Great marketing requires no sales team at all.**

When your marketing is dialed in, you're not selling—you're filtering. You're qualifying. You're building authority and trust so that by the time someone books a call, they're already hoping *you* pick *them*.

That's the philosophy behind everything in this playbook. Every email, ad, and touchpoint moves someone from cold to warm to qualified. By the time they talk to your team, the sale is already made. This works because most builders don't do it—they're running generic ads and wondering why they're stuck on sales calls all day. You're going to be different.

Stop Fishing in the World's Smallest Pond

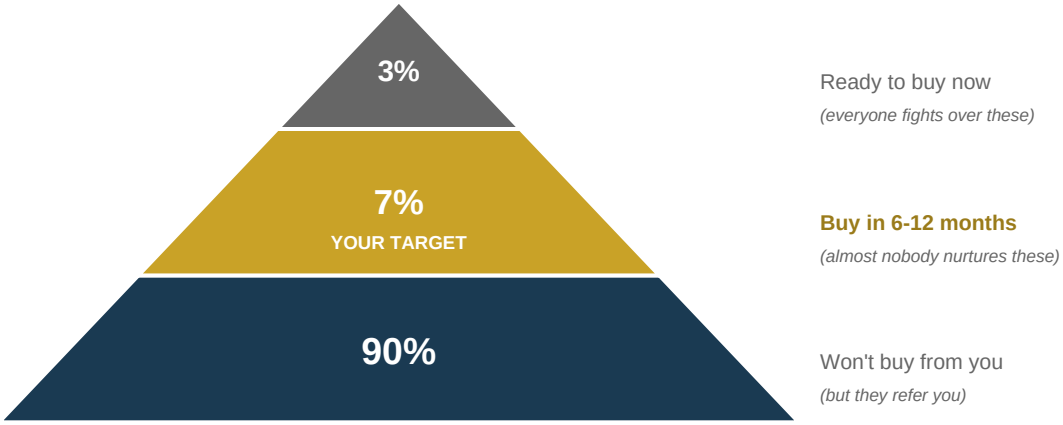
At any given moment, your market breaks down like this: about three percent are ready to buy right now. Seven percent will buy, but not for another six to twelve months. And ninety percent won't buy from you at all.

Most builders pour everything into chasing that three percent. As Rodric Lenhart puts it, that's fishing in the world's smallest pond—everyone's casting into the same tiny water, fighting over the same ready-now buyers, driving up the cost of every lead.

We do want the three percent—of course we'll take the buyer who's ready today. But our real target is the seven percent. It's more than double the size of the ready-now pond, and almost nobody is competing for it, because almost nobody has the patience to nurture a lead for six to twelve months. That's exactly why our system works: while everyone else gives up after one phone call, we stay present until that seven percent is ready.

And the ninety percent who'll never buy? They're not wasted. They're watching. They're remembering your name. And when their friend mentions they're thinking about building, your name is the one that comes up. Nurture isn't just about converting—it's about becoming the obvious answer to "do you know a good builder?"

THE BUYER PYRAMID — WHERE EVERYONE COMPETES VS. WHERE YOU WIN



How You Do One Thing Is How You Do All Things

There's a second layer to great marketing that has nothing to do with ads or emails: every detail signals what kind of company you are. How you do one thing is how you do all things—and your buyers feel it, even when they can't articulate it.

We signal premium on purpose, everywhere. The shirts our team wears are a premium brand, kept pressed and sharp—not a faded freebie tee. Our yard signs are the best on the market, with solar-mounted uplights so they look sharp day and night. When we give gifts, we give Yeti cups for the men and Stanley cups for the women—not because they're cheap, but because they're the most expensive, most recognizable premium option. Every one of these choices quietly tells a high-net-worth buyer: this is a premium builder who pays attention to detail and doesn't cut corners.

You charge premium prices, so everything the buyer touches should reinforce that you're a premium product. The sign in the yard, the shirt on your back, the cup in their hand—it all either builds or erodes the story your marketing is telling. Make every detail build it.

Great Marketing Is What Lets You Charge More

Most builders compete on price. They run a fifteen percent markup and fight for every job. We run a twenty-eight percent markup—and we win the work anyway. That's not an accident, and it's not because our lumber is different. It's because of marketing.

When your marketing builds enough trust and authority, price stops being the deciding factor. The client isn't choosing the cheapest builder; they're choosing the one they believe in. That belief is what lets you command a premium margin while the builder down the road is racing everyone else to the bottom.

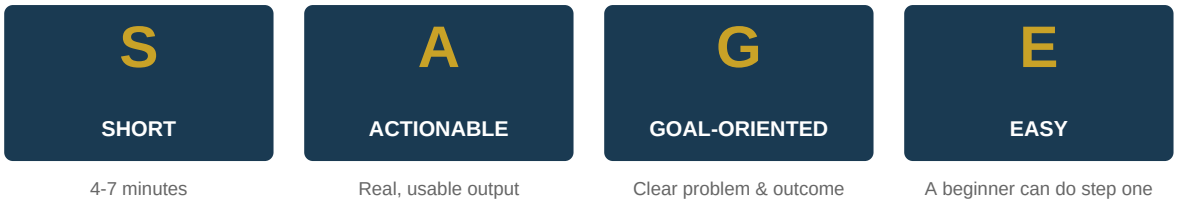
There's an old saying that nails it: if the cheapest price were all that mattered, the cheapest guy in town would be the biggest. He never is. Look around any market—the biggest, most dominant company is almost always one of the *most expensive*. That's not a contradiction. It's the whole point.

Take my buddy Brad Bacon, who owns Bacon Plumbing, Heating & Air. They'll charge several times the going rate to install a hot water heater—and people happily pay it. Why? Because their vans are wrapped and spotless, not leaking oil. Their techs show up in pressed uniforms, shirts tucked, clean black shoes, name on the chest, iPad in hand. No cigarette butts left in the driveway. A professional, polished pitch from the second they pull up. Every signal screams "premium," so a premium price feels not just acceptable but *expected*.

That's what great marketing buys you: the ability to charge what your work is actually worth, instead of what the cheapest competitor has talked the whole market into.

THE LEAD MAGNET — APPLYING THE SAGE FRAMEWORK

Your lead magnet isn't a PDF or a checklist. It's a *filter*. When Taki Moore built his Triage Call lead magnet, he wasn't trying to educate the world—he was separating serious people from the merely curious. He used the SAGE framework: Short, Actionable, Goal-Oriented, Easy. We do the same with our cost calculator.



Short — Consumable in four to seven minutes. Our calculator takes five. Not forty pages.

Actionable — Practical, useful content. The calculator walks someone through their project and gives a real number they can use immediately.

Goal-Oriented — Crystal clear on the problem and outcome. They want to know one thing: what will this cost?

Easy — The first step is doable by a beginner. Click, answer forty questions, get a number.

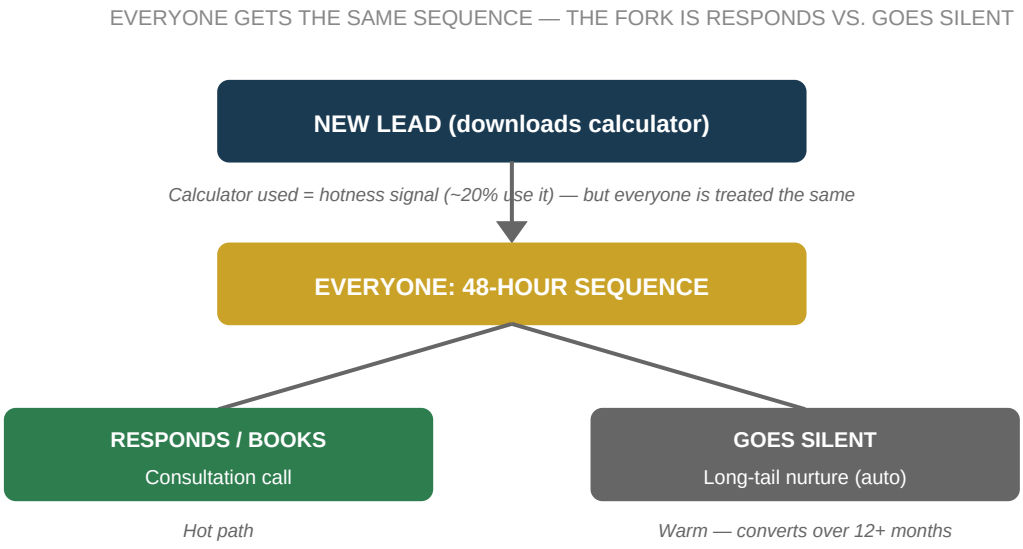
The Funnel Filter: Why We Delay Delivery

We intentionally delay delivery of the calculator by five minutes. When someone clicks to download, they hit a thank-you page with a video from you: "Hey, it's Cody. Thanks for downloading. Check your email in five minutes. In the meantime, check out our free content on YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook."

This creates friction (tire-kickers bounce), redirects them to your evergreen content where cold becomes warm, and tells you who's serious. The people who open the calculator email stuck around. They're hot.

The 80/20 Split — A Signal, Not a Sorting

Expect roughly eighty percent to download the calculator and never use it, and twenty percent to actually fill it out. Here's the key: this isn't about routing people into different sequences. Everyone who comes into your world gets the same 48-hour sequence and the same shot at booking a call. The calculator is simply a *signal*—the twenty percent who complete it are your hottest leads because they took a concrete action. Hot or not, everyone gets nurtured the same way. Only the people who go completely silent—no clicks, no replies, no booking—get moved automatically into long-tail nurture.



The Friction Principle: Every Question Costs You 50 Percent

Every question you ask drops your response rate by roughly fifty percent. First name, last name, email, phone—by four or five questions you've filtered out ninety percent of casual clickers. This sounds bad. It's *perfect*.

When we ran our seventeen-page checklist download, we required first name, last name, email, phone, budget, do you have land, do you have an architect, have you worked with an interior designer, and do you want a call from our team. Every field mandatory. What that gave us wasn't

volume—it was quality. The people who made it through were serious.

> **Ask yourself: do I want a thousand tire-kicker leads, or fifty qualified ones? The friction you add decides which you get.**

FACEBOOK ADS STRATEGY — TESTING ANGLES, NOT OFFERS

Most builders run one ad and cross their fingers. We run one campaign with twenty simultaneous ad sets. Same offer every time—download the free cost calculator. Different angle every time.

• "You spent six figures on the land. You hired an architect. You have the Pinterest board saved. But when you call the builder, nobody can give you a straight number. Sound familiar?"
• "You're not the cheapest option buyer. You know what you want. You'll pay for quality. But you're googling cost per square foot like it's 2015. There's a better way."
• "Most buyers walk into a builder meeting blind. You're not most buyers. Get your number first."
• "Tired of builders who won't quote you until they've already invested months into design?"
• "We've built fifty million dollars worth of custom homes in North Texas. This estimator thinks like we do."
• "Five minutes. Forty questions about your actual vision—house, pool, driveway, everything. One real number."

These aren't different offers—they're different *problems*. We're testing which pain point resonates. Running all twenty simultaneously lets Meta's algorithm find which message works for which segment.

The Budget Strategy: Shared Pool, Natural Winners

One daily budget across all ad sets—currently forty dollars a day. The algorithm allocates budget to winners automatically. This month, "Stop Pricing Like It's 2015" pulled leads at six dollars eighteen cents each while others ran thirty to thirty-three. The algorithm noticed and shifted budget to the winner.

Monthly Review Cadence

Don't obsess over daily metrics. Don't kill ads after three days. Pull your Meta Ads Insights report once a month. Look at cost-per-lead by creative. Are the winners still winning? Do you need new angles? This month: fifty-four leads at eighteen dollars cost-per-lead, five preconstruction agreements worth three million.

What You're Actually Testing

Not whether Facebook ads work. Not whether your offer works. You're testing *messaging angles* against a consistent, qualified audience. The targeting stays the same; the creative changes. By the end of thirty days, you'll know which messages move people to action.

CONTENT STRATEGY & ORGANIC REACH

Your paid ads are the hook. Your organic content is the net. When someone clicks an ad, they're curious but they don't trust you yet. That trust comes from watching your content over time—seeing you be real, hearing your framework. Your organic content is where cold becomes warm.

Batch It, Schedule It, Recycle It

Batch-create content, schedule it through GHL across Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, then recycle your best performers. If you post to a thousand followers, maybe a hundred see it. Post it again three weeks later and a different hundred see it. You're not being repetitive—you're reaching new people. This also kills content burnout: make fifty great videos and rotate them for months.

The Repetition Rule

Builders always ask: "Won't people get tired of the same content?" No. If a thousand people see it, nine hundred didn't. The hundred who saw it twice weren't paying attention the first time. Even you need to hear something three, four, five times before it clicks. Don't be scared to make the same video seven times.

Content Generation Prompts — Let AI Do The Heavy Lifting

Prompt 1: "Assume the role of a world-class custom home builder and marketing expert. Generate twenty ten-second video hooks for Facebook ads about custom home pricing. Focus on frustration angles and premium buyer positioning. Make them conversational and authentic."

Prompt 2: "Create ten framework videos explaining the custom home building process. Each two to three minutes, covering one phase: preconstruction, design, permitting, construction, closing. Write as if explaining to a first-time builder."

Prompt 3: "Generate fifteen short-form content ideas under sixty seconds about custom home design mistakes. Focus on common problems and how to avoid them. Make them shareable for TikTok and Reels."

Prompt 4: "Write fifty subject lines for nurture emails about custom home building. Mix urgency, educational, social proof, and curiosity angles. Conversational, not salesy."

Feed your ICA into these prompts first. When the AI knows your exact buyer, every hook it writes speaks directly to them.

LEVERAGING AI FOR REPORTING

You're running ads on Meta and sending emails through GHL, but most builders never connect the dots. We pull data from both, then use AI to analyze it all at once for a complete picture of what's working.

Monthly Reporting Ritual

Pull your Meta Ads Manager insights: cost per result, which creatives win, which audiences convert, overall spend versus leads. At the same time, pull your GHL email performance: highest open rates, most clicks, and most replies—because responses matter more than opens.

The AI Integration

Feed both reports into Claude and ask: "I spent a thousand dollars on Facebook ads this month and generated fifty-four leads. My top creative was 'Stop Pricing Like It's 2015' at six dollars eighteen cents per lead. My best email was 'I think you should hear it from me first.' What patterns do you see? What should I test next month?" AI spots correlations you'd miss and flags underperformers to pause.

Track Every Channel, Not Just Facebook

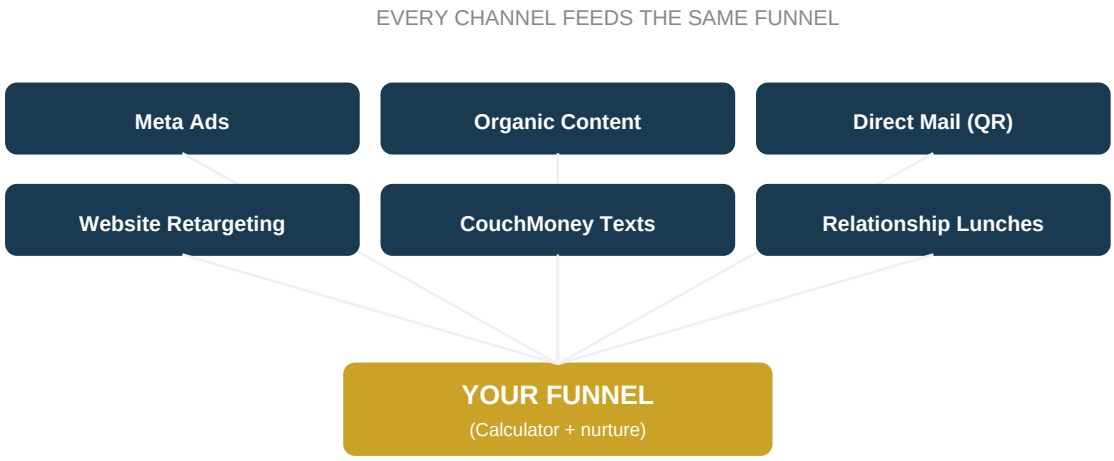
Here's where most builders fall short: they track Facebook because the dashboard hands it to them, and they ignore everything else. But every channel has a cost and a conversion. You spent sixty dollars taking a realtor to lunch. You spent X on direct mail to five hundred homes. You spent Y on the CouchMoney texts. Each of those produced—or didn't produce—leads and signed clients.

Track all of it. Every dollar in, every conversion out, across every channel—Facebook, direct mail, lunches, retargeting mail, referrals. When you feed that complete picture into AI, you finally see your true cost per acquisition by channel, not just your cost per Facebook lead. That's how you learn that a sixty-dollar lunch might be your cheapest client and a thirty-dollar Facebook lead might be your most expensive. APIs and AI make pulling and analyzing all this data easier than it's ever been—there's no excuse to fly blind on any channel.

You can't optimize what you don't measure. Set a calendar reminder for the first Monday of every month: pull every channel's numbers, analyze with AI, decide what to test next.

OFFLINE & MULTI-CHANNEL MARKETING

Digital is only half the game. For custom home builders, some of the highest-converting channels are offline—and they're wildly underused by your competition. Great marketing is a living organism: the more channels feeding your funnel, the warmer your prospects get before they ever raise their hand.



Direct Mail (ExpressCopy)

Direct mail is massively underestimated. Using a service like ExpressCopy, you can target by precise demographics—people earning over a million a year, over two hundred thousand a year, with two kids, married, in specific neighborhoods. Every piece carries a unique QR code, so you know exactly who scanned it, when, and how many times. That turns "junk mail" into a trackable lead source.

Frequency matters more than builders think. Don't send once and quit. When you have a build going, mail the surrounding neighborhood—roughly five hundred homes—at the start of the build, the middle, and the end. Honestly, seven times across the build is even better. The home going up nearby is your best billboard; the mail connects your name to it. Send it as often as you can justify.

Relationship Lunches

Some of your best business comes from a table, not a screen. Take realtors, lenders, and prospects to lunch. A sixty-dollar lunch with the right realtor or lender can open a referral pipeline worth far more than any single ad. Treat it like any other channel: it has a cost, it has conversions, and it deserves to be tracked. Log every lunch—who, why, how much—so you can see which relationships actually produce business.

Website Retargeting Mail (Dope Marketing)

Here's a powerful twist: when someone visits your website, a company like Dope Marketing can capture that and automatically send a physical piece of direct mail to their house. The prospect browses your site, and a few days later your postcard shows up in their mailbox. That one-two punch of digital plus physical builds serious trust.

CouchMoney — The "Cleaning Out My Phone" Text

Credit to Rodric Lenhart for this one. Text everyone in your phone, verbatim:

> **"Hey, this is Cody just cleaning out my phone. Is this still a good number for you?"**

No links. No sales pitch. No nothing. The whole goal is to get a reply. People respond, "Yeah man, haven't heard from you in fifteen years, how've you been?" You say, "Doing great, just building custom homes." And they say, "Oh really? I need a custom home built." That's why it works. If you instead text "This is Cody at Clark Custom Homes, we're running a special," everyone deletes it and it becomes spam—completely worthless. The casual version works beautifully every time. We've had seven clients convert on that text alone. You can run the same play with email using a short, personal, expectant note.

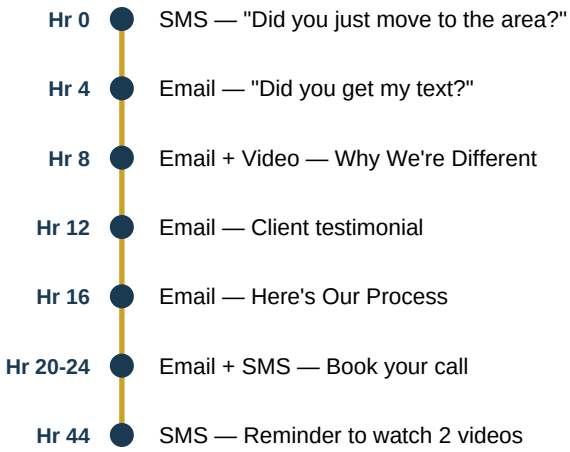
Donut Drops

Another Rodric Lenhart idea. Put your business card on top of a donut box—and another inside the lid. Drop it off at realtor offices, architecture firms, design studios, anyone who refers business. Every time someone opens the lid to grab a donut, they see your card and get a little dopamine hit. Repeated, positive brand exposure with the exact referral partners you want.

> **Run your ICA against each channel. Direct mail lets you target your exact high-net-worth buyer by income and neighborhood—the same person your ICA describes.**

THE 48-HOUR HOT SEQUENCE

When someone completes your cost calculator, they're not just a lead—they're a *hot* lead who self-qualified by taking action. Now you have forty-eight hours to move them from interested to booked, with roughly one touchpoint every four hours.



The SPEAR Text — Hour 0

That first text follows a format called SPEAR—Short, Personal, Expecting A Reply. No links, no branding, no sales pitch. Just a quick, human note designed to start a conversation, like "Hey! Did you just move to the area?" The goal isn't to sell; it's to get a reply, because a reply is a micro-yes that turns a passive lead into a participant—and replies also improve your email and SMS deliverability over time.

The SPEAR concept comes from Dean Jackson, a pioneering direct-response marketer who coined it (Short, Personal, Expecting A Reply) and who is widely credited as one of the originators of the modern lead-magnet approach.

The Psychology

You're building urgency without pressure. Each touchpoint adds information or social proof. By hour twenty-four they've heard from you six times—they know your story, they've seen video proof, they understand your process. The CTA to book doesn't feel pushy; it feels like the natural next step.

Why Video Links Beat Attachments

Don't embed videos—link to YouTube. You want them in your ecosystem, and YouTube watch time and engagement feed your organic algorithm. They're also more likely to watch a video they click than one that's attached.

No-Show Prevention: The Two-Day Window

Only allow booking two days out. Longer windows spike no-show rates; when the call is "soon," people take it seriously. Send a reminder text the day before: "You've got a consultation with us tomorrow at 2 PM. Make sure you watched those two videos. See you then!"

Conversion Expectations

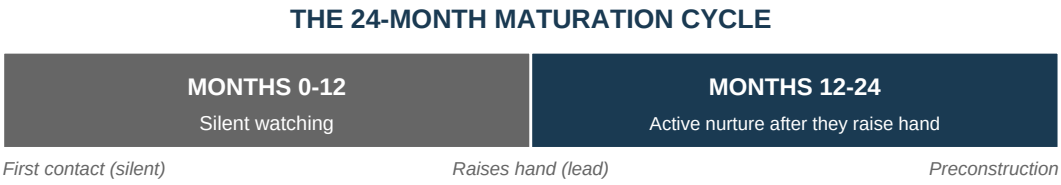
Expect roughly twenty to thirty percent to book a consultation off this sequence. Everyone who doesn't respond at all—no clicks, no replies, no booking—gets moved automatically into long-tail nurture, still warm and still potentially converting months later.

THE LONG-TAIL NURTURE SEQUENCE

Not everyone books off the 48-hour sequence. The people who go silent—no reply, no booking—don't get dropped. The automation moves them into long-tail nurture, which keeps them warm indefinitely with your best content on repeat.

The 24-Month Timeline

Leads don't convert on your timeline—they convert on theirs. A prospect watches you silently for about twelve months before they ever raise their hand. Then they download the calculator and become a "lead." From that moment, add another twelve months before they convert to preconstruction.



This changes everything. A six-month-old lead that hasn't booked isn't dead—they're often right in the sweet spot, about to be ready. Don't kill your system at month three when the real ROI shows up at month twelve and beyond.

Recycle Your Winners

Don't write new emails for this. Pull your best performers and run them on a steady cadence. Examples: "I want to tell you before June 1st" (urgency plus personalization), "I think you should hear it from me first" (positioning plus transparency), your framework emails, client testimonials, and "why we're different" positioning pieces.

The Six-Month Nine-Word Email

At six months, send: "Are you still interested in building a custom home? Or should I take you off this list?" Nine words, one question. People who say yes go back into active nurture. People who ignore it may still be watching—the twelve-month window isn't over. People who opt out, let go. Better a clean list of engaged prospects than dead weight.

The nine-word email was created by Dean Jackson, the same marketer behind the SPEAR concept. He designed it to revive cold leads with a single, personal question that's almost impossible not to answer.

> **If a lead takes twelve months to mature after raising their hand, you won't see the system's real ROI until month twelve. Patience is part of the strategy.**

THE CONSULTATION CALL

The consultation call isn't a sales call. It's a *qualification call*. Before you ask a single question, tell them:

> **"This is just a consultation. There's nothing to buy on this call. Even if you wanted to buy right now, I wouldn't let you. My job today is to understand if we're a good fit for each other."**

This one statement drops their guard. They stop bracing for pressure and start having a conversation.

Flip The Dynamic: You're The Judge

You're Simon Cowell; they're auditioning. You're not convincing them to hire you—you're evaluating whether you want to work with them. When they say "I'm shopping ten other builders," you say, "That's fine, go ahead and shop. But we have to like you, and you have to be a fit for us. We're selective." Suddenly they're hoping *you* pick *them*.

The Qualification Checklist

You're listening for specifics: Do they have land or access to it? A realistic budget? Design preferences or willingness to develop them? Financing sorted, or the ability to get it? You're mentally checking boxes. This isn't mean—it's filtering out the nightmare prospects before they waste your time.

Build Rapport: Understand What Matters

Beyond the checklist, find out what's actually important to them. Some care most about the kitchen, some the master bath, some outdoor living, some smart home tech. Ask: "If we could nail one thing, what would it be?" Their answer tells you how to position your process and team.

The Close On The Call

If they pass and you vibe: "Sounds like you're a great fit. Here's what happens next—we move into a deeper dive where we walk through our entire preconstruction process. That happens in an in-person meeting. Does that sound interesting?" You don't close on this call. You move them to the next step.

IN-PERSON MEETING & PRECONSTRUCTION CLOSE

If they pass the consultation, you schedule an in-person meeting. This is where you walk them through the entire preconstruction process and get the agreement signed. You're not selling here—you're teaching.

The Preconstruction Walk-Through

"First, you work with Angie, our interior designer—cabinets, flooring, finishes, appliances, lighting—designing something beautiful that fits your budget. If you don't have house plans, we connect you with Tracy's Custom Home Design, our architect. You, Angie, and the architect work together so nobody designs something you can't afford. Meanwhile we schedule soil testing with our geotech partner, then send plans to the engineer for the foundation and frame plan. Once everything's locked, you walk out with a permit-ready packet. That's what you're paying for in preconstruction—our knowledge, expertise, and relationships walking you through every step."

The Value Prop

You could hire the architect, designer, geotech, and engineer separately. Most people do—and most end up designing a house that costs twenty percent more than they budgeted. You walk them through so they design something they can actually afford. That's the service.

The Preconstruction Agreement

At the end, you present the preconstruction agreement. It locks them in—they're now committed to moving forward through design, engineering, and permitting. It's not a build contract yet; it's the agreement that says, "We're working together on preconstruction."

Conversion Rate: 100 Percent

We've never had a single person leave preconstruction—one hundred percent convert to the build contract. By the time they're here, they're not shopping anymore. The marketing and qualification did all the heavy lifting. Once they sign, they come off all automations and your team takes over manually.

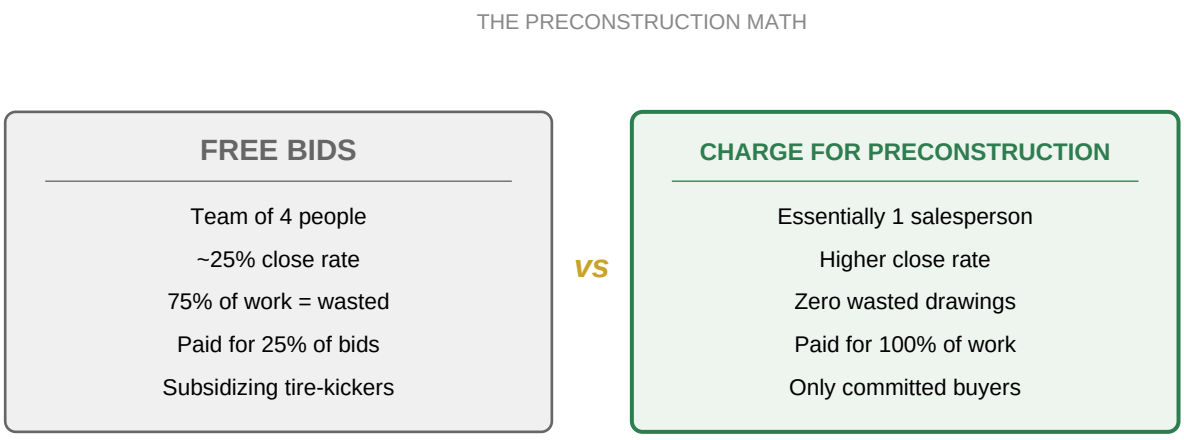
Handling the #1 Objection: "Nobody Will Pay For That"

The number one objection builders raise about preconstruction is always the same: "Nobody's ever going to pay for that—everybody else gives away free estimates and free drawings." It feels true. It isn't.

I spoke with a respected builder recently—he builds custom pools—who told me he closes about twenty-five percent of the jobs he draws and bids. The other seventy-five percent? He drew them, bid them, and got nothing. He also mentioned his team is four people. Sit with that math for a second.

If three out of every four bids you produce never close, three-quarters of that drawing and bidding labor is pure waste—and you're carrying a team of four to absorb it. Now flip it. If you charged for the preconstruction work—the estimates, the bids, the drawings—two things happen. First, you get paid for one hundred percent of the work instead of seventy-five percent of it walking out the door for free. Second, the people who pay are radically more committed, so your close rate climbs instead of sitting at twenty-five percent.

Run the numbers and it's almost shocking: a builder charging for preconstruction could do the same volume that four people produce on free bids with essentially one salesperson. You stop subsidizing tire-kickers, you get paid for your expertise, and you need a fraction of the labor to produce the same revenue. "Nobody will pay for that" isn't a reason to give it away—it's the exact reason charging for it is your biggest competitive advantage.



Same volume. A fraction of the labor. Paid for your expertise.

THE FRIDAY UPDATE SYSTEM & CLIENT COMMUNICATION

Every Friday, your client gets a structured update with three parts: what happened this week, what's happening next week, and any issues.

> **"Good afternoon, Mr. and Mrs. Smith. This week: we heard back from Encore on your power quote, and Dynamic Engineering is working on your soil samples—about three weeks out. I haven't heard from the architect yet but I'm reaching out Monday. Next week: we finalize your plans, then get you in with Angie to start interior design. Issues this week: none. Everything's on track."**

Why This Matters

There are two nuts-and-bolts reasons we do this. First, it keeps the client informed so they never feel like they're on a scavenger hunt chasing you for answers. Second, it dramatically cuts down the phone calls, emails, and texts that would otherwise hit you on Saturday and Sunday. A client who got a clear update Friday afternoon doesn't need to track you down over the weekend.

The deeper payoff is psychological. When people feel well informed, they don't feel the need to micromanage. When they're not micromanaging, they don't turn into "crazy clients." Informed clients are calm clients. Silence is what breeds anxiety, and anxiety is what breeds the 9 PM phone call.

Set the Cadence Early

Establish this rhythm from day one. Tell them up front: "From today until we close this build out—anywhere from now to day three hundred sixty-five—you'll get an update from us every Friday." Setting that expectation early means they know exactly what to expect and they stop wondering whether they'll hear from you. The cadence itself becomes a source of trust.

Beyond Friday: A Live Window Into the Build

As you move into construction, Friday updates are just one layer. The bigger system is giving the client a live, transparent window into their project—and it's one of your strongest selling points when you're still trying to win them.

• **Live schedule** they can follow along with in real time. Build in rain days up front using National Weather Service data—"based on historical data, we expect roughly fifty-six rain days across these four months"—so delays are expected, not surprises.
• **Live budget** they can see at any time, so there are no financial shocks.
• **Daily logs** once construction starts, documenting progress every single day.
• **Five photos per day** as a standard operating procedure, uploaded to your software.
• **A live client portal** where they see all of it—schedule, budget, logs, photos.
• **All communication and change orders run through one system** so nothing gets lost in scattered texts and emails.

We run all of this through JobTread. Photos, logs, schedule, budget, communication, and change orders all live in one place, and the client has a portal to follow along. When you're selling yourself to a prospect, this is a massive differentiator: "We send Friday updates. We keep a daily log. Our SOP is five photos a day uploaded to your portal. You'll see a live schedule and live budget the entire time." Most builders can't say any of that.

The Differentiator

Ninety percent of builders go silent and make clients chase them. You do the opposite—and it's a big reason your preconstruction-to-build close rate is one hundred percent. Communication is the key to the entire thing. Clients who feel informed and in control don't disappear, don't panic, and don't shop around. They refer you.

KEY METRICS & BENCHMARKS TO TRACK

You can't optimize what you don't measure. Track these every month.

Paid Ads

• Cost per lead (this month: eighteen dollars; ranges six to thirty-three by creative)
• Total leads (this month: fifty-four on $1,017 spend)
• Top creative by cost-per-lead ("Stop Pricing Like It's 2015" at $6.18)
• Impressions and reach

Lead Quality

• Calculator usage rate (benchmark: 80% download, 20% use)
• Consultation booking rate
• Consultation show rate (minimal with the two-day window)

Conversion

• In-person meeting conversion rate
• Preconstruction close rate (benchmark: 100%)
• Preconstruction-to-build conversion (benchmark: 100%)

Revenue

• Preconstruction agreement value (this month: five agreements, three million dollars)
• Return on ad spend (this month: about $1,017 in ads produced $17,500 in preconstruction revenue—roughly seventeen to one)

Email

• Open rates, click rates, and reply rates (responses matter most)
• Which emails drive consultations

Long-Tail

• Six-month re-engagement response rate
• Time-to-conversion (months from first contact to preconstruction)

> **First Monday of every month: pull all these numbers, look for trends, decide what to test. Don't obsess over daily swings—look at the month holistically. Is the system working?**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

"I'm not good on camera."

Nobody is at first—I wasn't either. And here's the secret: you don't need to be polished. You need to be *real*. Custom home buyers aren't looking for a TV host; they're looking for a builder they can trust with a million dollars. A slightly awkward, honest video of you explaining how you think about a build does more for trust than a glossy, over-produced ad ever could. The "imperfections" are what make you believable. You'll be comfortable after ten videos—and you'll need a lot of content anyway, so you'll get the reps fast.

"I don't have time for this."

You don't have time to do it all yourself—which is exactly why the very first step is hiring an implementer to run the system for you. Your job isn't to post content all day or manage ad sets. Your job is to record some raw video, approve the strategy, and review one report a week. The whole point of building a *system* is that it runs without you living inside it. Done right, this gives you time back, it doesn't take it.

"My market is too rural or too small for this."

Rural and small is an advantage, not a problem. We build in a rural Texas market and it's the reason this works as well as it does—less competition, lower ad costs, and a tighter community where word travels fast. The smaller the market, the cheaper it is to become the name everyone knows. You don't need a huge metro. You need to dominate the specific niche and geography you serve, and a smaller pond makes that far easier.

"I've tried Facebook ads before and they didn't work."

Same here—I burned around fifty thousand dollars before any of it worked. But the ads weren't the problem. The problem was running ads with no system behind them: no lead magnet to filter, no nurture sequence to build trust over the eighteen-to-twenty-four-month buying window, no consultation process to qualify. Ads alone don't sell custom homes. Ads that feed a real system do. If you tried ads and they flopped, it almost certainly wasn't because ads don't work in your market—it's because there was nothing built to catch and nurture what they brought in.

CONCLUSION

You now have the full system—the same one that's generated a hundred and thirty qualified leads and a thirty-two-and-a-half-million-dollar pipeline. This works because every piece fits together: your ads attract the right people, your sequences warm them up, your consultation call qualifies them, your in-person meeting closes them, and your Friday updates carry them through.

The builders who asked how I'm getting results—this is it. Not luck. Not magic. System.

QUICK REFERENCE FIELD CARD

The entire system on one page. Print it. Pin it up.

THE MARKET	**3%** ready now (everyone fights here) | **7%** buy in 6-12 months (your target) | **90%** won't buy but refer you. Nurture wins.
THE FUNNEL	Ad → Cost calculator (lead magnet) → 48-hour sequence → Consultation call → In-person meeting → Preconstruction agreement → Build + Friday updates.
BEFORE YOU START	1) Build your ICA (niche your client). 2) Niche your product. 3) Hire an implementer ($6-8/hr, Meta + GHL). Brief them on the philosophy, funnel, and monthly rhythm.
LEAD MAGNET	SAGE: Short, Actionable, Goal-Oriented, Easy. Delay delivery 5 min → thank-you video → redirect to content. Every form question cuts response ~50% (that's a feature).
FACEBOOK ADS	One campaign, ~20 ad sets. Same offer, different hooks. Shared budget; let the algorithm pick winners. Review monthly by cost-per-lead.
OTHER CHANNELS	Organic content (batch, schedule, recycle). Direct mail w/ QR (start, middle, end of build). Website retargeting mail. CouchMoney texts. Relationship lunches. Track every channel's cost + conversions with AI.
48-HOUR SEQUENCE	Everyone gets it. SPEAR text → emails (who we are, proof, why different) → book the call. Calculator use = hotness signal. Go silent → auto long-tail nurture.
LONG-TAIL	Best emails recycled. Six-month nine-word email: "Are you still interested in building a custom home?" Leads mature over ~24 months. Don't kill it early.
CONSULTATION	"Nothing to buy on this call." You're the judge. Qualify: land, budget, plans, financing. Build rapport. If they pass → book in-person meeting. Two-day booking window.
PRECONSTRUCTION	In-person deep dive: design, architect, soil, engineering → permit-ready packet. Sign the agreement. CHARGE for it. 100% convert to build.
COMMUNICATION	Friday updates (this week / next week / issues). Live schedule (rain days from NWS), live budget, daily logs, 5 photos/day, client portal. All through one system.
KEY NUMBERS	This month: $1,017 ad spend → 54 leads → $18 CPL → 5 preconstruction agreements → $17.5K design revenue → $3M in build contracts.
MONTHLY RHYTHM	First Monday: pull every channel's numbers, analyze with AI, decide what to test next. Don't obsess over daily swings.