

*Micro-Mastery*  
THE AUTHORITY APEX STRATEGY

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*the*

# Complete Companion Workbook

*Ten exercises, drawn from the book, for becoming the only call worth making.*



*Elena T. Rivera-Cheek, MBA*

FOUNDER · C&A DIGITAL · C&A HEALTH

C&A PUBLISHING · WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK · MMXXVI

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# A Letter to the Reader

**Elena T. Rivera-Cheek, MBA**

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*White Plains, New York · 2026*

## Dear Reader,

Thank you for picking up the book. And thank you for picking this workbook up after it. I wrote *Micro-Mastery* to be read, but I built the framework to be used. These ten worksheets are how the framework leaves the page.

Every exercise here is pulled directly from a chapter. The Yes Audit and the Ten-Person Test live in Chapter One because positioning starts with telling yourself the truth about what you are actually doing. The Authority Apex Diagnostic lives in Chapter Three because no amount of marketing fixes a vague position. The Workflow X-Ray lives in Chapter Six because operations is where expert attention either compounds or quietly disappears. The 90-Day Execution Tracker lives at the end because nothing in this book matters until it shows up on a calendar.

A note on how to use these pages: do not try to complete all of them in a single sitting. The book argues that depth is the new differentiator. Apply that here. Pick one worksheet. Sit with it. Print it. Write on it. Come back to it. The page is meant to be a working surface, not a checklist.

If you find a worksheet that does not feel uncomfortable, you may not have answered it honestly. That is a feature, not a bug. The exercises were designed to surface what most leaders avoid — the drift, the dependency, the manifesto that sounds too safe, the calendar that does not match the strategy. Honesty on these pages is the cheapest form of strategic work you will ever do.

I hope these pages help you do what the book describes — narrow your focus, deepen your expertise, build the architecture that holds without you, and become the only call worth making in the category you choose.

*With clarity,*

## Elena T. Rivera-Cheek

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AUTHOR · MICRO-MASTERY

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Ten worksheets drawn from the chapters of the book.

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THE COMPANION WORKSHEETS

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CHAPTER  
**01**

# The Micro-Category Mindset

*Escaping the Generalist Trap*



THE EXERCISE

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## The Yes Audit & The Ten-Person Test

*A competent firm gets considered. An authoritative firm gets chosen. Before you can build authority,  
you must see how far the generalist trap has already pulled you in.*

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# The Yes Audit

List the last ten clients, projects, or engagements your firm said yes to. For each one, ask one question: did this work reinforce your strongest area of expertise, or did you accept it for some other reason — revenue, convenience, an existing relationship, or the fear of saying no?

MARK EACH: CORE OR DRIFT

<b>01</b>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> CORE	<input type="checkbox"/> DRIFT
<b>02</b>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> CORE	<input type="checkbox"/> DRIFT
<b>03</b>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> CORE	<input type="checkbox"/> DRIFT
<b>04</b>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> CORE	<input type="checkbox"/> DRIFT
<b>05</b>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> CORE	<input type="checkbox"/> DRIFT
<b>06</b>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> CORE	<input type="checkbox"/> DRIFT
<b>07</b>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> CORE	<input type="checkbox"/> DRIFT
<b>08</b>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> CORE	<input type="checkbox"/> DRIFT
<b>09</b>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> CORE	<input type="checkbox"/> DRIFT
<b>10</b>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> CORE	<input type="checkbox"/> DRIFT

THE RATIO

Core total \_\_\_\_\_ Drift total \_\_\_\_\_

*If more than half lands in Drift, the generalist trap is not theoretical. It is your current operating model.*

# The Ten-Person Test

*Ask ten people in your network — clients, colleagues, referral partners — to answer a single question: what is this company (or am I) the best in the world at? Do not prompt them. Do not explain. Just listen. Record the answers verbatim.*

VERBATIM ANSWERS

<b>01</b>	NAME _____	ANSWER _____
<b>02</b>	NAME _____	ANSWER _____
<b>03</b>	NAME _____	ANSWER _____
<b>04</b>	NAME _____	ANSWER _____
<b>05</b>	NAME _____	ANSWER _____
<b>06</b>	NAME _____	ANSWER _____
<b>07</b>	NAME _____	ANSWER _____
<b>08</b>	NAME _____	ANSWER _____
<b>09</b>	NAME _____	ANSWER _____
<b>10</b>	NAME _____	ANSWER _____

COMPARE THE TWO RESULTS

*If the two pictures do not match the authority you want to build, you now have a clear starting point for the work ahead.*

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CHAPTER  
**02**

# The Personal Bottleneck

*From Leader-Hero to CEO-Architect*



THE EXERCISE

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## The Disappearance Test & The Two Lists

*Authority is not built by being present everywhere. It is built by being irreplaceable somewhere. This is the work of separating the operator from the owner.*

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# The Three Great Abdications

*What the leader must release is not just work, but authority, ownership, and identity. For each abdication, name one place this week where you will let go — and the temporary discomfort that will follow.*

## THE HOW

### **Relinquish your prescribed methods.**

*Where will you stop dictating process and start defining outcomes?*

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## THE RELATIONSHIP

### **Relinquish being the only point of trust.**

*Which client, account, or stakeholder will you transition to a team member as a peer?*

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## THE FIX

### **Relinquish rescuing every problem.**

*Which problem will you let your team resolve without you next time?*

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# The Disappearance Test



*Imagine you disappeared for ninety days. Two lists will tell you more than a week of self-reflection. For each item in List 1, write its counterpart in List 2.*

**LIST 1 · WHAT BREAKS?**

*Every decision, deliverable, or relationship that would stall or collapse without your involvement for three weeks.*

**LIST 2 · ARCHITECTURE ROADMAP**

*For each item to the left, what would have to change — a person trained, a system built — so the organization can handle it without you?*

<b>01</b>		•	
<b>02</b>		•	
<b>03</b>		•	
<b>04</b>		•	
<b>05</b>		•	
<b>06</b>		•	
<b>07</b>		•	
<b>08</b>		•	
<b>09</b>		•	
<b>10</b>		•	
<b>11</b>		•	
<b>12</b>		•	

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CHAPTER  
**03**

# The Authority Apex

*Where expertise, demand, and distinction converge*



THE EXERCISE

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## The One-Sentence Test & Apex Statement Prompts

*The Authority Apex is not a branding exercise. It is the strategic decision that shapes everything that follows — who you hire, what you refuse, how you are known, and why the market eventually stops comparing you to alternatives.*

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# The Authority Apex Diagnostic

Score each statement from 1 to 5. The diagnostic below is designed to reveal which of the three circles needs the most attention.

1 = NOT TRUE AT ALL · 3 = SOMEWHAT TRUE · 5 = COMPLETELY TRUE

## 1. EXPERTISE

When a complex problem in our area of strength lands on our desk, our team solves it with a depth and nuance that our competitors cannot match. \_\_\_\_\_ / 5

## 2. PATTERN RECOGNITION

Across our best engagements, we see recurring patterns clearly enough that we can diagnose a client's real problem faster than they can. \_\_\_\_\_ / 5

## 3. DEMAND

The problem we are best at solving is one our target clients describe as urgent, expensive, or unacceptable to leave unsolved — not merely nice to fix. \_\_\_\_\_ / 5

## 4. DIFFERENTIATION

We have a specific perspective, methodology, or approach that our clients can name back to us, in their own words, without being prompted. \_\_\_\_\_ / 5

## 5. RECOGNITION

If ten of our past clients were asked what we are the best in the world at, the answers would converge around a single, specific capability — not a menu of services. \_\_\_\_\_ / 5

## TOTAL SCORE

\_\_\_\_\_ / 25

### SCORE INTERPRETATION RUBRIC

#### 20–25 APEX IS VISIBLE.

*Refinement and protection — sharpen the language, build the pillars around it.*

#### 13–19 FOUNDATION EXISTS.

*One or more circles needs deliberate attention. Look at the lowest-scoring question.*

#### 5–12 OPERATING AS A GENERALIST.

*Not yet committed to a specific intersection. The diagnostic has revealed the distance.*

# The One-Sentence Test

*Finish this sentence out loud, in under fifteen words. Not what you do. Not the industries you serve. The moment a client realizes they need you.*

**We are the organization you call when**

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*If your answer runs longer than fifteen words, or if it requires explanation after you finish it, the apex is not yet sharp enough.*

*The three circles give you the architecture. The sentence gives you the verdict. If the architecture is right but the sentence still comes out mushy, the work left to do is language work.*

– CHAPTER 3, THE AUTHORITY APEX



# The Three Apex Prompts

*Translate your diagnostic into the first draft of your Authority Apex Statement. A working draft, not a finished product.*

## PROMPT I · EXPERTISE

Looking at your highest-scoring expertise area, write one sentence describing the specific kind of problem your team solves better than almost anyone else.

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## PROMPT II · DEMAND

Looking at your clients and stakeholders, name the single market segment where that problem is most urgent — failure has the worst consequences and the budget is least negotiable.

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## PROMPT III · DIFFERENTIATION

Looking at your approach, write one sentence describing what you do differently that clients in that segment have actually noticed and commented on.

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## THE AUTHORITY APEX STATEMENT

*We help [specific market segment] solve [specific urgent problem] through [specific differentiated approach].*

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CHAPTER  
**04**

# The Identity Pillar

*Becoming the Authority You Intend to Be*



THE EXERCISE

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## Values Audit & Manifesto Draft

*Brand is what you say about yourself. Identity is what you are prepared to defend when saying it costs you something.*

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# The Values Audit

*Preferences are principles we follow when convenient. Values are principles we uphold even when they cost us something. Name three moments in the past two years when a principle of yours cost you money, time, or a relationship — and the value revealed in that decision.*

## 01

THE MOMENT

---

---

WHAT IT COST

---

THE VALUE REVEALED

---

---

## 02

THE MOMENT

---

---

WHAT IT COST

---

THE VALUE REVEALED

---

---

## 03

THE MOMENT

---

---

WHAT IT COST

---

THE VALUE REVEALED

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# Draft Your Manifesto



*Three parts. Belief. Enemy. Promise. Do not aim for polish. Aim for honesty.*

## BELIEF

*A statement about what you believe is broken, misunderstood, or underserved in your industry.*

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## ENEMY

*The common practice, assumption, or convention you refuse to accept.*

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## PROMISE

*The commitment you make to the clients and partners who share your perspective.*

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## THE MANIFESTO TESTS

### **01 THE DISCOMFORT TEST**

*Does it make you slightly uncomfortable? If your manifesto could have been written by any firm in your industry, it is too safe. A real manifesto takes a position some people will disagree with.*

### **02 THE REVENUE SACRIFICE TEST**

*Think of three moments in the past two years when you turned down revenue. What value was revealed in each of those decisions? If your manifesto does not reflect those values, it is not yet honest.*

### **03 THE TEAM TEST**

*Share the draft with three people on your team. Do not explain it. Ask them: 'Does this sound like us?' If they hesitate or soften it, you have more work to do.*

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CHAPTER  
**05**

# The Culture Pillar

*Building a Special Forces Team*



THE EXERCISE

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## The Hiring Five & The Three-Question Audit

*Mastery does not live in a strategy document or a positioning statement. It lives in people. Every seat matters disproportionately when the team is small by design.*

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# The Hiring Five



*Capability is the entry ticket. Alignment is what decides whether the hire strengthens the formation or dilutes it. Take a current or open seat. Answer five questions about the person you would hire into it.*

## THE SEAT / THE CANDIDATE

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**01** Does this person care about the same problems we care about?  

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**02** Do they bring a point of view, or do they wait to be told what to think?  

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**03** Are they energized by depth, or do they prefer to stay at the surface?  

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**04** Do they hold themselves to a standard, or do they need a manager to impose one?  

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**05** Will their presence raise the temperature of the team, or lower it?  

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# Three-Question Culture Audit

*Imagine your organization one year from now, fully operating as a Micro-Mastery business. Picture the team around you. Then answer three questions honestly.*

## **I. THE KEEPERS**

*Who in your current team would clearly belong in the future Micro-Mastery picture? Name at least three whose standard raises the room.*

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## **II. THE MISALIGNED**

*Who in your current team is unlikely to belong, and why? (Misalignment is a strategic reality, not a character judgment.)*

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## **III. THE MISSING**

*What capabilities are missing entirely? Define the next three hires by the depth of capability the apex demands, not by traditional job titles.*

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CHAPTER  
**06**

# The Operations Pillar

*Systems, AI, and the Modern Advantage*



THE EXERCISE

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## Automate • Augment • Protect The Calendar X-Ray

*Operations is the discipline of protecting expert attention at a moment in history when expert attention has never been more rare, more valuable, or more vulnerable to being wasted on work that does not require it.*

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# The Workflow X-Ray

Walk through a recurring workflow. Write down every task. Tag it A (Automate), G (Augment), or P (Protect). Calculate the time drag.

**A – AUTOMATE**

*Repetitive work that does not require judgment.*

**G – AUGMENT**

*Analytical work where expertise + tools sharpen output.*

**P – PROTECT**

*Judgment work clients remember. Where authority lives.*

#	SPECIFIC TASK	OWNER	A	G	P	DRAG (hrs)
1	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
2	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
3	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
4	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
6	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
7	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
8	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
9	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE DRAG · HOURS STOLEN FROM P \_\_\_\_\_

*Pick the single most expensive A-on-P item. Fix that one. Build the process, find the tool, delegate the handoff.*



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CHAPTER  
**07**

# The Marketing Pillar

*Broadcasting Authority Instead of Chasing Leads*



THE EXERCISE

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## Four Forms of Authority Content Inventory

*Market by teaching, not by chasing. Authority is not built by being seen — it is built by being remembered, trusted, and chosen long before the buying moment ever arrives.*

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# The Authority Content Audit

*Pull your last ten pieces of published content. Do not curate. Tag each piece below. If it is a generic holiday greeting, announcement, or repost, mark it as Other.*

POST	PROBLEM DEFINITION	POINT OF VIEW	PROOF	EDUCATION	OTHER (NOISE)
<b>01</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>02</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>03</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>04</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>05</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>06</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>07</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>08</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>09</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>10</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TOTAL	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

**THE SIGNATURE QUESTION**

Read these ten pieces as if you were a prospective client encountering your firm for the first time.  
**Could you describe, in one sentence, what this firm is the authority on?**

.....

# The Content Trap Check

*Before publishing, three traps to clear. For each, name what your last month of content would reveal if a stranger had to describe what you are the authority on.*

## THE LOUD GENERALIST TRAP

*Volume without focus. Topics jump. No single category accumulates.*

What single category did my last ten pieces deepen?

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## THE PERSONAL BRAND PERFORMANCE TRAP

*Personality without substance. Lifestyle replaces expertise.*

Which pieces taught a specific lesson — and which were performance?

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## THE AI NOISE TRAP

*Fluent, well-formatted content with no original thinking, no lived experience, no point of view.*

Could a reader say of my last piece, 'only this author could have written that'?

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*Market by teaching, not by chasing. If you cannot look at a published piece and say, 'only I could have written that,' it is not authority content. It is filler.*

— from Micro-Mastery

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CHAPTER  
**08**

# The Experience Pillar

*How Being Chosen Becomes Being Kept*



THE EXERCISE

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## The Experience Mirror & The Four Moments

*Endurance does not create loyalty. Trust does. And trust is built through the accumulated weight of moments that were designed on purpose, not left to happen.*

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# The Experience Mirror

*Imagine a client, customer, patient, stakeholder, or team member describing the experience of working with you to someone else. Not the result. Not your résumé. Not your intentions. Just the experience. Complete this sentence five times.*

- 01** Working with me feels \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 02** Working with me feels \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 03** Working with me feels \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 04** Working with me feels \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 05** Working with me feels \_\_\_\_\_ .

*Write the adjectives most likely true today — not the ones you hope are true.*

**THE HARDER QUESTION**

**How much of that experience is happening by design — and how much by accident?**

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# The Four Moments

*Choose one real journey you are responsible for right now. Walk through it from beginning to end. Identify these four moments. Make one of them feel meaningfully better next week.*

## I. THE FRICTION MOMENT

*Where is the person doing the work of your process unnecessarily? What could you absorb onto your side? Pick one thing to eliminate this week.*

---

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## II. THE EMOTIONAL MOMENT

*Where is the other person likely feeling the most uncertainty, fear, or exposure? Draft the sentence you would say, the note you would send, the touchpoint you would add.*

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## III. THE SIGNATURE MOMENT

*Where is the peak? If the person were later asked what it was like to work with you, what is the one moment they would describe? Design it. Make it repeatable.*

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## IV. THE ENDING MOMENT

*How does this engagement currently close? Is there a deliberate, structured ending — or does the relationship simply taper off? Draft the closeout you wish they experienced.*

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CHAPTER  
**09**

# Building Your Authority Apex

*A Synthesis and 90-Day Roadmap*



THE EXERCISE

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## The 90-Day Roadmap Clarity · Construction · Visibility

*Ninety days is not enough time to perfect anything. It is enough time to shift enough in enough directions that the changes start to reinforce each other.*

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# The 90-Day Execution Tracker

*Mark each step as completed. Strategy without execution is philosophy.*

## PHASE 1 · CLARITY

DAYS 1–30

- 
- Wk 1.** Run the Yes Audit & Disappearance Test to map the bottleneck.
  - Wk 2.** Map the Three Circles (Expertise, Demand, Differentiation).
  - Wk 3.** Draft the One-Sentence Authority Apex template.
  - Wk 4.** Complete Revenue Refusal Audit & write Manifesto.

## PHASE 2 · CONSTRUCTION

DAYS 31–60

- 
- Wk 5.** Abdicate one bottleneck (how, relationship, or fix).
  - Wk 6.** Complete the Three-Question Culture Audit.
  - Wk 7.** Map one workflow using the Workflow X-Ray.
  - Wk 8.** Protect expert attention on calendar via Automate/Augment.

## PHASE 3 · VISIBILITY

DAYS 61–90

- 
- Wk 9.** Publish first Point-of-View drawn from your Manifesto.
  - Wk 10.** Build the engine: run the Authority Content Audit.
  - Wk 11.** Design the signature peak moment in your client delivery.
  - Wk 12.** Audit the entire experience using the Experience Mirror.

# Day Zero · Day 91



*Two anchors. Sign one at the start. Sign one at the end. Authority compounds quietly in the months that follow — but only if Day Zero is a decision and Day 91 is a reckoning.*

DAY ZERO · WHAT I COMMIT TO

Three commitments — the things I will stop, start, and protect for the next ninety days.

STOP

---

---

START

---

---

PROTECT

---

---

SIGNED

---

DATE

---

DAY 91 · THE RECKONING

**What is sharper than it was?**

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**What is structurally different — not just philosophically different?**

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**What is the market saying about us that it was not saying ninety days ago?**

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CHAPTER  
**10**

# The Second Curve

*From Achievement to Fulfillment*



THE EXERCISE

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## The Satisfaction Equation & What Is All Of This For?

*The Authority Apex is not an end in itself. It is a structure designed to create the conditions for a meaningful life. The point was never just to build a machine that produces money. The point was to build a machine that funds a meaningful life.*

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# The Satisfaction Equation

*One of the most useful ways to understand this shift comes from Dr. Brooks' framing of the satisfaction equation. Whether you treat it as literal math or as a memorable way of thinking, the insight is powerful.*

## Satisfaction = Reality ÷ Expectations

*Doing \$500k that only needs \$250k is mathematically more successful than a firm doing \$5M that needs \$6M to survive.*

**LEVER 1 · ADDITION**  
**Increase Reality.**  
*Grow the numerator. Work harder, close more deals, scale the team. (The exhaustive path.)*

**LEVER 2 · SUBTRACTION**  
**Decrease Expectations.**  
*Shrink the denominator. Define enough. Kill false ambition. (The leverage path.)*

**REALITY · WHAT I ALREADY HAVE**

*Name five things — already true, already in your life — that you would have called success ten years ago.*

- 01** \_\_\_\_\_
- 02** \_\_\_\_\_
- 03** \_\_\_\_\_
- 04** \_\_\_\_\_
- 05** \_\_\_\_\_

**EXPECTATIONS · WHAT I CAN SHRINK**

*Name two expectations that have quietly turned achievement into a moving target. Then trade expectation for appreciation.*

- 01** \_\_\_\_\_
- 02** \_\_\_\_\_



# What Is All Of This For?

*The Authority Apex is not an end in itself. The point was never just to build a machine that produces money. The point was to build a machine that funds a meaningful life.*

## I. What have I built?

*Name what is undeniably true about the life and work you have constructed so far.*

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## II. Who am I becoming through what I have built?

*The first curve is a strategy. The second curve is a reckoning. What is the work asking you to become?*

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## III. Who benefits because I was here?

*Legacy is rarely measured in fame or scale. It is measured in people. In wisdom transferred. In lives strengthened.*

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