# KEEP GOING

*Survival Workbook for Indie Podcasters*



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# I see you.

You launched a podcast without a roadmap and you keep showing up, even when the numbers don't cooperate.

You're doing it all, mostly alone, while running a business and living through a terrifying political climate, an unforgiving economy, and one global crisis after another.

**And you're still here, making a show that matters.**

You just want someone to hand you something useful that might make things feel even a tiny bit easier. That's what this workbook is.

Everything in these pages comes from real sessions inside the Feminist Podcasters Collective, a membership community for equity-centered indie podcasters. Some of the smartest people in podcasting have taught our members; this workbook distills the best of what they shared, with full credit to them throughout.

You're essentially getting a year's worth of expert programming, organized into something you can use *now*.

# CONTENT

## 1 Know What You've Built

Your positioning, personality, and the show that only you can make.

## 2 Get Found While You Sleep

The unglamorous fundamentals of discoverability.

## 3 Build Your Audience

Growth strategies that don't require you to be a full-time marketer.

## 4 A Show That Works For Your Business

Using your podcast as a pipeline, without making it feel like one.

## 5 Make Guesting Work For You

How to pitch yourself, show up well, and make the most of episodes.

## 6 Sustain Without Burning Out

Systems, rhythms, and the radical act of deciding what's enough.

## 7 Sound Like You Have a Team

Tools, templates, and automations that give you your time back.

**Each chapter includes:**

- A framework: The core idea, explained plainly.
- The work: Exercises and prompts to apply it to your show.
- Your output: Something concrete you'll have at the end.

By the time you finish, you'll have a document that tells you exactly what your show is, who it's for, how to grow it, and how to sustain it without destroying yourself in the process.

1

# Know What You've Built

*Before growing, you need to know what you have. Let's get clear on your show's foundation so you have something solid to stand on.*

This chapter draws on the thinking of four educators who've taught inside the Feminist Podcasters Collective:

- **Amelia Hruby,** founder of The Interweb community and host of Off the Grid podcast.
- **Annie Franceschi**, brand story strategist and host of Establish Yourself podcast.
- **Brandon Birkmeyer**, personal branding expert and host of Brands On Brands podcast.
- **Hayden Lyon**, strategic podcasting partner and founder of podcast production company NOVA Media.

By the end of this chapter, you'll have a Show Foundation Sheet, four pieces that together answer the question every podcaster needs to be able to answer: *What is this show and why does it matter?*

# The Framework

**1. Start With Your Concept**
When Amelia Hruby teaches about growth, she always starts with clarity of concept: *What is your show about? Who is it for? Who are you as the host?* "If you don't know who you want listening to your show, we can't grow your audience."

This doesn't mean your show has to be niche. Amelia says "this is my podcast where I talk about my life for the 10 people who really care" is a completely valid concept, as long as you know that's what it is.

Clarity of concept also includes your consistency of publishing. There's no formula, "you get to pick the pace," she says, but do you have a cadence your listeners can count on?

Then there's 'power of personality'—what makes *your* show *yours*. "There's a reason people want to tune in to your show and it is you," she says. Don't sand that down.

**2. Stop Selling Eggs**
Annie Franceschi spent years at Walt Disney Studios telling stories for films like Maleficent before becoming a brand message strategist. Her central idea is simple: most of us are marketing our podcasts like we're selling raw ingredients.

"When you say 'six months of consulting,'" she says, "what people hear is 'who wants three months of eggs?'" They don't want eggs, but they'll wait an hour in line for brunch.

Applied to your podcast: listeners don't subscribe because of what your show contains. They subscribe because of how it makes them feel, what it helps them understand, what kind of person it makes them feel like when they're listening.

Annie's framework is called 'packaging your process.' It asks not just what your show covers, but what *transformation* or *experience* it offers. THAT is your show's value proposition. What is the brunch version of your podcast?

# The Framework

**3. Close the Authority Gap**
Brandon Birkmeyer spent 17 years in advertising before building his personal brand from scratch. He identifies three things most indie podcasters are missing when they try to grow: *authority* (being recognized as an expert in your space), *influence* (having a network that supports and amplifies you), and *credibility* (proof that what you do works).

Your podcast is one of the most powerful tools available for building all three, but only if you're clear on what you're claiming authority about. A show that's fuzzy on its own positioning won't build the host's credibility.

Before you can close the authority gap, you have to name what you're the authority on.

**4. Create Experiences, Not Just Content**
Hayden Lyon runs a strategic podcasting partnership and has a theory about why so many good podcasts don't grow: They're focused on delivering value when they should be focused on creating experiences that deliver value.

He calls this 'the wrapper effect.' "Value is everywhere now," he says. Information is on Google. Inspiration is on Instagram. Education is on YouTube. So why do people go to podcasts specifically, and why do they go to yours?

His answer? The experience. Not what you teach, but how it feels to listen. The emotional connection. "Successful podcasters focus not on delivering the outcomes they want to deliver, but on creating experiences that deliver those outcomes," he says.

Think about what it actually feels like to listen to your show. What emotion does someone leave with? What do they do differently? That experiential quality is what makes a show sticky, and it belongs in your positioning.

Answer as specifically as you can. Don't write what you *wish* were true. Write what's *actually* true about your show right now.

## Exercise 1: Concept Clarity

What's my show about?

Who is it for? (Be as specific as possible.)

Who am I as the host? What do I bring that nobody else does?

## Exercise 2: The Brunch Test

When my listener finishes an episode, they feel:

That happens because my show:

**The brunch version of my podcast is:** A show that [feeling/outcome] through [what it actually is/does]. Ex. *"My show makes feminist podcasters feel less alone and more strategic through real talk with expert guests."*

## Exercise 3: Your Authority Claim

I am the go-to podcast for people who want to...

because I...

and no one else does it quite like...

## Exercise 4: The Experience Question

Think about an episode of your show that you are most proud of.
What did a listener feel while listening to that episode?

What did they probably do or think differently afterward?

What made that episode an experience rather than just information?

# Foundation Sheet

**Show name:**

**Mission**
*Why does this show exist? What would be lost if it didn't?*

**Values**
*What does this show stand for? What will it never compromise on?*

**Listener Avatar**
*Who is your show for? What are they struggling with, what do they care about, what they need from your show? How do they feel after listening?*

**The One-Liner**
*Write a concise sentence that you could say out loud without reading:*

[Show name] is a podcast for [listener] who [situation or struggle]. Every episode [what the experience delivers], so they can [outcome or feeling].

*Ex: Amplify is a podcast for indie podcasters who center equity in their work. Every episode helps them build a sustainable show without selling out their values so they keep going.*

2

# Get Found While You Sleep

*You could have the best podcast in your niche and still be invisible. Let's fix that—without paid ads, going viral, or living on social media.*

Eighty percent of podcasts get fewer than 1,000 downloads per episode. That's not a content problem. It's a discoverability problem.

- **Adam Schaeuble** has taken two different shows beyond 500k downloads, and hosts Podcasting Business School podcast.
- **Alex Sanfilippo** runs PodMatch.com and hosts Podcasting Made Simple podcast.

Both teach the same core truth from slightly different angles: The podcast industry has organic discoverability built right into it, most podcasters just aren't using it.

By the end of this chapter, you'll create a Discoverability Audit, a clear picture of exactly where your show is invisible and the specific changes that will help the right listeners find you.

# The Framework

**1. Your Show Name Is Your Most Powerful SEO Tool**
The name of your show carries more discoverability weight than anything else. Adam Schaeuble has three rules:

Rule 1: The name tells me exactly what the show is about.
Rule 2: The name tells me exactly who the show is for.
Rule 3: The name includes two+ searchable keywords.

Within your show name, the first word carries the most weight. Think about what your ideal listener is actually typing into that search bar, and make sure that word appears as early as possible. If your show name starts with "The," remove it from your listed title so your first word is a keyword.

The same logic applies to your show description. That field in your hosting platform is a keyword opportunity. Use words your ideal listener would actually search.

Finally, show art is the visual version of this same argument. When someone searches a keyword and your show appears in a list of results, they make a split-second decision. Your art either wins the finger-hover or loses it. Adam says make text the star (not your pic), use a solid background, and highlight a keyword in a contrasting color. Check it on your phone at thumbnail size—if you can't read it, redo it.

# The Framework

**2. Episode Titles Are Searchable Real Estate**
Episode titles are another chance to show up in search. "Episode 47: A Conversation with [Guest Name]" tells a new listener very little.

What works are titles that describe the value of the episode in plain language, with at least one keyword. Alex Sanfilippo suggests thinking of episode titles like chapter titles in a nonfiction book: Someone skimming the table of contents should be able to immediately tell if it's for them.



**3. Pull, Don't Push**
Alex also makes a distinction that reframes how most podcasters think about promotion: Push vs. pull marketing.

Push marketing is telling people to take action. "New episode out, go listen." You're pushing them toward something.

Pull marketing is sharing something so relevant and resonant that they walk toward you on their own. Instead of "new episode out," you share the insight that changed how you think about something, or the moment in the interview that stopped you cold, or the question you've been sitting with. This approach has people self-selecting into your content. They arrive already interested.

Alex builds his entire growth strategy around pull marketing because it keeps working even when you're not actively at it. It's the content equivalent of organic discoverability.

# Exercise 1: The Discoverability Setup

**SHOW NAME:**

What is my ideal listener actually typing into a search bar?

• Does my name tell them what the show is about? Yes / No / Sort of.

• Does my name tell them who it's for? Yes / No / Sort of

• Does my name contain at least two of those keywords? Yes / No / Sort of

*If you answered no or sort of to any of the above, try a few alternatives*:
[Keyword] + [tips/strategies/conversations] + for + [specific audience]

>> Option 1:

>> Option 2:

>> Option 3:

**SHOW DESCRIPTION FROM HOSTING PLATFORM**

• Does it contain the keywords my ideal listener would search? Yes / No

• Does it clearly describe who the show is for? Yes / No

>> *One thing I'll update*:

**SHOW ART**

• Can I read my show name clearly at thumbnail size? Yes / No

• Is text the dominant element? Yes / No

>> *One thing I'd change*:

## Exercise 2: Episode Title Rewrite

*Write your three most recent episode titles here:*

Episode 1:

Episode 2:

Episode 3:

Now rewrite (where needed) so a brand new listener would know what the episode is about from the title alone, so it contains at least one keyword, and it describes the value, not just the topic or guest name.

Episode 1 rewrite:

Episode 2 rewrite:

Episode 3 rewrite:

Use these as your benchmark going forward. Before you publish any episode, run the title through the same three questions.

## Exercise 3: Push vs. Pull

Write down what you said the last time you promoted an episode:

Rewrite it as a pull message. Share an insight, a moment, a question,
the thing that would make your ideal listener think “that's exactly me”

# Discoverability Audit

The one keyword my ideal listener is most likely to search:

**SHOW NAME**
Current name:
Passes the three-rule check? Yes / Partially / No

>> One change I'll make:

**EPISODE TITLES**
Am I using keywords consistently? Yes / Sometimes / No
Am I writing for new listeners or existing ones?

>> One thing I'll do differently starting with my next episode:

**SHOW DESCRIPTION**
Contains my keywords? Yes / No
Clearly describes who it's for? Yes / No

>> One thing I'll update:

**SHOW ART**
Passes the phone test? Yes / No

>> One thing I'll change:

**PROMOTION STYLE**
Am I mostly pushing or pulling?

>> One shift I'll make in how I talk about my show:

**MY THREE PRIORITIES**
The three most important changes I'll make based on this audit, in order:

1.

2.

3.

# 3

# Build Your Audience

*Find the strategies that actually work for indie podcasters, and choose the ones that won't make you want to quit.*

You're making the show, showing up consistently, putting thought into every episode, but the audience isn't growing the way you hoped. Here's what's probably happening: you're promoting, but you're not marketing. Those sound like the same thing. They're not.

- **Amelia Hruby,** founder of The Interweb and host of Off the Grid, a podcast about building a business without social media
- **Lauren Passell** runs Tink Media, a podcast marketing and PR company, and has made it her mission to prove that independent creators can market their own shows effectively.

They offer a complete picture of what audience growth *actually* looks like for indie podcasters. By the end of this chapter, you'll have a 90-Day Audience Growth Plan with specific tactics, a timeline, and a commitment you can keep.

# The Framework

**1. Marketing vs. Promotion: You're Probably Only Doing One**
Amelia Hruby makes a distinction that stops most podcasters in their tracks the first time they hear it.

Promotion is sharing your episodes with people who already know about your show (social media, email list, etc.). Useful, but not growth. Marketing is getting your show in front of brand new listeners. This is the thing most podcasters are not doing, and it's the only thing that actually grows an audience.

You need both, but if your audience has plateaued, it's almost certainly because you're promoting without marketing.

Pick one or two promotion tactics and do them consistently for every episode. Put the rest of your energy into marketing.

**2. Market Like a Podcaster**
It's hard to convert a non-podcast listener into a listener. The far easier path is getting in front of people who are already in the habit of listening to podcasts, Lauren Passell says, so use the podcast ecosystem to grow.

*Guest swaps*: You appear on someone else's show, they appear on yours. Or record one conversation and both share. Get in front of an audience that already listens to podcasts.

*Promo swaps*: At the start of your episode, recommend another show and they recommend yours at the start of theirs. A recommendation from a host that the listener trusts carries more weight than an ad ever will.

*Feed drops*: Find an episode of your show that would resonate with another show's audience and ask that host to drop it into their feed with a short intro (and you do the same for them). This works best when the audiences genuinely overlap.

*In-app pitching*: Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Overcast, etc. feature shows in their apps (search for their free submission forms). People seeing those are already in search mode.

# The Framework

**3. Market Like a Business Owner**
The dirty secret of podcast growth is that most of the places your listeners find you (Apple, Spotify, Instagram) aren't yours. The platforms own the relationship. You don't get to keep your audience if they disappear.

Lauren pushes indie podcasters to think about focusing on areas over which they have more control.



**Your email list** is the only audience you truly own. You can reach them directly, anytime, without an algorithm deciding whether they see it. Start building it now, even before you have a newsletter or a lead magnet. Just start collecting addresses.

**Your show notes** are owned real estate too. Detailed, keyword-rich show notes live on your website, get indexed by Google, and help new listeners find you through search, long after an episode publishes. They're also an accessibility tool. Some people read before they listen, and good show notes give them a reason to press play.

**Your CTAs** (calls to action) are how you convert listeners into people with whom you have an actual relationship. Lauren's rule is one CTA per episode, and make it specific and easy. Just one thing. The more you ask for, the less anyone does.

# Exercise 1: Marketing vs. Promotion Audit

Look at everything you currently do to get your show out into the world.
Sort each activity into the right column:

**PROMOTION:**
*(reaches people who know me)*

**MARKETING:**
*(reaches brand new listeners)*

The one or two promotion tactics I'll keep doing consistently:

What did this exercise tell me about my marketing efforts?

## Exercise 2: Your Podcaster Marketing Moves

Two shows I could approach for a guest swap:

1.

2.

Two shows with overlapping audiences I could approach for a promo swap:

1.

2.

The one episode of my show I'd drop into someone else's feed:

Two shows that I could ask for a feed-drop swap:

1.

2.

Which podcast platform makes the most sense to pitch first for my show:

Do I have an email list? Yes / No / Sort of (it exists but I don't use it)

>> If yes, am I actively inviting podcast listeners to join it? Yes / No

>> If no, what simple thing could I offer to start it? *(Resource, bonus ep. etc.)*

>> What is a specific and easy call to action I can use at the end of episodes?

>> One thing I could add to make my show notes more useful/searchable:

# 90-Day Audience Growth Plan



You've now got a full picture of your marketing options. The goal is to pick two or three things and do them. As Amelia says, if doing something to support your podcast makes you want to quit making your podcast, stop doing that thing. The tactics you choose should feel hard in a productive way (uncomfortable and unfamiliar, not soul-crushing).

**THE TWO OR THREE TACTICS I'M COMMITTING TO:**

*Tactic 1*:

Why this fits my show, audience, and capacity:

What successs look like at 90 days:

My first concrete step and when I'll take it:

*Tactic 2*:

Why this one:

What success looks like at 90 days:

My first concrete step and when I'll take it:

*Tactic 3 (optional)*:

Why this one:

What success looks like at 90 days:

My first concrete step and when I'll take it:

**WHAT I'M NOT DOING**

List the tactics you're *consciously* setting aside as a CHOICE, not a failure:

# 4

# A Show that Works for Your business

*Your podcast isn't just a creative outlet. It's one of the most powerful business development tools you have, if you're using it intentionally.*

Most podcasters think about growth in terms of downloads. More downloads means more credibility, which eventually means sponsors and revenue. But that's a long, slow road that puts your business at the mercy of a metric you don't control.

- **Greg Wasserman** spent years in media sales, ran three podcast listening platforms, and is now head of relationships at RSS.com.
- **Haley Hatcher** helps business owners use their podcasts as tools for impact and client attraction without making it feel gross.

Both of them push podcasters to flip the script. Stop chasing downloads and start using your show to build real relationships with the exact people you want to work with. By the end of this chapter, you'll have a Podcast-to-Business Map, a clear picture of how your show connects to your business goals and who you want it to attract.

# The Framework

**1. Stop Chasing the Wrong Metric**
If you're focused on growing downloads so you can get sponsors, you're probably thinking about podcasting wrong, Greg Wasserman says. You're chasing a metric instead of chasing the people who will move your business forward.

Your podcast gives you a legitimate, low-friction reason to invite anyone into a conversation. Instead of cold emails that get ignored and ads that get scrolled past, you can reach out to your 50 dream clients, collaborators, or referral partners and invite them to be a guest on your show. Most will say yes.

The goal is to build a real relationship. Your guest list is a business strategy, so treat it like one.

**2. Make Your Show Work Without Making It Feel Like a Funnel**
Haley Hatcher works with podcasters who care deeply about impact, and who get a little queasy when someone says the word “funnel.” She believes your podcast can be a business tool and still feel human, values-led, and genuinely yours.

The key is knowing what you want your show to do for your business before you start worrying about how. Is it building your authority in a specific space? Attracting a specific type of client? Creating enough trust that when someone is ready to hire, they already feel like they know you?

Each is valid, and each requires a different approach. A show built for lead generation looks different from one built for authority. A show built for community looks different from one built for referrals.

You don't have to pick just one, but you do have to know what you're going for.

# The Framework

**3. You're the Expert, So Act Like It**
One thing both Greg and Haley notice about indie podcasters is that they're incredibly good at making their guests shine, but often forget to make themselves shine, too.

You're so focused on drawing out your guest's expertise that your own knowledge, perspective, and credibility barely register. This is a major missed opportunity.

Your listeners come back because of your questions, your takes, your way of seeing things. Potential clients are listening to figure out whether they trust you enough to hire you. If you're invisible on your own show, that answer is likely going to be no.

You don't have to make every episode about you, but it is important that you show up as the expert you are.

## Exercise 1: Your Strategic Guest List

What does my business need most right now?
*(clients / collaborators / referral partners / visibility / credibility)*

Who are the 5 people I most want in my orbit who that fit that bill? These are people to invite as guests.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What would I want them to walk away knowing about me and my work?

What's one episode I could pitch to each of them that would genuinely serve their audience AND get them in my world?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

## Exercise 2: Your Show's Business Job

My podcast's primary business goal is: (circle one or write your own)
Build authority / Attract clients / Generate referrals /
Build community / Create visibility / Something else:

The type of person I most want listening is:

What I want them to think, feel, or do after listening:

How does my current show content align with that goal?

One thing I could do differently to close that gap:

## Exercise 3: Show Up as the Expert

In my episodes, how much of my perspective, expertise, and POV comes through:

One place where I consistently hold back (intros, questions, commentary, outros):

One thing I could add/change to let my expertise show up more:

If a potential client listened to my three most recent episodes, what would they conclude about what I do and whether I'm worth hiring?

# Podcast-to-Business Road Map



My show's primary business goal:

The person I most want listening:

What I want them to think/feel/do:

How my show currently serves that goal:

The gap I need to close:

My strategic guest list (3-5 names):

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

>> One change I'll make to show up more visibly as the expert I am:

# 5

# Make Guesting Work For You

*Being a guest on other podcasts is one of the most effective ways to grow your show and your business.*

You already know how to show up for an audience—you do it every time you hit record. Guesting is just doing that on someone else's show. But most indie podcasters either never pitch themselves, or they do but then let the episode disappear.

- **Cher Hale** runs Ginkgo PR, a micro-agency that uses public relations to help underrecognized people tell their stories on their own terms.
- **Lyndsay Phillips** hosts The Leverage Your Podcast Show and specializes in helping guests turn podcast appearances into real business results.

Together they cover how to pitch yourself in a way that feels good, and how to make the most of every appearance. By the end of this chapter, you'll have a Guesting Action Plan, a pitch template ready to send and a post-episode checklist so nothing is wasted.

# The Framework

**1. Pitching Isn't Gross If You Do It Right**
Cher Hale has a philosophy about pitching that reframes the whole thing: attention has been weaponized against us by systems that want us to stay small and quiet. Asking for attention, claiming space, saying "I have something worth hearing," is actually an act of equity and liberation.

That reframe matters because most podcasters who aren't pitching themselves aren't lazy. They're uncomfortable. It feels like self-promotion, like imposing, like who am I to ask for this?

Cher's answer: you're someone with a story, an expertise, and an audience who needs to hear it. Pitching isn't extractive — it's an offer of value to the host and their listeners.

A good pitch tells the host exactly who you are, why their audience will care, and what you'll bring to the conversation. It's short, clear, and sounds like a real person wrote it (because you did).

**2. Find Your Right Shows**
Pitching the wrong shows wastes everyone's time. Cher's criteria for finding genuine fit is an audience that overlaps with yours, values alignment, and a host whose endorsement actually means something to their listeners.

A warm, specific recommendation from a trusted host converts. A generic appearance on a show that has nothing to do with your work is a shot in the dark, at best.

She also pushes podcasters to think beyond the obvious. The biggest shows in your niche aren't always the best pitch. A smaller show with a deeply engaged audience and a host who genuinely loves what you do will often outperform a big name who barely remembers your episode.

# The Framework

**3. Know Your Talking Points**
One reason guest appearances don't convert is that the podcaster shows up without a clear throughline. They share good things, but nothing lands specifically enough to make a listener think "I need to follow this person."

Cher calls this 'knowing your talking points,' the 2-3 ideas you come back to no matter what the conversation is about. This is a compass, not a script. It's what you want every listener to walk away knowing about you and your work.

Lyndsay agrees, and adds to make sure at least one of those talking points connects directly to what you do and who you help. Interesting is good, but interesting *and useful* converts.

**4. The Work Starts After the Episode Airs**
Lyndsay Phillips sees this pattern constantly: Podcasters go on a show, have a great conversation, and then wait for the host to make magic happen. When leads don't materialize, they conclude that guesting doesn't work.

The host isn't responsible for your results, she says. You are.

Most of the ROI from a guest appearance comes from what you do after it publishes. Sharing it with your own audience, adding it to your website, using clips in your content, following up with the host are the moves that turn a good conversation into a great business asset.

A guest appearance has a shelf life well beyond its publish date...but only if you work it.

## Exercise 1: Your Pitch Template

**WHO I AM** (2 sentences max; lead with what's relevant to their audience):

**WHAT I BRING** (topic I'd discuss, specific so they can picture the episode):

**WHY THEIR AUDIENCE** (1 sentence on why it's right for their specific listeners):

**MY ASK** (clear and direct — a guest appearance, a specific episode idea, whatever you're pitching):

## Exercise 2: Pitch Smart, Not Wide

Three criteria I'll use to evaluate whether a show is worth pitching:

1.
2.
3.

Five shows that meet those criteria (not just the biggest ones):

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

One show I've been avoiding pitching because it feels like a reach (and why I should anyway):

## Exercise 3: Your Talking Points

The 2-3 ideas I want every listener to walk away with:

1.

2.

3.

The one thing I want them to know about what I do and who I help:

How I'll naturally work that into any conversation:

## Exercise 4: Post-Episode Checklist

**WHEN THE EPISODE PUBLISHES**

☐ Share it to my email list with a personal note about why I loved this one
☐ Post about it on the platform(s) where my audience lives
☐ Add it to a "featured on" page or section on my website
☐ Send a thank you note to the host

**REPURPOSE IT**

☐ Pull one key insight and turn it into a standalone post or newsletter
☐ Request clips from the host (or ask for the recording & pull them yourself)
☐ Add it to speaker/media kit

**KEEP THE RELATIONSHIP ALIVE**

☐ Engage with the host's content in the weeks after
☐ Look for a way to reciprocate (make an introduction, share their work, etc.)

One guest appearance I've not yet fully leveraged:

>> One thing I'll do with it this week:

# Guesting Action Plan

**MY TARGET SHOWS:**

1. Pitch by:
2. Pitch by:
3. Pitch by:

**MY TALKING POINTS:**

1.
2.
3.

**MY ONE CTA:**

**SAMPLE PITCH:**

Hi [name],

I'm [who you are in one sentence, relevant to their audience].

I'd love to come on [show name] to talk about [specific topic or angle].
Your listeners would get [specific value — what they'll walk away with].

I also [one sentence of credibility or context that's relevant to their audience].

Would [month] work for a conversation? You can find more about me and my work at [link].

[Your name]

# 6

# Sustain Without Burning Out

*You don't have to be always on. Build a podcast practice that's actually sustainable, so you're still here a year from now.*

The statistics on how many podcasters quit before episode 10 or 50 are bleak. Most don't quit because they run out of ideas, but because they built something they couldn't sustain.

- **Courtney Reimer** spent years at Spotify and MTV Radio before becoming a podcast strategist who helps indie creators build without burnout.
- **Elsie Escobar** is the director of community at Captivate and has been in the podcasting space since the beginning. She's watched more shows come and go than almost anyone.

Both say podcasters who last are the ones who build systems that work for their actual lives. By the end of this chapter, you'll have a Sustainability Plan with your real production rhythm, what you're saying no to, and a minimum viable episode so you have something to fall back on when life gets hard.

# The Framework

**1. One Solution Is Never Enough**
Courtney's rule of threes applies to every part of your podcast—episode format, content, and promotion. If you only have one of any of these, you're one bad week away from everything falling apart.

One episode format means you're stuck when a guest cancels, you're too burned out for a long interview, the topic doesn't fit the mold, etc.. Three formats (solo, interview, roundup, for example) gives you flexibility. You don't have to use all three every month, you just need them available.

Same with content and promotion. Having three approaches means you can rotate, rest, and recover without going dark.

**2. Know Your Why Before You Add Anything New**
Elsie has watched the pressure on podcasters multiply over the years. In 2015 it was just audio. Then came social media. Then video. Then YouTube. Then Shorts. Then newsletters. Then AI workflows.

Before you add anything, she says, answer three questions:

- What are you trying to achieve with your podcast?
- How does this new thing fit those goals?
- How will you know if it's working?

If you can't answer all three, don't add it—yet or maybe ever.

The podcasters who last aren't the ones doing the most. They're the ones who are ruthlessly clear about what they're doing and why.

# The Framework

**3. Define Your Minimum Viable Episode**
Every podcaster needs a version of their show they can produce on the hardest week. Not the best or most polished episode, but one that keeps the feed alive and the commitment intact when everything else is falling apart.

Courtney calls this building for sustainability rather than perfection. The “always on” mentality that dominates podcasting is a setup for quitting. If your only option is a full-production episode with a guest and show notes and audiograms, you’ll go dark the moment life gets hard.

Your minimum viable episode is your safety net. Define it now, before you need it.

**4. Set Your Actual Rhythm**
Not the rhythm you think you should have. Not weekly because that's what everyone says. The rhythm you can maintain without resentment, burning out, or white-knuckling your way through every publish date.

Courtney is direct: You get to pick the pace. Escobar adds: Figure out how much time you're actually spending on your podcast right now between ideation, recording, editing, publishing, and promoting before you decide whether to add or change anything. Most podcasters underestimate this number significantly.

Your rhythm is right when it's consistent enough that listeners can count on you, and sustainable enough that you don't dread it.

## Exercise 1: Rule of Threes

**MY THREE EPISODE FORMATS:**
(Ex: solo, guest, listener Q&A, case study, roundup, co-host conversation)

1.

2.

3.

**MY THREE CONTENT APPROACHES:**
(Ex: how-to, personal story, industry commentary, guest expertise, community spotlight)

1.

2.

3.

**MY THREE PROMOTION TACTICS:**
(The ones from Chapter 3 that you're committing to)

1.

2.

3.

## Exercise 2: Add-Nothing Test

*Use this every time something new comes across your radar...*

The new thing I'm considering:

What I'm trying to achieve with my podcast overall:

How does this new thing serve those goals?

How will I measure whether it's working?

How much time per week would this actually require?

Do I have that margin right now? Yes / No / I'd have to give something up

If I'd have to give something up, what would it be?

My decision:

## Exercise 3: Minimum Viable Episode

My typical episode takes approximately _____ hours to produce.

The simplest version of my show I could produce in _____ hours.

What I'd keep no matter what (the non-negotiables):

What I'd drop when I'm in survival mode:

My minimum viable episode looks like:

## Exercise 4: Your Real Production Rhythm

How much time per week do I currently spend on my podcast?

| | |
|---|---|
| Ideation: | hrs/mins |
| Recording: | hrs/mins |
| Editing: | hrs/mins |
| Publishing: | hrs/mins |
| Promoting: | hrs/mins |
| **Total:** | **hrs/mins** |

Is that sustainable long-term? Yes / No / Only if I change something

My ideal cadence (not what I think I should do — what I can actually keep):

The one part of production I could streamline or eliminate:

One thing I'm going to stop doing, cut back on, or hand off:

# Sustainability Plan

**MY PUBLISHING CADENCE:**

**MY THREE EPISODE FORMATS:**

1.

2.

3.

**MY MINIMUM VIABLE EPISODE:**

**THINGS I'M SAYING NO TO RIGHT NOW:**

**THE ONE PART OF PRODUCTION I'M STREAMLINING:**

*Before I add anything new, I'll ask:*

1. What am I trying to achieve?
2. How does this serve that goal?
3. How will I know if it's working?

# 7

# Sound Like You Have a Team

*With the right systems, you can build a backstage that runs without you so you can focus on what only you can do.*

The podcasters who seem to have it all together aren't necessarily working more than you. They've likely just built better systems.

- **Jason Gilliken** runs a podcast production company and has produced hundreds of episodes across dozens of shows.
- **Jason Van Orden** has been building online businesses since 2005. He teaches creators how to use AI without losing their own voice.
- **Brandon Birkmeyer** and **Annie Franceschi** both work with experts and podcasters on turning their knowledge into systems that work beyond the moment of creation.

By the end of this chapter, you'll have a Team of Systems: the specific tools, templates, and automations you're committing to so your show runs smoother without you doing more.

# The Framework

**1. Build a Concierge Guest Experience**
Every touchpoint a guest has with your show, from the first message to the published episode, should feel like it was handled by a professional team, says Jason Gilliken.

Most podcasters email guests informal instructions, answer the same questions over and over, and scramble to gather last-minute details. It makes your show look smaller than it is.

The fix is a system: one document that goes to every guest before they record. It covers what to expect, how to prepare, tech requirements, what you'll need from them, and what happens after. You write it once, and it works every time.

Jason also recommends a simple pre-show checklist. What you do in the 10 minutes before every recording so you never start cold or unprepared. Consistency at the micro level creates professionalism at the macro level.

**2. Build a Custom AI Assistant That Sounds Like You**
Jason Van Orden believes most AI tools flatten your voice into something generic. The way to avoid that, he says, is to build a custom AI assistant that's trained on you.

This only requires capturing your voice, values, audience, and communication style in a document that you can feed to any AI tool. The result is an assistant that writes your show notes in your voice, drafts your social posts the way you'd actually write them, and helps you repurpose content without making it sound like it came from a machine.

AI is only as good as what you put into it. A generic prompt gets a generic result. A prompt built on a detailed understanding of your show, your audience, and your voice gets something you might actually use. "Ask AI to help you use AI well in the way that you exactly want to use it," he says.

# The Framework

**3. Template Everything That Repeats**
If you've done something more than twice, make a template. Episode outlines, show notes structure, social post formats, guest outreach emails, post-episode follow-ups can be templated once and reused forever, saving time and stress.

Brandon Birkmeyer talks about this in terms of personal brand consistency. Every time you create a new piece of content from scratch, you're making a micro-decision about what you stand for and how you sound. Templates lock in the best version of your thinking so you don't have to reinvent it.

The goal isn't to be formulaic. It's to free up your creative energy for the things that actually require it (ideas, conversations) and let systems handle the scaffolding.

**4. Package Your Expertise So It Works Without You**
Your knowledge shouldn't live only in your head or in your episodes, Annie Franceschi says. It should be packaged into frameworks, repeatable language, and resources.

This is what separates a podcast that creates occasional value from a show that builds a body of work. When you have named frameworks, consistent language, and a clear point of view that shows up across everything you make, listeners start to recognize you. They start to quote you. They start to send their friends.

You don't have to build all of this at once. Start by naming the things you already teach. The phrases that show up in episode after episode. Give them names. Write them down. That's the beginning of a body of work. “Everything is how you tell the story,” Annie says.

## Exercise 1: Your Guest System

What my guests currently receive before recording:

**WHAT MY GUEST PREP DOCUMENT NEEDS TO COVER:**
*Check all that apply*

- ☐ Tech setup and recording requirements
- ☐ What the show is about and who listens
- ☐ What to expect during the recording and how long it takes
- ☐ What I'll need from them (bio, headshot, links, CTA, etc.)
- ☐ When and where the episode will publish
- ☐ How I'd like them to promote it
- ☐ Other:

**ONE-TIME TASK:** Write a guest prep document that covers all of the above. Once it exists, send it every time.

**MY PRE-RECORDING RITUAL:**
What I'll do in the 10 minutes before every episode so I never start unprepared:

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

The guest system handles the outside. The pre-recording ritual handles the inside. Both run on autopilot.

## Exercise 2: Your Voice Document

Your Show Foundation Sheet (Ch. 1) has your mission, values, listener avatar, and one-liner. Copy those here, then add the pieces that make it useful for AI.

**MY VOICE**
*3-5 words or phrases that describe how I sound*

**WHAT I NEVER SAY OR DO**
*Words, phrases, tones to avoid*

**A SAMPLE OF MY WRITING I'M PROUD OF:**
*A paragraph from a newsletter, show notes, or social post that sounds most like you so AI has something to match.*

*Copy everything above into the system prompt or custom instructions of any AI tool you use. Start a new chat, paste it in, and say: "This is my show and my voice. Use this as your guide for everything you help me create." That's it.*

## Exercise 3: Your Template Audit

**THINGS I REBUILD FROM SCRATCH EVERY TIME:**
*Check all that apply*

☐ Episode outline / structure
☐ Show notes
☐ Guest outreach email/prep document (covered in Exercise 1)
☐ Post-episode thank you to guests
☐ Social posts for new episodes
☐ Newsletter mentions of new episodes
☐ Other:

The two I will build first:

1.

2.

**TASK:** Build the templates above *this week*. Add the others over the next month.

## Exercise 4: Your Signature Frameworks

**THE IDEAS I COME BACK TO AGAIN AND AGAIN:**
*The things you say in almost every conversation about your topic. Your go-to explanations, distinctions, or ways of seeing things.*

1.

2.

3.

**GIVE EACH A NAME:**
*A working title that's memorable, specific, yours.*

1.

2.

3.

**TASK:** Write your top framework in >200 words. That's the beginning of your body of work, and the thing AI, guests, and future collaborators can actually reference.



# My Team of Systems

The system I'm building first is:

I'm doing this one first because:

When it's done, this is what it frees me up to do:

The one thing I've been rebuilding from scratch every week that I am done rebuilding from scratch:

My signature framework (the idea I'm finally giving a name) is:

I'm committing to having my first system done by:

***Done is better than perfect. Pick one. Build it. Come back for the next one.***



# You did it!

You just built something real. Not a collection of worksheets, but a strategy for your show.

It was built on the thinking of 16 educators who've come through the Feminist Podcasters Collective (Amelia Hruby, Annie Franceschi, Adam Schauble, Alex Sanfilippo, Arielle Nissenblatt, Cher Hale, Hayden Lyon, Brandon Birkmeyer, Courtney Reimer, Elsie Escobar, Haley Hatcher, Greg Wasserman, Jason Gilliken, Jason Van Orden, Lauren Passell, and Lyndsay Phillips). Their generosity made this possible.

You could close this workbook and implement everything on your own. Or you could do it inside a community of indie podcasters who are navigating the exact same terrain. That's what the Feminist Podcasters Collective (FPC) is.

If this workbook felt like the kind of thinking you want more of, FPC is where that thinking lives. **Join us at feministpods.com** We offer equitable dues to keep it accessible to those who need it most.

**Keep going. We'll be there when you do.**