

The Founders AI Playbook

A practical guide for founder-led service businesses to find workflow friction, improve one system first, and use AI without losing the human touch.

30+

Years Experience

\$50M+

Revenue Influenced

100%

Human-Approved AI

3xPotential ROI Reducing
Workflow & Saving Time

THE GUIDE

About Douglas Hunter

Douglas Hunter is the founder of Marsten AI.

After more than 30 years helping businesses and people improve operations across real estate, finance, insurance, technology, and entertainment, he developed the Marsten AI Workflow Framework to help founder-led businesses introduce AI practically, one workflow at a time, while keeping humans in control.



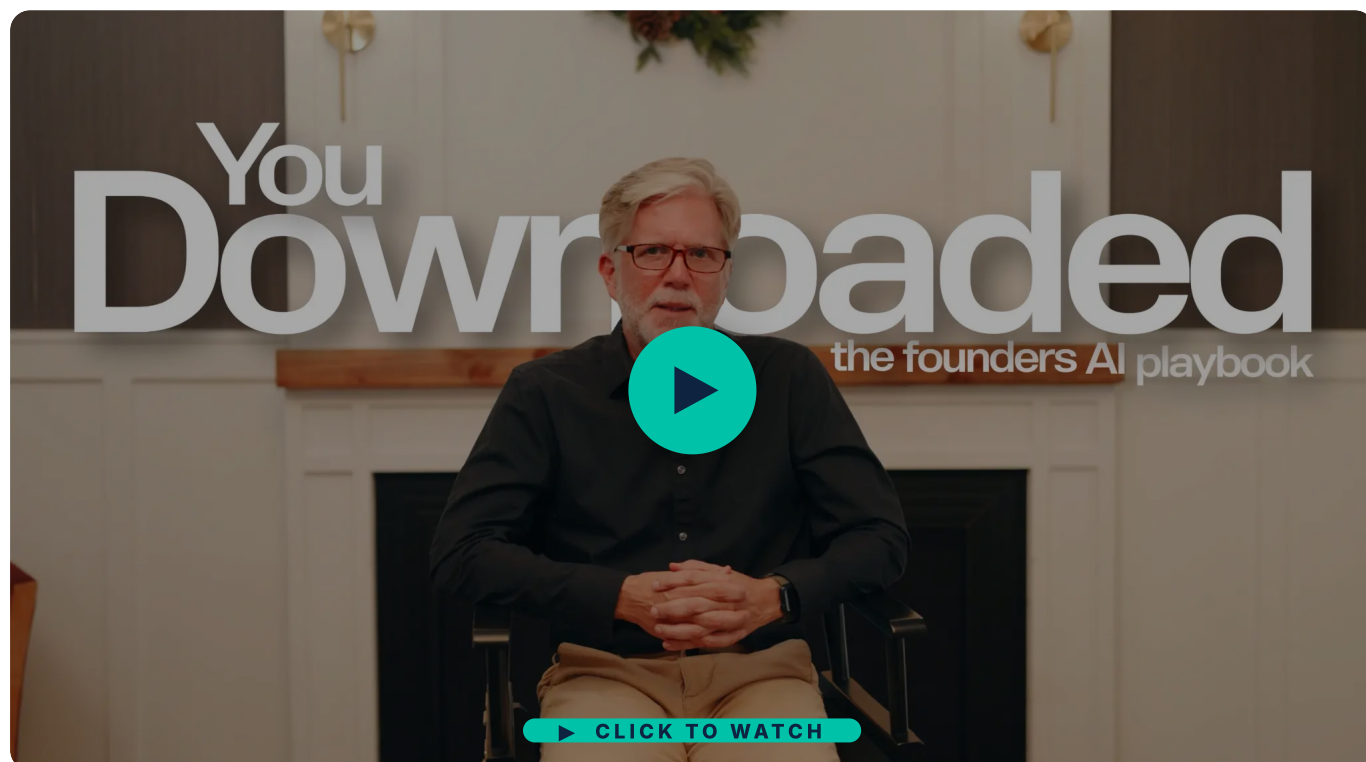
Why Founder-Led Businesses?

Founder-led businesses operate differently. When a founder is the bottleneck, the entire business slows down. AI is often pitched as a way to replace teams, but for founders, the real value of AI is removing the repetitive friction that pulls them back into the weeds. We focus on founder-led businesses because freeing up a founder's time is the fastest way to unlock growth.

START HERE

Watch This First

This short video explains the complete methodology — how every piece works together. Instead of learning random AI tactics, you will understand how to build an entire AI-assisted workflow system for your business.



WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- ✓ How to identify workflow friction
- ✓ Why most AI projects fail
- ✓ Where AI can assist without replacing people
- ✓ How to choose the first workflow to improve
- ✓ How to measure whether AI is actually helping



System Overview

Friction Point → Workflow Map → AI-Assisted Step → Human Review → Measure & Refine



The Methodology

Find the friction. Map the workflow. Improve one system first. Keep humans reviewing. Then measure and refine.

THE FOUNDATION

The Big Idea

**AI does not fix unclear workflows.
It amplifies them.**

— THE MARSTEN.AI PHILOSOPHY



Founder Reality

Most AI projects stall because the workflow is unclear, systems are fragmented, or the team is already overloaded before AI is introduced. More tools are not the answer.



How to Use This Playbook

Do not automate everything overnight. Find where friction exists first, improve one workflow, keep humans reviewing, then measure and refine before expanding.

"Most founders do not need more AI tools first. They need to know where AI actually belongs inside their business. This playbook helps them identify the first workflow worth improving."

— MARSTEN.AI

THE SYSTEM

The Marsten.AI Workflow Framework

MINI FRICTION-TO-WORKFLOW MAP

1

Friction Point
Identified

2

Workflow Mapped
End-to-End

3

AI-Assisted
Step Built

4

Human Reviews
+ Approves

5

Results Measured
+ Refined

Every successful founder-led business that uses AI well has one thing in common: they did not automate everything at once. They found one friction point, mapped the workflow clearly, added one AI-assisted step, kept a human in the loop, and measured the result. Then they repeated the process.

Key Takeaways

- › AI is a workflow tool, not a replacement strategy.
- › Every step in the framework has one job.
- › Do not skip steps — build the full system.

Worksheet

What does your current biggest workflow bottleneck look like?

1 STEP ONE

Find the Friction

Before choosing an AI tool, identify where your business is actually slowing down. The 7 most common friction points in founder-led service businesses are listed below. Most founders find at least 3 that apply immediately.

01 — Lead Response

Slow replies create missed opportunities

AI assist: Prepare lead summaries and first-response drafts. Measure: Response time, booked calls.

02 — Follow-Up

Important conversations become inconsistent over time

AI assist: Draft follow-up emails and next-step reminders. Measure: Reply rate, follow-up speed.

03 — Proposals

Drafting and revisions pull founders into manual work

AI assist: Create proposal outlines, recaps, and action items. Measure: Proposal turnaround time.

04 — Meetings & Action Items

Decisions happen, but follow-through gets scattered

AI assist: Organize notes, owners, deadlines, and next steps. Measure: Task completion rate.

05 — Internal Knowledge

Information lives in inboxes, documents, or someone's head

AI assist: Make FAQs, SOPs, and policies easier to search. Measure: Time saved, fewer repeated questions.

06 — Content Creation

Consistent messaging takes more time than expected

AI assist: Turn calls, notes, and FAQs into draft content. Measure: Draft time, content output.

07 — Onboarding & Admin

Repetitive setup tasks quietly consume valuable time

AI assist: Create welcome steps, checklists, and document collection. Measure: Time to onboard, handoff speed.

Start Small

Identify one friction point.
Improve one system first.
Keep humans reviewing.
Measure and refine.

2 STEP TWO

Map the Workflow

Once you have identified a friction point, map the workflow end-to-end before touching any AI tool. You cannot improve what you have not clearly defined. Most founders discover the real problem only when they write it out step by step.

Why This Step Matters

AI amplifies whatever workflow it is placed inside. A clear workflow produces better AI output. A messy workflow produces faster mess. Map first, automate second.

The Golden Rule

Understand the workflow before you improve it.

You are looking for the one step where AI can assist — not replace the entire process.

◀ WORKSHEET — MAP YOUR WORKFLOW

What happens now? (describe the current process step by step)

Who is involved? (founder, team member, client, tool)

Where does it slow down? (the specific friction point)

What gets missed? (the cost of the friction)

What still depends on the founder? (the bottleneck)

If you're unsure how to answer every question, that's exactly what we'll work through together during your complimentary AI Review.

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STEP THREE

Choose One AI-Assisted Step

After mapping the workflow, identify the single step where AI can do the heavy lifting while a human reviews the output. Start with one. Prove it works. Then expand.

**Draft First-Response Emails**

AI drafts a personalised first reply based on the lead's details. Human reviews and sends.

**Summarise Leads Before Calls**

AI pulls key details from the lead form and creates a one-page brief before the discovery call.

**Create Proposal Outlines**

AI generates a structured proposal outline from call notes. Human adds context and sends.

**Turn Meeting Notes into Next Steps**

AI organises raw meeting notes into owners, deadlines, and action items automatically.

**Organise FAQs & Internal Knowledge**

AI turns scattered docs and emails into a searchable internal knowledge base.

**Draft Content from Calls & Notes**

AI converts call recordings and FAQs into first-draft social posts, emails, or guides.

**The Rule: One Step at a Time**

Pick the single highest-friction step in your mapped workflow. Build one AI-assisted step. Prove it works. Then move to the next. Trying to automate everything at once is the most common reason AI projects fail in founder-led businesses.

4

STEP FOUR

Keep Humans in Control

Remove friction, **not humans.**

AI accelerates the workflow. Humans provide the judgment. Both are required.

AI DOES

- Drafts first responses
- Summarises information
- Organises and structures data
- Recommends next steps
- Generates first-draft content

HUMANS DO

- ✓ Review and approve all output
- ✓ Make final decisions
- ✓ Add context and judgment
- ✓ Maintain client relationships
- ✓ Refine and improve the system

The goal is not to remove people from your business. The goal is to **remove the repetitive, low-judgment workflow friction** that drains their time — so they can focus on the work that actually requires a human.

5 STEP FIVE

Measure the Result

If you cannot measure it, you cannot improve it. Every AI-assisted workflow step should have a clear metric attached before you build it. These are the six most meaningful measurements for reducing friction in founder-led service businesses.

**Response Time**

How fast does your team reply to new leads and enquiries?

**Follow-Up Speed**

How quickly does the next touchpoint happen after initial contact?

**Proposal Turnaround**

How long from discovery call to proposal delivered?

**Task Completion**

Are action items getting done, or falling through the cracks?

**Time Saved**

How many hours per week does the improved workflow return to the team?

**Fewer Missed Opportunities**

Are warm leads converting at a higher rate after the change?

"Measure the one thing that matters most for the workflow you improved. A single clear metric is more useful than five vague ones."

— MARSTEN.AI

EXAMPLE WORKFLOW

Lead Response

Slow lead response is the single most common revenue leak in founder-led businesses. A lead that waits more than an hour is significantly less likely to convert. Here is how the AI-assisted workflow fixes it.

BEFORE

A lead comes in through the website. The founder is in a meeting. The workflow breaks because the team is not sure who should respond or what to say. Hours pass. The lead goes cold. The opportunity is lost.

AFTER

AI immediately summarises the lead's details and drafts a personalised first response. A team member reviews, approves, and sends within minutes. A follow-up reminder is automatically scheduled.

THE AI-ASSISTED WORKFLOW

- 1 **Lead arrives** — form submission, email, or DM triggers the workflow.
- 2 **AI summarises** — key details, business type, and stated need are extracted.
- 3 **AI drafts response** — a personalised first reply is prepared for human review.
- 4 **Human reviews and sends** — team member approves, edits if needed, and sends.
- 5 **Follow-up reminder set** — AI schedules the next touchpoint automatically.

EXAMPLE WORKFLOW

Proposals

Proposal drafting is one of the highest-friction workflows for founders. It requires pulling together notes, context, and pricing — and it always seems to land at the worst possible moment. AI can do the heavy lifting while the founder adds the final judgment.

BEFORE

After a discovery call, the founder sits down to write a proposal from scratch. It takes 2–3 hours. The client waits days. Momentum from the call is lost. Revisions add another round of manual workflow friction.

AFTER

AI creates a structured outline from the call notes within minutes. The founder reviews the structure, adds pricing and personal context, and sends a polished proposal the same day. Turnaround drops from days to hours.

THE AI-ASSISTED WORKFLOW

- 1 **Discovery call ends** — notes or recording are fed into the workflow.
- 2 **AI creates outline** — problem, solution, scope, and next steps are structured.
- 3 **AI drafts recap** — a call summary is prepared to include in the proposal.
- 4 **Human adds pricing and context** — founder reviews, personalises, and approves.
- 5 **Proposal sent same day** — client receives a professional, timely response.

EXAMPLE WORKFLOW

Meetings & Action Items

Decisions get made in meetings. But action items get lost in inboxes, chat threads, and memory. AI turns unstructured meeting notes into a clear, assigned, trackable workflow — without the founder having to chase anyone.

BEFORE

The meeting ends. Everyone has a slightly different understanding of what was decided. Action items live in someone's notebook. The workflow breaks down, follow-up is inconsistent, and the same topics come up again in the next meeting.

AFTER

AI processes the meeting notes and produces a structured summary: decisions made, action items, owners, and deadlines. It is shared with the team within minutes. Follow-through improves. Repeat discussions drop significantly.

THE AI-ASSISTED WORKFLOW

- 1 **Meeting ends** — notes, transcript, or recording are submitted to the workflow.
- 2 **AI organises decisions** — key decisions made in the meeting are extracted and listed.
- 3 **AI assigns action items** — each task is linked to an owner and a deadline.
- 4 **Human reviews summary** — founder or team lead confirms accuracy before sharing.
- 5 **Summary distributed** — team receives a clear, shared record of what was decided.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

AI Readiness Scorecard

Use this scorecard to evaluate any workflow in your business. Score each question 1–5 (1 = not at all, 5 = absolutely). Workflows with the highest total scores are your best starting points for AI assistance.

QUESTION	WORKFLOW A	WORKFLOW B	WORKFLOW C
Is this workflow repetitive? Does it happen the same way every time?			
Does it slow the team down or create a bottleneck?			
Does it get missed or fall through the cracks often?			
Does it depend too much on the founder to get done?			
Can a human easily review and approve the AI output?			
Total Score (out of 25)			



Score 20–25: High-priority — start here. **Score 15–19:** Good candidate — plan it next. **Score below 15:** Not ready yet — map the workflow first.

ACTION PLAN

Your First AI Workflow Map

Use this worksheet to plan your first AI-assisted workflow. Complete every field before building anything. A clear workflow map produces better results and prevents the most common mistakes founders make when starting with AI.

► COMPLETE YOUR FIRST WORKFLOW MAP

1

My friction point is:

2

The current workflow is: (describe it step by step)

3

The AI-assisted step could be:

4

The human review point is: (who reviews and approves?)

5

The result we will measure is:

If you're unsure how to answer every question, that's exactly what we'll work through together during your complimentary AI Review.



READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

Find Your First AI Workflow.

Book your Complimentary AI Review and Marsten.AI will help you look at your current workflows, identify where friction may be slowing your team down, and map one practical AI-assisted workflow your business can improve first.

BOOK A COMPLIMENTARY AI REVIEW

Visit marsten.ai/schedule · 15 minutes · No pitch · Zero pressure

WHAT HAPPENS IN YOUR AI REVIEW

Douglas will review your current workflows, identify where friction is costing you time and revenue, and map one practical AI-assisted workflow you can improve first. If Marsten.AI is not the right fit, he will tell you — and point you in the right direction.