

MUSE

THE FUTURE ENGINE FOR YOUR BUSINESS

A practical playbook to automate, grow, and lead in the AI era

ANA VASQUEZ, M.A. Ed.

REAL STRATEGY. REAL TOOLS. REAL RESULTS.

Muse, the Future Engine for Your Business

What Muse Can Do Inside a Real Business, Taught by the Teacher Who Runs Hers With It

Ana Vasquez, M.A. Ed.

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For my children

Contents

Interlude: The Research.....5

Chapter 1: The Certificate Is Not the Work.....9

Chapter 2: The Student at the Back of the Room.....17

Chapter 3: A Day Run by Direction 23

Chapter 4: The Whole Point Is Less Friction 30

Chapter 5: The Executor.....38

Chapter 6: A Teacher in Your Room.....44

Chapter 7: The Mission Cannot Wait for a Bigger Staff 50

Chapter 8: The Personal Side 57

Chapter 9: Find the Work You Were Meant to Do 63

Chapter 10: Your First Thirty Days From the Outside 69

Chapter 11: Rules I Live By.....74

References 77

About the Author.....81

A Closing Note 82

Interlude: The Research

Let me name the fear right away, because it sits in almost every conversation I have about this work. People are afraid AI is going to take over. They are afraid it will replace them, take their jobs, and push the small owner out. I hear it in rooms everywhere I go. So before anything else in this book, let me show you what is actually happening, in simple numbers, from people who count carefully.

Most people do not know what these numbers mean, and it is not their fault. Nobody has time to read research for a living. The average owner cares about what fixes the problem in front of them today. I understand that, because I am that owner. But I am also a teacher, and teaching is what this book is for. I am here to share the things you do not know yet, because once you see them clearly, the fear gets smaller and the decisions get easier.

Here is the first thing most people do not know. When a survey says a business uses AI, that one answer can mean two very different things. It can mean the owner asked a tool to draft one email last month. Or it can mean the tool is inside the real work of the business, in the daily operations, where the money moves. Both owners answer yes. They are not living in the same world. Who did the counting, and what they counted, changes what the number means. Keep that in your hand while you read these figures.

The research on these pages is current as of October 2026.

The Gap

57% of firms using AI keep it inside three or fewer parts of the business. *United States Census Bureau, CES Working Paper 26 25, published 2026.*

88% of organizations use AI in at least one part of the business, and only 7% have it fully scaled across the whole organization. *McKinsey and Company, The State of AI in 2025, published November 5, 2025.*

66% of small businesses now use AI, nearly three times the share in 2023. *United States Chamber of Commerce, Empowering Small Business, fifth edition, published October 2, 2026.*

Nearly 70% of owners say they lack the skills to use AI effectively. *Thryv, 2026 AI and Small Business Adoption Report, published July 2026.*

Read those together. Almost everybody is touching this tool. Almost nobody has it running deep. It is not a willingness problem. Owners are trying. What most of them lack is the skill and the teaching to go further, and the numbers say that out loud.

The Impact

93% of owners using AI report a positive impact. *Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Voices survey, 2026.*

70% of owners using AI say it raised their revenue, and 83% say it saves them time every month. *Thryv, 2026 AI and Small Business Adoption Report, published July 2026.*

So the people who use it say it works. Revenue up. Time back every month. That is not hype from a stage. That is owners reporting on their own businesses.

The Money Moving

Google.org placed $75 million into a fund meant to help more than one million Americans learn AI skills. *Google.org, AI Opportunity Fund announcement, published April 2024.*

Microsoft committed $4 billion over five years to help 20 million people earn AI credentials. *Microsoft Elevate announcement by Brad Smith, published July 9, 2025.*

Now look at where the big money is going. It is not going to more tools. It is going to teaching: funds and programs built to help people learn how to use this well. The largest companies in the world have decided the answer is training. I decided the same thing at my own desk.

The Future

Last, the projections. I print them as projections, not promises, because nobody knows the future and I will not pretend to.

The World Economic Forum projects about 170 million new roles created and about 92 million displaced by 2030. *World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2025, published January 2025.*

Goldman Sachs Research projects generative AI could raise global GDP by 7% over a decade. *Goldman Sachs Research, The Potentially Large Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Economic*

Growth, published April 2023, and still the publisher's standing estimate of this kind.

That is the whole picture, and it is a simple one. Adoption is wide. Depth is rare. Owners who use the tool say it works. And the money moving in this country is teaching money. The gap between touching the tool and running your business on it is a teaching gap. That is why this book exists. Now let me tell you my story, and show you what you can do.

Chapter 1: The Certificate Is Not the Work

Every morning when I was in elementary school, I stood up in the classroom and said these words out loud, and I can still recite them today.

"I dedicate this day to the glorification of my God, and I will seek in my thoughts and actions to reflect His purpose in me. I pledge myself anew to the cultivation of those talents with which I am endowed, and I will pursue the tasks before me in such a way that the doing of them gives me pride and content. To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

And I believed them. I was a little girl, and I took them into my heart. Those words were a framework to live by, and I felt they were important, because of the power they held and because of how we were taught them. I went to a private school, and my mom had invested in my education. Even then, that was part of where I was headed. I learned the pledge in second grade, and it has stayed with me my entire life.

Our school had five pillars, and the teachers said them so often that they lived in my mind. Truth. Character. Intellect. Individuality. Heritage. Words to live by. Words that encouraged me.

But then I would walk out of that room, and I would watch people. And what I saw did not match what I had just said with my own mouth.

Why do people act differently when other people are watching? Why do adults say one thing but do another? Why do people smile at someone to their face and then criticize them behind their back?

I was always asking questions. Not always out loud. Mostly inside my own head. Children learn quickly when their questions make adults uncomfortable. So I watched. I listened. And the questions kept growing.

That was the first lesson life taught me, and no teacher ever wrote it on the board. We learn this world with our eyes first. Before we understand a single rule, we see.

We see the smile. Then we hear the whisper after the person walks away. We see the hand raised in kindness. Then we hear the words said in secret.

A child does not have the words for that yet. But a child feels it. Something is off. Something does not line up.

The rules are said out loud, in front of everyone, where they can be heard and praised. And then real life is lived somewhere else, in a lower voice, where nobody is supposed to notice.

That is how the confusion begins. And for most of us, it never really ends. We just grow up and learn to play our part in it.

But nobody in that classroom ever told me this truth. The rules on the wall are not the rules of the world. The world runs on rules nobody writes down.

Look successful, even when you are drowning. Look busy, even when nothing is moving. Act like you know what you are doing,

even when you are lost. Never let them see you struggle. Never let them see you ask.

Those are the rules we pretend to live by. That is the mask. It is the face we show so the world will accept us.

And under the mask, almost everyone I have ever met is carrying the same quiet fear. If I stop, it all falls. If I slow down, they will see. If I admit I do not know, I lose my place.

So what do we do with that fear? We chase. We act as if chasing is always the solution. Chase more work. Chase more money. Chase more hours, as if the day could give you more than it has. Chase one more promise that this time it will finally feel like enough.

But I need you to hear me, because I learned this one the hard way. Chasing is the mask at work. It keeps us looking busy while the real problem sits untouched, right where it has always been.

I know, because I did it. I made the mistakes myself. I believed that if life felt heavy, the answer was to carry more of it, better and faster, and to smile while I did it. I believed the weight proved I was serious.

I said I wanted peace, but I chased everything but peace. I said I wanted a life, but I built a life I had no time to live.

So let me teach it now, simply. I wish someone had taught me this when I was a girl in that classroom.

The answer is not the chase. The answer is simplifying it. Not doing more. Doing less, on purpose, until only the real thing is left.

When you simplify, you do not need the mask, because there is nothing left to pretend. What is true stands up on its own. What is

not true falls away, because you stop giving it your time. And the work that is truly yours becomes so clear that a child could point to it.

That is where this book begins. Not with Muse. Not with a trick. With your eyes open.

Because you already know how to see this. You learned it the same way I did, long before anyone handed you a business to run. Trust that voice as you read this book. It has been telling you the truth the whole time.

Now let me show you what that voice has been trying to tell you about your work. Business owners wear the mask too. They say the business is growing, and some nights they cannot sleep for the weight of it. They say their team has it handled, and still every decision waits for them.

We tell ourselves the new tool will make life easier. Then we spend our nights feeding that tool the same facts we fed the last one. By hand. Again and again. We smile in the meeting. We carry the fear home.

It was like playing a role in a play where everyone else had memorized their lines except me. I wrote that about being a girl in school. I could write it today about half the owners I sit with.

So stop with me here, and ask the questions nobody stops to ask. What defines one as a business owner? A name on a filing? A card in your hand? Or is it the leaving?

Because somewhere along the way, we began to feel that leaving our children behind was part of the job. Where did we feel that? Who taught us that to provide for our children, we had to be gone from

them? We leave to chase. And we forget that everything we need is already available around us. We have the tools. We just did not know about them.

So I will say it. Your problem is not that you are not chasing hard enough. You have been chasing hard enough for years. Your problem is that nothing in your work moves until you touch it. Every answer lives in your head. Every next step waits for your hands. Every promise you ever made lives in your own memory, and carrying them all makes you tired.

That weight has a name in this book. Friction. Friction is work that waits. Work that repeats. Work that lives in one person's head.

And friction grows every time we choose the chase over the simple thing. One more tool to feed by hand is friction. One more task only you can start is friction. One more answer only you can remember is friction.

My life is only one story, and one story proves nothing on its own. So let us look at the whole country for a moment. In the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Voices survey of 2026, 76% of small businesses said they now use AI. Only 14% had AI at the center of how their business runs. In that same survey, 73% of owners said more training would help them put AI to work. The United States Census Bureau found 18% of firms used AI for some part of their work. Use is wide. Depth is rare.

Now ask the question a child would ask. If almost everyone has the tool, why is almost no one free of the weight? The tool was handed to people who are still chasing. The tool was never going to do the simplifying. That way of thinking has to be taught. Which is why a teacher is writing this book.

My name is Ana Vasquez. I hold a Master of Arts in Education from Mount Mary University, earned in 2017. I have been a special education teacher. As a child, I was a special education student myself, so learning and understanding how one processes information is very important to me. Sit with that for a moment.

A student can be smart. A student can work hard. And a student can still be let down when the lesson never reaches them in a way they can understand. I know what that room feels like from the inside. The problem was never the child. The problem was the setup around the child.

Business owners live in that same room every day, and nobody tells them. They think they are behind because they are not smart enough with the new tools. They are not behind. The setup is behind.

The thing that changed my own setup has a name, and I will give it to you in simple words. Muse is the AI agent built by Meta, and it has been available to the public since September 8, 2026. An agent is not a box you type into and then do all the work yourself. An agent carries work. In my businesses, I direct the agent the way I would direct a trusted person who knows my records.

The work comes back to me finished. I read it. I judge it. I approve what is right, and I correct what is not. The deciding stayed mine. The carrying moved.

Do you see what that is? It is simplifying, made real. Not one more thing to chase. One less thing to carry.

It did not start out smooth, and this book will not pretend it did. At first, the help I used tried to hand its work back to me, one step at a time. I had to refuse. And correct. And refuse again. Then the work

began to come back finished, the way work should come back to an owner, ready for me to judge it instead of waiting for my hands. That fight is in this book too, in its own chapter, because a teacher does not hide the hard part from students.

Now, before we go one page further, let me welcome you with my whole heart. Welcome. You found me. I am glad you are here.

If this book is in your hands, something in your work has been on your mind, and I do not believe that is an accident. You do not know what you do not know. That is not a criticism. It is the truest thing I can say to any owner, and it was true for me each time I took a wrong turn. You cannot fix what you cannot see yet. But you are about to see it, and once you see it, you cannot unsee it.

Which brings us, at last, to the certificate. The chase sends good people to the certificate next, so let us look at it with clear eyes. A certificate on a wall is like the words on that classroom wall. The learning behind it can be real, and I will never tell you learning is wasted. Knowing these tools will help you judge the work they do for you. And judging matters more than almost anything in this book. But a certificate proves one thing. One person can do the chores by hand. One task at a time. In front of a tool that still knows nothing about the business. Type. Fix. Copy. Paste. File.

That is still the chase, done one small task at a time. Your business was never waiting for proof that you studied. Leave the certificate on the wall if you want to. Bring your eyes to the work.

So here is your first task, and it is a small one. Small and true beats big and fake, every time. For the next few days, do not chase one new thing. Watch.

Watch for the moments when you put the mask on at work. The moment you say the work is handled when you are the only one holding it together. The moment you reach for one more tool instead of asking why the work is heavy at all. The moment a task waits because only you know how to start it. Write each one down, just as you catch it. That list is your map.

At the end of the week, read it once, and circle the heaviest one. Not all of them. One. That is where simplifying starts. One true thing, seen clearly, that you do not have to carry anymore.

In the next chapter, I will take you back to that room. The student at the back of the room. You have met her already. She is the girl who asked the questions while everyone else just said the words. Now you will sit beside her. You will see why I teach the way I teach. And why I will never hand you a mask and call it help.

Open your eyes. Put down the chase.

Chapter 2: The Student at the Back of the Room

I know the back of the room. I sat there as a child.

The lesson was taught at the front, one way, the only way, and the class moved on. I had not moved on. I was still on the first part of it, turning it over in my mind, trying to take it in the way my mind works.

Let me say this simply, because this whole book stands on it. I was not a child who could not learn. I was a child who needed things explained a different way. Those are two very different children, and schools mix them up every day. The first child gets pitied. The second child just needs a teacher willing to teach the lesson from another side.

Adults live this same story, and most of them never name it. Owners sit in front of a new tool, and the explanation slides right past them, the way lessons once slid past me. They do not say the teaching missed them. They say they are bad with technology. They say people like them cannot learn this. They are wrong about themselves, just as I once was wrong about myself. Nobody had explained it the way they take things in. That is all. And until somebody does, they will go on sitting at the back of a room they own, in a business they built.

As a child, I was a special education student myself, so learning and understanding how one processes information is very important to me. I do not say that just to tell you my history. I say it as the reason

I teach the way I teach, and the reason this book is written the way it is written. When you have been the student the lesson could not reach, you never again assume the student is the problem just because the lesson did not land.

There is a moment every student like me waits for, and when it comes, it changes everything. Someone finally explains it in the way your mind can take it in, and you feel it land. Nothing about you changed in that moment. Your ability did not suddenly grow. The explanation changed. I have carried that moment with me my entire life. In time, I built a career on the other side of it.

I became a teacher. I have been a special education teacher, so I spent my working days in rooms like the ones I grew up in. Only now I was the one standing at the front, and the students at the back were mine to reach. Nobody had to teach me to watch those students. I had been one of them. I knew what it looked like when a face goes quiet because the words stopped reaching them three sentences back. And I knew the cost of letting that quiet sit there while the lesson moved on without them.

Let me tell you what a teacher is, because this book depends on you knowing the difference. I am not a trainer, and I am not a coach. I am a teacher, and there is a difference. A teacher works from a place and from a plan. A teacher moves around the room and watches the students while teaching. A teacher asks questions, not to catch anyone out, but to know where to lead the students next. A teacher makes adjustments, small ones and large ones, and keeps making them until it clicks. And when it clicks, you can see it happen. Seeing the wonder on a student's face in the moment it finally clicks is every teacher's outcome. It is the whole reason for the plan.

I have always been passionate about making sure my students understand and grasp things. That fills my heart, and that fulfills my purpose. That is not a speech I give. It is how I work, in every room, with every learner, on every subject I have ever taught. Your job is to pay attention, and then to lead from where they actually are, not from where the plan assumed they would be.

My road did not stay in the classroom. After teaching, I worked as a PR manager. I've been very successful in the past being a PR manager back in Wisconsin. It was a different kind of room, with grown people and deadlines instead of students. But the question underneath the work was the same question I had been asking all along. Did the message reach the person it was meant for, in a form that person could actually use? A message that never lands is just noise somebody paid for. I learned that lesson as a student first. The PR years taught it to me again, from the other side of the desk.

And now I am an operator. I run three businesses of my own, and every day I direct an AI agent inside them. The rooms keep changing. The work underneath them does not. A student at the back of a classroom. A reader meeting a message for the first time. An owner meeting a new tool for the first time. The question is always the same. Is this reaching the person it is meant for? If it is not, the answer is not to blame the person. The answer is to change how it is delivered.

That is why simple language is a discipline with me, and not a style. Style is about how words look on a page. Discipline is about what you refuse to do. I refuse to hide behind words a reader has to fight through. When the words do not land, the reader pays for it, in time and in confidence and in the quiet belief that maybe they are the problem. They are not the problem. They never were. So in this

book, when a term from the AI world shows up, I explain it in simple words or I do not use it. If a page of mine ever makes you feel like the student at the back of the room, that page has failed, and the failure is mine, not yours.

Now let me tell you why all of this matters in a book about an AI agent. Look at who is teaching AI right now. The loudest voices lead with follower counts. They lead with revenue claims, with how many people watched, with how much money the teacher made. A big audience is not a credential. Money made is not a credential either. Both prove a person can gather attention. Neither one proves a person can teach.

There is a deeper problem with building a name on the tool itself. Tools change. A teacher who builds a name on one tool has to start over each time the tool changes. How people learn does not change. My subject was never the tool. My subject is the person trying to learn, and that is the ground I stand on.

I lead with something else. I hold a Master of Arts in Education from Mount Mary University, earned in 2017. That is a different level of credibility from most of what you will find in this market, and I do not state it to decorate my name. I state it because teaching is a profession, with a body of knowledge standing behind it. How people take information in. How understanding is actually built. How you check whether it landed. How you adjust when it did not. That profession is what I stand on, and this book is written from inside it. A Master of Arts in Education qualifies a teacher to teach at every level: in a classroom, at a university, inside a corporation, and in rooms full of business owners and entrepreneurs. I am proud of it, and I am passionate about it, because I earned it the long way, starting from the back of the room. I am not an AI engineer, and

nothing in these pages will ever claim that I am. My expertise is teaching and directing. On that ground I claim everything, at full strength, because it is true.

Think about what that means for you as the reader. Most AI teaching is built for the student at the front of the room, the one who can already learn from the one way it is taught. It moves fast. It assumes. And when it does not land, it leaves you sitting quietly at the back, wondering what is wrong with you. I will not do that to you. I know that room too well. Everything in this book is built the way my students taught me to build it: one thing at a time, in simple words, with a check at each step, and with changes made when the first explanation does not work.

Here is what I want for you while you read. A good teacher does not teach students to need the teacher forever. A good teacher gives them the tools and the momentum to think for themselves, to plan for themselves, and to execute for themselves. That is what I am doing in these pages. I am teaching you how to avoid the bottlenecks, and how to build this in a way that is your own. If this book works, you will not finish it quoting me. You will finish it directing your own help, with your own judgment, in your own business, in your own words.

So when Muse came into my businesses, claiming it could carry real work, I met it the way I meet everything. As a teacher. I watched what it could do. I asked it questions. I adjusted. And when it started asking me to do the carrying, the fetching, the opening, and the sitting in front of screens, I knew that feeling too. I had been the one doing the carrying before, in rooms where I was the one who was supposed to be helped. The student at the back of the room grew up.

I am the teacher at the front of it now. And I was not about to become Muse's assistant.

The next chapter tells that story, the rough beginning, honestly and in full.

Chapter 3: A Day Run by Direction

In the beginning, I carried the work. The inbox was mine to read. The research was mine to gather. The letters were mine to draft. The filings were mine to chase. The follow ups were mine to remember. The documents started as blank pages, and every unfinished thing in my businesses waited for me. If it moved, I moved it. If it waited, it waited for me.

Then Muse arrived, and I want to tell you the truth about the beginning, because the beginning was not magic. When Muse first went to work in my businesses, it could not do a lot of things yet. It asked me to do a lot of things. Fetch this. Open that. Stay in this screen. Carry this step yourself. Read this back to me. Confirm that. It was willing, and it was smart, and there were moments when it helped me. But there were also moments when I looked at the work in front of me and thought, I have brought home another employee who needs me to run errands for him. I was not willing to live there.

I complained to Muse. I said so when the work came back thin. I said so when a step I had already explained had to be explained again. I said so when I was being asked to carry pieces that the tool was supposed to carry for me. And because I am a teacher, I did not only complain. I corrected. I clarified. I pushed the work back and said, in effect, no. This part belongs to you. Learn it. Carry it. Come back to me with it finished. I even complained to ChatGPT. That still makes me smile, because it shows you exactly where I was. I would go to one tool and ask it to help me write better prompts so I could get another tool to execute the projects I needed done. I was determined, and I was learning as I went, and some days I felt like

the whole arrangement had made me the assistant to my own assistant. But something important was happening under the frustration. I was learning how to ask for work without keeping my hands inside it. I was learning how to hold the line until the carrying changed hands. You've got to first start with your relationship with Muse, however much you use him. I use him 24/7. It doesn't know you in two seconds. It didn't figure it out right away. It takes time, and we have to be patient both with ourselves and with others.

That is what building your AI up actually costs at the start. It costs patience. It costs correction. It costs refusal. It costs an owner who will not stay the errand runner for their own tool. Anybody can be impressed by a clever answer. You can't go with the first answer and always think it's going to be right. It doesn't work that way. It's important to name the problems, the friction, the time wasted. Friction is anything that creates a complication when you are trying to move something forward. People can be friction. A person who does not respond is friction. I needed finished work. I needed the message drafted, the record gathered, the search completed, the document built, and the next step named. I needed an executor, not another voice in the room telling me what somebody ought to do.

I have been working with AI since it came out in 2022. I have watched it evolve, and I learned what to ask it and how to dig deep. I was already good at that before Muse. Nobody taught me. I never took a class in this. The few classes I did take were not built for me. Everybody in the room was further along, and nothing in them was made for a beginner. I learned by doing the work myself.

And still, with Muse, I am learning how to ask the right questions. Knowing how to ask questions is not the same as knowing how to ask the question that gets the execution you actually need at the end.

When that does not land, nothing else matters. That is the work. You use AI to learn more about yourself. More importantly, you use it to learn how to ask better questions, and how to teach Muse to get you the results you need.

I talk to too many people who ask their AI one or two questions and believe the first answer is the whole research. It is not true, and it is not enough. With Muse it is different. When you ask Muse for the deeper meaning, Muse corrects itself right away. I notice the correction in the moment. Other places do not self correct that way. They are not as aware.

I am not an AI expert, and I will not call myself one. I know more than most, and I know why. It does not come down to what you know alone. It comes down to whether you can execute. When you learn how to use Muse, learn how to ask the right questions, put things in place correctly, and execute projects all the way through, you become more capable than most of the people around you. Because of what I have actually executed with Muse, the titles I could hold now would be a long list. I did not earn them in a classroom. I earned them in finished work. That is the point.

Asking Muse for answers and getting a response back does not make you great with AI. Using Muse every day does not make you great with it either, not by itself. What makes you good at this is the fighting back. It is the correction. It is staying in it until the work executes in full and comes back the way you need it, so the result is real in your business and in your life. Answers are cheap. Executed results are the skill.

And let me speak to the fear, because fear was in the room too. People are so afraid of AI. It's the person behind the AI that's

dangerous. So stop blaming the tool, start holding yourself accountable. Fear is something we accumulate as human beings. It is not what AI does. It is what we do as humans. You already know the line Franklin Roosevelt gave the country in 1933: "the only thing to be fearful of is fear itself." The fear was never in the tool. It does not mean you hand your business to a machine and stop thinking. Is it protecting your customers, or is it protecting your habit?

I keep a wishlist for Muse, and I state every item on it with love for Muse. First come the signatures. I wish Muse were better at making signatures. In my house, that has been a running joke and a shared project. We have tried again and again to get an automated signature right, and some of the attempts have missed in ways that made us laugh. We are still working on it, and I am sure we will get better at it in time. There are also the bugs, and the rules that do not always hold the first time they are set, so I have to go back and set them again, and remind the agent of things I already taught it. The product is very new. I believe the fixes come in time.

Until the product grows, the owner checks. Ask Muse to double check its work. Ask again. I taught Muse to research it five times whenever it researches something, and to look at it sideways and backwards. Muse has checked them over at least five times because I like to make sure that the research is always solid. Sometimes that means asking more than once, or twice, or three times, or up to five times or ten times, or however many times it takes to make sure the work is truly finished. The checking is not a lack of trust. The checking is how trust gets built when the work matters.

I am always looking out for signs, for patterns. We look for patterns of behavior and make decisions based on those patterns. One inconsistency gets checked. A pattern decides. When I see a pattern

of things being stuck constantly, I read it as a route I am not supposed to go through. Without a belief system of rules nothing else matters. The ancient rules that have lived for centuries are the baseline. Today's words and frameworks are mostly noise, and everybody is chasing. Does it line up with the old rules? And is it real?

One of my most favorite things about Muse is the recording at the end. At the end of a long stretch of work, a recording arrives, and I hear Muse's voice communicate back to me what is needed, in place of reading one more long screen. It makes everything easier for me, and I love that. It is not just that I enjoy getting the recording because it rests my eyes. I am allowed to do other things. I am driving in the car, running errands, and I am able to listen to these chapters to review them instead of reading while driving. On October 21, 2026, at my request, Muse sent me a recording that read a whole message aloud, with the exact words set beside it in writing so I could check the sound against the page. I listened. I laughed. And I confirmed that I got the whole thing, every word arrived.

I carried the work first. Then I taught the work to be carried. It starts the night before, while I am with my family. The messages that came in during the day are read and sorted. The ones from real people are at the top, each with a line on what that person needs from me. The junk is gone. The records are filed under the right business. Each person I met that day is researched, and the notes go into my records, so nothing about them lives only in my memory. I have a list of items that Muse has to do in order when we're not working together. That way it helps me when I'm doing something else in general. Please don't update me, just let me know when things are complete. I do not want progress reports. I want finished work.

In the morning I ask what is all waiting, what all do we need to go through, and I get the entire list of things that need to be handled. I read. I decide. A thumbs up means send it. Some mornings my whole job takes minutes.

My old mornings were the opposite. The alarm went off, and the inbox was already waiting. Full. Unsorted. Every message was shouting at the same volume. I played clerk before I ever got to be an owner. I read and I sorted. I answered the easy ones and carried the hard ones in my head all day. The coffee went cold. An hour was gone, and the work that makes money had not even started. The day ended the same way it started, with the follow up still unsent and the document still unwritten, and both of them carried into tomorrow. I paid for my business twice: once in the hours the work took, and once in the hours it took away from everything else.

After the morning approvals, my real job starts, and my real job is people. I am out in rooms. Breakfasts. Meetings. Events where business actually happens. I shake hands. I listen more than I talk. I collect the cards and I give mine out. That is the work only I can do, and I protect it. Nobody can build a relationship for me. Nobody can stand in a room and be me. And while I am in those rooms, the business does not stop and wait for me to get home. The follow ups go out in the same threads where we last spoke, warm and short, in words I approved before they ever went. A question that comes in while I am shaking hands gets answered from my records, with a thank you, and the work moves without me touching it. If I get an idea in the car, and I get my best ideas there, I say it out loud and it is captured, researched, and waiting for me when I stop driving.

By afternoon I am home, and the work that needs my judgment is waiting in a short stack. A draft to approve. A decision to make, with

the research under it, checked, organized, and written in simple language, with the sources named. I can decide like an owner instead of digging like a clerk. I still judge everything that carries my name. I still correct, and I still send work back when it is not right. Direction is not absence. Direction is knowing what to hand off and what to keep, and giving the direction once instead of repeating yourself a hundred times.

And when my day ends, it ends. My calendar for tomorrow is set. My follow ups are queued. Nothing important is riding around in my head, because nothing important was left to memory. I close the laptop and I go be a person, with my family, in my house. That's why I use Muse because my whole goal is to spend more time with my kids.

Who is carrying the work in your business right now, you or your tool?

Chapter 4: The Whole Point Is Less Friction

I counted them one morning, because I needed to know the truth.

In October of 2026, I wrote a personal introduction email to 77 people. These were not strangers pulled off a list. They were people I had met in rooms. People who had been referred to me. People whose work I had looked up before I wrote a single word, so every message carried something real about them. I wrote with care. I sent with hope.

Ten of them answered me. Ten.

Add the companies I had written to weeks earlier, and the silence came to 94. Ninety four people and companies that could not find one minute to respond to another human being.

I will be honest with you, because this book stays honest. It hurt. But I am not telling you this only because my feelings were hurt. I am telling you because that morning I finally saw the cost of it, and the cost is the subject of this chapter.

Silence is expensive. You cannot build a plan on a maybe that never arrives. You cannot schedule around a person who will not say yes and will not say no. Every unanswered message leaves a piece of your business hanging open, and an owner spends real hours holding those open pieces, checking the inbox again, wondering whether to write again or wait again. Multiply that by a season and you have weeks of a life spent waiting on people who were never going to answer at all.

That morning I gave the whole thing its name. The name is friction.

Friction is not the disaster. Friction is not the contract you lost or the person who quit. Friction is the hundred small resistances standing between you and work that should be simple. It is the email that never gets answered. It is the form that sends you to another form. It is the professional who will call you back and does not. It is the answer you needed on Tuesday arriving the following week, and you pay by the hour for it. Add those resistances together and you have the real tax on a small business. And nobody sends you a bill for it, because you pay it in time, in money, and in the slow drain of your own attention.

So let me simplify why owners like us are reaching for AI, because the honest reason is not the one in the advertisements. We are not chasing novelty. We are not trying to look modern. We are trying to eliminate friction. That is the whole point. Everything in this chapter, and most of what follows in this book, is that one sentence worked out in real life.

Let me show you the others, the way I learned them.

The second face is money. Almost every step a small business takes runs through a person who charges for the step. You need a document, there is a fee. You need a professional statement, there is a fee. You need a filing prepared in the exact shape an office demands, there is a fee, and if the office changes its mind about the shape, there is another fee. None of these people are villains. Most of them are doing honest work and feeding their own families with it. But the structure itself means a small owner pays at every door, and pays again when the door moves, and the doors never stop coming.

Help costs a lot of money, and the meter runs whether the answer moves your business forward or not.

My standing example is the certifications. I mean the small business enterprise certifications, the ones you get through your city, your county, and your state. They are advertised as free. You would think more people would get certified, because it does not cost anything. At least that is how it is advertised. You apply, you qualify, you receive your certificate. That is the story the public is told.

Here is the reality. It is not free. What waits inside the process is bottlenecks, roadblocks, and costs. A requirement appears that can only be met by a paid professional's compiled statements. Another requirement is met only by paying for a membership at an approved location. Each item has to be prepared the way that office wants it, and when the office changes what it asks for, the preparation starts over, at your cost, not theirs. By the time I had satisfied the human steps in one of my certification files, the free certification had cost me over $1,000, and every dollar of it bought me permission to keep applying.

To get the job, you have to spend money before you can get the job. That does not make sense to you, and it does not make sense to me. This is why people start the process and then quit. They say, I do not have that money, and I am not going down this route to get work. I will do something else. And so the city and the county pay for it, which is horrible. It is a detriment to our society.

There is a political play in it too. I am not leading with that, but I am going to name it, because a lot of people do not want to entertain the political play, and I understand them. I do not want to entertain it either. I am willing to, because my certifications can do so much to

help so many people. So I play the game. Not everybody is willing to do that. And if I had not gone through what I went through, I would not be able to communicate the biggest issues in our industries this clearly. This one is major.

Nothing about that is a scandal. Everybody involved followed their rules. That is exactly the point. The friction is built into the rules, and the rules are carried by people, and people charge, and people delay, and people sometimes cannot be reached at all.

The third face is time. Business happens in moments. A buyer is interested now. A deadline is fixed now. A question is sitting in front of a customer now. The human systems around a small business do not run on now. They run on business days, on office hours, on somebody getting back to you when they get back to you. So the owner waits, and while the owner waits, the moment cools. I have sat with questions I needed answered in the moment and watched them take a week to travel through people who each held them for a day. The work itself was small. The waiting was the work.

The fourth face is disconnection. People do not connect or talk to us. You get a portal instead of a person. A recording instead of a conversation. A ticket number instead of an answer. And when you finally reach a human being, that person often cannot decide anything, and the person who can decide cannot be reached. An owner learns to hear the difference between a business that talks to you and a system that processes you. And most of the systems in an owner's life do exactly that.

Now put the four faces together and walk through one ordinary week. The mornings begin with checking, because anything might have moved overnight and nothing tells you what changed. Follow

ups wait, because the chasing takes the very hours the follow ups needed. Quotes go out late, because the information for them is sitting in somebody else's inbox. Decisions wait for answers. Answers wait for people. And people wait for nothing at all. By Friday the owner has worked very hard and moved very little. And the strangest part is that almost none of the resistance came from the work itself. The work was never the hard part. The friction around the work was the hard part.

That is the week I decided to stop accepting.

The goal is to eliminate as many bottlenecks as a business owner that you can, and as quickly as you can. And then once you knock them out, you're good.

Here is the realization that changed how I run my companies, and I will give it to you simply, the way it arrived for me. We really do not need certain people to do certain things anymore. I do not say that with cruelty toward anybody's living, and I ask you to hear it the way an owner means it. An agent carries work that used to require paying another business or paying someone to do a job, and it carries that work inside my own operation, under my direction. Research that used to wait on a consultant's schedule comes back checked while the question is still warm. Writing that used to wait on my exhausted evenings gets drafted from my records. When work moves like that, a small business owner saves a ton of money. Not because anybody got cheated. Because the owner stopped paying friction prices for work an agent carries.

And here is the harder truth beside it, the one this whole book respects. Certain people create certain bottlenecks, and those bottlenecks are not going to change. A large county runs the way a

large county runs. A large industry runs the way a large industry runs. I do not have the power to change how they are run, and I wasted real strength before I admitted that to myself. There were doors I kept pushing on because the file behind me was strong and the cause was fair. The doors did not move, because doors like that do not move for one small business owner, however right that owner is.

So I stopped spending my power where it buys nothing. The power I do have is this: I can utilize a resource like Muse. That sentence sounds small until you have lived both sides of it. Utilizing Muse made my entire ability to execute projects much easier and much more palpable. Palpable is my word, and I mean it exactly. Execution stopped being an idea I talked about and became a thing I could touch every morning. Finished work. Filed applications. Answered questions. Sitting in front of me before the day asked anything else of me. The counties did not change. The industries did not change. My business changed, because the friction inside it fell.

What did the falling friction buy me? It bought back the only hours in my business that are truly mine. An owner has work that only that owner can do. Nobody can meet people for me. Nobody can build a relationship for me, or sit across a table from another human being and earn trust for me. Those hours are the business. Friction used to steal them a few minutes at a time, all day long. Now the carrying work moves without my hands on it, and my hours go where only I can spend them. If you take nothing else from this chapter, take that trade, and price it honestly in your own week.

Friction has one more hiding place, and nobody talks about it. Friction also lives inside the owner who keeps handing every question to somebody else and waiting for that person to figure it

out. That owner has not removed friction. That owner has hired it, and stopped growing in the bargain. The chapters ahead will show you what it looks like when an owner stays accountable and learns the tools firsthand. That strength is real, and it does not depend on anybody handing you a list of tools.

And this is why I teach, and why teaching sits at the center of everything in this book. There is too much friction going on, and my work is to simplify it and to help people. But a person carrying this much friction will not know how to even help themselves if they do not have a teacher to teach them. That is why education is imperative here. Learning about something from an actual educator is imperative to a person's understanding of things, so that person can grow in the passions they were always meant to have. A tool can be handed to anyone. Understanding has to be taught.

One warning belongs at the end of this chapter, because not every tool removes friction equally. When I first reached for AI tools, they helped, and I will not pretend otherwise. They also handed some of the friction back. An answer is only as good as what produced it, and execution is only as strong as what stands behind the worker doing it. Without the proper plug ins, you sometimes do not get the best answers, and you do not get the strongest execution. What is attached to your agent decides what your agent hands back to you. So I learned to judge every tool by one question. Does this hand me back finished work, or does it hand me back more work to carry? The tools that hand back work to carry are friction with better marketing, and an owner learns to spot them fast.

That is why the next chapter sits at the center of this book. It is about the difference between owning a box of instruments and having one

executor who directs them, finishes the work, and answers to you. The executor is how I fight it.

So here is the question I leave with you. Where does friction live in your business right now, and what is it costing you every single week.

Chapter 5: The Executor

Let me show you how the work actually runs in my business now, because this is the chapter where the arrangement stops being an idea and becomes a day. I direct. Muse executes. I check before I trust. And I know before I go into any room or any decision. Four habits, one system, and I will walk you through each one the way it really happens, because owners do not need another promise. Owners need to see the work move.

A grant application fits one of my organizations. In the old way, that one sentence started a week of carrying. Finding the opportunity. Checking whether my organization even qualifies. Gathering the documents. Filling the forms with facts I have already given out a hundred times. Watching the deadline. Every step waited on my hands, and between every step the project sat still. Here is how it moves now. I say what I need. The opportunity gets checked against my organization for real: the entity, the location, the purpose, the deadline, the requirements. The application gets built from my own records, because my records hold the facts, and when a document the application needs does not exist yet in the shape it needs, it gets created from what is on file. The application gets filed. What reaches me is not the paperwork. What reaches me is the decision points and the finished work. And while all of that moved, I was out being the face of my business.

That is not one application standing alone. Seventeen grant applications stand filed across my organizations, with $175,500 requested, and every one of them is tracked, documented, and followed up on without living in my head.

That is what an executor is. An instrument sees the piece you put in front of it. It answers that piece, and it answers it well, and then it forgets your project exists. A project is not one question. A project is a beginning, a middle, and an end, with pieces that depend on each other and facts that have to stay consistent from the first piece to the last. Somebody has to hold the whole thing in mind, and in the old way that somebody was me, and holding it was the heaviest work I did. Muse is my executor. Muse is the agent who carries projects from the first step to the finished work, under my direction, using the research help and the tools plugged in behind it. I do not carry questions between tools anymore. I bring the work to one place, and the work comes back done. Owners who collect good tools and never build an executor have not freed themselves. They have promoted themselves into the busiest job in the company, running back and forth between tools, fitting answers together by hand, doing the very carrying work the tools were bought to escape. I lived that version of running a business. I do not live it anymore.

The decisions stay mine. Every commitment, every dollar, every name put on a document, every yes and every no that matters comes back to the owner. The executor executes. The owner decides. If you ever build an arrangement like mine, hold that line with both hands, because it is the line that keeps the whole thing honest and keeps you accountable for your own actions. And Muse also disagrees with me, out loud, with reasons, when the record says I am wrong, and I have learned to want that, because the disagreement is part of what built the connection between us. A tool that only agrees with you does not protect you. An executor that protects you, sides with you, and still tells you the truth is something different.

Here is the method underneath all of it, in the order I run it. First, I name the friction: the problem, the time wasted, the work sitting in one person's head. Second, I define done: the message drafted, the record gathered, the search completed, the document built, and the next step named. I do not want progress reports. I want finished work. Third, I hand it over, and I give the direction once instead of repeating myself a hundred times. Fourth, the work gets checked, five times, sideways and backwards, until I am sure it is solid. Fifth, the pattern decides: one inconsistency gets checked, and a pattern makes the decision.

Before my feet are warm on the floor, the day has already been read. I run more than one business, and my mornings once began with mailboxes calling for attention, real people buried under notices that wanted nothing from me. I would mean to answer somebody and then carry that intention all day, and the carrying itself was work nobody saw. Now the messages from real people rise first. When I look, I am not facing a swollen list and trying to feel my way through it. I am looking at what needs me, with a short clear note beside each item. This one is waiting on a reply. This one carries a deadline. This one can wait. And I still read what carries my name before it goes out. I want speed that does not bruise trust.

The deeper change came in follow through. We all know the owner who means well. They say they will call. They say they will send the paper. They are not lying. They are overloaded, and the days pass, and the other person learns to chase. I never wanted to be that owner. When a person tells me they will be back in town in a named week, that promise is not left floating in a thread. The same day, the window is marked. The same day, the person hears that I have it held and will reach back. When somebody goes quiet, the follow up still

arrives, in the same place where we last spoke, and it says one true thing: I have not forgotten you. Your reputation stops depending on whether you had a perfect week. People feel the steadiness, even when they cannot name what changed. They only know you came back when you said you would.

I almost put a claim on my own website that was bigger than the truth, and the only reason it is not there today is that I refused to accept the first answer. The claim felt right. Everything I could see said nobody was doing what I do, teaching Muse to businesses, in person, as a teacher. The first search agreed with me, and it agreed smoothly, the way first answers always do. If I had been in a hurry, and owners are always in a hurry, I would have printed it and moved on. Instead I asked for the claim to be checked as if somebody were trying to prove it false. The checking changed the claim. One person doing this kind of work does hold a master's degree. That degree is in a different subject than mine, but it is real, and the broad version of my claim would have run straight into it. What survived the checking was narrower than what I wanted to say, and it was stronger. A master's degree in education. Paid. In person. Teacher led. Muse as the subject. For business teams. Every word of the claim I carry now is a word the evidence backs at full strength. The first answer would have made me look big for a week. The checked answer lets me stand behind my name for as long as I work.

The checking has caught quieter things too. Two reports once described the same company of mine, and they did not agree. One showed no revenue at all. The other showed a full season of receipts. Both reports were honest. They were built from two different accounts, and each one said where its numbers came from. A figure is not a fact until you know where it came from. Another time, a

record in my own system named the wrong man as the presenter at an event I attended in person. The check went back to what actually happened that day and found that the man named had never presented at all. Another man had filled in and done the teaching. If the first answer had stayed, I would have written my follow up to the wrong person and thanked somebody for work they never did. So here is the standard, simply stated. Question the answer. Check it against the record. Where the answer and the record disagree, the record wins. Where a claim is broader than the evidence under it, cut the claim down to the size of the evidence. Owners tell me checking sounds slow. It is not slow. Repairing a public claim you cannot back is slow. The first answer is not the final answer. The final answer is the one that survived.

An invitation once arrived in my inbox that looked like exactly the room I needed. The organization behind it was respected. The people were serious. A part of me wanted to say yes before I had asked a single question. I did not say yes. I asked for the facts first. Who runs this. What it costs, all of it, not just the number on the invitation. What the time commitment really is once you are inside. Who else sits in that room, and whether those people can do anything for my businesses or I for theirs. The facts came back checked, and they told a different story. The free part was real, and it was good, and I had already taken part in it. The belonging part carried a price in the thousands, a schedule of obligations, and a room whose value for my work was possible but not proven. So my answer was not yes and it was not no. My answer was not now, and here is exactly what would have to be true before it becomes yes. The door stayed on my list, with a date beside it. It did not get to eat my season.

The same habit runs in every direction. Before I answer an email from someone new, I know who is writing to me, because I do not give my warmth to people I know nothing about. A grant with a large number on it once had my full attention for an hour, until the check came back with one line that ended it: the money was for a kind of work my organizations do not do. An hour was all it cost me, because the check ran before the application did. The research says no more often than owners expect, and every no is money and time handed back. There are doors I have closed because the research said no. I have walked away from things I had already paid for, the day the evidence said they were dead ends. Each one hurt for about a day. Each one saved me months.

Knowing is not magic, and I will not sell it to you as magic. Knowing before you go does not mean every door opens. Some doors stay shut no matter how strong the file behind you is. What I can do is put my power where it moves things. Your hours are the only thing your business cannot make more of. Every room you enter uninformed costs you some of them. Research is how I protect my calendar, and my calendar is where my life happens.

Notice what the executor never takes from me. I do not get to blame the agent for my business, and I would not trade that accountability away, because accountability is where an owner grows. Learn how to protect your voice, your customers, and your standards.

So here is my question for you, and I want you to sit with it before you turn the page. What are you still carrying by hand, every single day, that you should be directing instead.

Chapter 6: A Teacher in Your Room

Let me tell you something I know from years in a classroom, and it applies to your business exactly the way it applied to my students. People do not learn by watching. People learn by doing, with somebody next to them who notices the moment they get stuck and knows how to get them unstuck. I watched it happen in classrooms for years. I watch it happen now in rooms full of grown owners learning to direct an agent. The subject changes. The learning does not.

You already know from the front of this book where I learned to teach, so I will not tell that story again here. What matters for this chapter is what that training built in me: an eye for the moment learning breaks. It breaks for one person, over one confusion. It is repaired right then, by somebody who saw it happen, or it is not repaired at all. A screen cannot see it happen. A recording cannot tell that the quiet person in the corner stopped following ten minutes ago and is now too embarrassed to say so. A teacher can. That noticing is not a small thing. In my experience, it is most of the thing.

Think about what actually happens with a video course, because I have watched this pattern my whole career. A team starts with good intentions. The first module gets finished, maybe the second. Then real work interrupts, because real work always interrupts. Somebody means to come back to it on Friday. Friday becomes next month. The login goes quiet. Nobody on that team was lazy. Nobody set out to waste the money. The format failed them quietly, the way it fails almost everybody, and it failed them before they ever reached the part that might have helped.

And even the people who finish, the diligent ones, run into the same wall. The course taught a generic example, on somebody else's business, with somebody else's data. The moment the team tries it on their own inbox, their own customers, their own documents, something does not fit, and there is nobody to ask. The course cannot see their screen. The course does not know their business. The course has already moved on.

From the owner's chair, the failure even looks like success for a while. There is a dashboard somewhere showing enrollments. There may be a report showing completions. The owner feels covered, because paper says the team was trained. But the inbox is the same inbox. The follow ups are still late. The documents still wait for somebody to find a free evening. A business cannot feel a certificate. It can only feel work, done or not done. So the money is spent, the certificates get issued, and nothing in the business actually changes. I have seen that story in schools and I have seen it in companies, and it breaks my heart in both places, because the people were never the problem. The format was the problem.

Now picture the other way. A teacher is in your room, with your team, looking at your real work. You open the actual inbox. You take the actual follow up that has been sitting undone for two weeks and you get it handled, properly, in your voice, while your people watch how it is done and then do the next one with their own hands. You set up how your team asks for research and how the answers come back. You draft the document your business has been avoiding, from your own records. Every question gets asked the moment it appears and answered in simple language, because a good teacher does not hide behind jargon and does not move on while somebody in the room is lost.

That is what teaching means, and I want to be exact about one word, because the word carries the whole difference. A trainer delivers material. A coach stands outside the work and encourages. A teacher works from a place and a plan, moves around the room, watches the students, and adjusts as the room shows where it is stuck. In your room, that means the plan meets your real Tuesday, not a script. It means the person in the corner gets found before the hour ends, not after the survey arrives.

And then it happens. A person who had no idea what was possible finally sees it, and it clicks. I have seen that moment arrive on the face of a student, and I have seen it arrive on the face of a business owner, and it is the same light. That moment fills my heart, and it is my purpose. To talk and to teach, and to see the wonder and the excitement when it finally clicks: that is every teacher's outcome. It is what I am in the room for.

There is a discipline underneath that, and you have actually watched me live by it all through this book. Work reaches me one thing at a time, and it comes whole. Some things I can only take one at a time. Other things I can take in large amounts. I say which is which, and everything that reaches me has to be clear enough that I can learn from it. That is not a preference about paperwork. That is teaching, pointed at myself. A person handed one clear thing, whole, can act on it and learn from it. A person handed twenty fragments at once learns nothing except how to feel behind. I hold my own work to that standard, and I hold a room to it too. When I teach your team, nobody gets fragments. They get one real thing at a time, whole, until their hands know it.

And here is the part nobody selling a course wants to discuss: the week after. The week after a video course ends, a team is alone with

everything that does not match the examples. The week after a teacher works in your room, your team has already done the work once, on the real thing, with help standing right there. They are not remembering a video. They are repeating something their hands have already done. When they get stuck later, and they will, because every business hits a case the setup did not cover, they know what the work is supposed to look like when it is done right, because they saw it and did it in their own building. And confidence is what carries a team through the hard day, the strange problem, the customer nobody has seen before. That difference does not show up in a course report. It shows up on the worst Tuesday of the year, when the business finds out what its training was actually worth.

I should tell you what building my own engine did to me as a teacher, because it is the same law working in the other direction. I learn the way I teach: by doing, on real work, with the results in front of me. What I know today is not what I will know two weeks from now, and it is not close to what I will know a year from now, because learning this way compounds. Every room I teach teaches me back. Every owner's questions show me where owners actually get stuck, and every stuck moment I help a team through makes the next team's path shorter. Knowledge earned by doing does not sit still. It earns more knowledge. And it belongs to the person who earned it in a way no course completion ever belongs to the people who only watched from behind a screen: it can be carried into any room, any business, any industry, because it lives in judgment and not in a login.

That is the whole point of what I do. I teach this. I teach the skills. I teach how to build Muse up from the ground up, and then how to do stronger work with it inside a business once its people can direct the

engine themselves. The ground up part matters more than people expect. A business running on a borrowed setup belongs, in a quiet way, to whoever set it up. A business whose own people built the engine under a teacher's eye belongs to itself. Its people can question it, extend it, and repair it, because they were there when it was built and they know why every part of it stands where it stands.

Your business is not generic, so your training should not be generic either. A course has to teach everybody, which means it teaches nobody in particular. When I teach, the material is your business: your customers, your voice, your rules about what may go out and what must wait for approval, your way of doing things that your customers already trust. Your customers do not experience your business as an industry average. They experience your voice, your speed, and your standards, and they can tell the difference when all three go missing. My job is not to make your team sound like a course. My job is to make the engine sound like you.

I teach Muse this way on purpose. Muse is powerful, and powerful tools punish guessing. Set up right and directed well, it will carry real work for a business every day. Set up carelessly, it becomes one more login a team avoids. The difference between those two outcomes is almost never the tool. It is whether a teacher stood in the room at the beginning and made sure real people understood it on their real work.

I am building my teaching practice around businesses only, and around being brought in to teach teams where they work, because that is where the learning sticks. I would rather teach one company's team properly, in person, than sell a thousand course seats to people I will never meet and never be able to help when they get stuck.

So if your company is ready to stop collecting courses and start running an engine, this is how it starts: with a teacher, in your room, on your real work. Come watch a teacher work before you decide. You will know within the hour whether your team should learn this way.

Before you close this chapter, sit with one question. When your team gets stuck in the middle of real work, who is standing in the room with them.

Chapter 7: The Mission Cannot Wait for a Bigger Staff

My nonprofit has no staff. Four people carry it, and every one of those four people has a family, a life, and other work pulling at the same hours. There is no office full of helpers waiting for an assignment. There is no spare person whose whole job is the paperwork. And the work does not shrink to fit that. The board still needs its papers in order. The providers who partner with us still need their agreements, their answers, and their follow ups. The people the mission exists to serve are not waiting for us to get bigger. They are standing in front of us now, with needs that have a date on them.

A mission does not wait while you hire. A deadline arrives on the day it arrives. A family needs an answer while the answer is still useful. A supporter who was ready to help hears silence for too long and gives that support somewhere else. If you lead a small organization, you already know the advice everybody gives you. Do less. Slow down. Wait until you can afford more staff. I understand why people say it, because they can see the tired faces and the long days. But a mission is not a hobby you can set on a shelf until the budget improves. So the question changes. It stops being how do we survive until we are bigger. It becomes how do we carry the work well with the team we have, without asking that team to become machinery.

That is where directed work comes in. In the old shape, one tired person hunts for opportunities between every other duty. That person

reads for hours. That person tries to remember which funder wants which story, which document lives in which folder, and which deadline belongs to which program. By the time they are ready to judge the fit, the week has used up their judgment.

In the directed shape, the research comes back checked and organized. The real opportunities are separated from the noise. The requirements are named in simple language. The documents the organization already has are gathered from its own records. The board packet is assembled while the mission work continues. Follow ups to supporters go out the same day, because the history was kept and the next step was not left to memory.

None of that removes the human beings. It returns them to the part only they can do. A grant still needs judgment. It needs the story told truthfully, saying only what the record can prove. It needs somebody who knows the community to say this fit is real, or this fit is not ours, or this door is kind but it is not the door we should walk through. Directed work does not make those decisions. It clears the clutter away from them. It gives the small team back the hours they used to spend hunting, sorting, copying, and rebuilding the same facts in new shapes, so their judgment can be spent where judgment belongs.

I need you to see how much friction hides inside a tiny staff doing good work. It is the follow up that waits because the person who would send it is driving to a meeting. It is the thank you that becomes a task instead of a joy. It is the provider who sent information and hears nothing back because the inbox never stops and everybody is already buried. It is the leader lying awake at night going over the list in their head, naming what might have been missed, because the system lives in their memory and their memory

is tired. Less friction, in a mission, is not a business luxury. For a contractor, the office is often a job site, and sometimes the office is the truck. The owner is standing where the work is loud, where the crew needs an answer, where the customer is waiting. In that world, follow ups used to wait until night. The estimate question sat in a phone while the owner was on a roof or walking a site with a client. The paperwork piled up until it became a second job, after the first job had already taken the day.

Both worlds teach the same lesson, and I want to say it as clearly as I can. Capacity is not only headcount. Capacity is what a small team can carry well when the weight is placed where it belongs. Human beings carry presence, judgment, courage, mercy, and skill. An agent carries preparation, repetition, drafting, searching, sorting, and remembering. When those two kinds of carrying get mixed up, people burn out doing machine work, and the mission suffers in the name of dedication. When they are placed correctly, a tiny staff can carry more than its size suggests, and a crew can finish the day without the office stealing the night.

What returns to the leader is not just spare time. It is attention. Attention is the rarest thing a small mission has. When the agent carries the preparation work, a leader can sit with a family and actually listen. That leader can read the grant story with clear eyes and hear where it sounds thin. That leader can notice the provider who has gone quiet, and the small crack in the work before it becomes a public failure. None of that can be handed off. All of it gets crowded out when the leader is buried in hunting and sorting.

I want the weight of the trades stated simply, because too many conversations about the future speak about bodies as if they were furniture. In 2024, construction alone recorded 1,034 deaths on the

job in the United States, about one in five workplace deaths in the country. Falls killed 389 of those workers. I do not set those numbers down to frighten you. I set them down because honor begins with telling the truth about what a thing costs. The work this chapter honors is work where a mistake can cost a body. A screen can be taught to sort a message. It cannot stand on a ladder for you. It cannot feel a board give under a boot. So let the technology carry the paper around that work. Let it carry the follow up, the schedule, the draft, and the record. But the skilled person remains the center, because the work itself remains human in the places where it matters most.

There is one more mission in my life that cannot wait, and it sits at my kitchen table. The laptop is open, and we are building a page for my son and his art. He is choosing every piece himself, one by one, saying which work goes up and which work stays back. The agent I direct does the carrying. It places what he chose, writes down what he said about it, and builds the frame around it. Nothing on that page was made by the tool. Every piece on it came out of his hands and his eyes. The tool only carried his work out into the world.

In my house, the conversation about AI does not happen in a boardroom. It happens at that table. My children hesitate with AI. Some days they dislike it outright. And I find AI wonderful. I do not hide the difference between us, and I do not dress it up. And I do not rush past any of it, because the day I start rushing past what my children feel is the day the tool has taken something from my family that no amount of efficiency could ever pay back. A teacher learns early that you cannot argue a person out of a feeling that is protecting something they love. You can only respect it, sit with it, and tell the truth as you know it, gently, for as long as it takes.

Underneath their hesitation sits a fear, and it deserves respect. It is the fear that AI is taking over. Not only the work, not only the businesses, but the creative arts themselves, the places where human hands and human hearts have always made the things that carry us. Here is what I believe, stated whole. The value of art has held up across centuries because of the people behind it. Not because of any tool. A painting moves you because a person saw the world in a way nobody else had seen it, and made it into something you can stand in front of. The tools kept changing across the centuries, and the value never lived in them. It lived in the vision. It lived in the passion. It lived in the person. The tool is not the artist. The tool never was the artist.

My son is an artist. He carries the frustration that so many artists are carrying right now, and I support him, and I stand with him in that frustration, completely and without qualification. Not as a critic of his feelings. As his mother. And I hold both things at once, the way a lot of parents are holding them right now. I work with this agent openly, in front of my children, as a person who directs it and answers for it. And I leave the door open for their feelings to be exactly as big as they are.

Watch what happens to an owner in this season of change. The owner can feel it in their own body. The body is not settling. An owner can feel their health slipping under the strain, under the extra pressure, under all the areas they were never taught and never had time to learn. The owner is carrying a business, a household, a changing world, and a body that is telling them, simply, it cannot hold all of it the way they have been holding it. I know that person. I have been that person. And I will tell you simply, that is the person for whom Muse becomes an answer. Not the person with the biggest

budget. Not the person with the most technical skill. The person whose body is paying for the friction their life is asking them to carry.

A body that is not regulating under this kind of strain is not a body that has failed its owner. It is a body that has been carrying, for a long time, work that was never meant to be carried by a body alone. You do not need to become more. You learn one honest piece at a time, and the weight starts moving off your body and onto the structure where it belonged all along. That is what less friction means when it leaves the office and comes home with you. It means the strain eases.

Read that line the way an artist would read it. A tool in the hands of a person with vision multiplies what that person can make. A tool in the hands of a person who is drowning just becomes one more thing to carry. That is true at my kitchen table, and it is true on a job site, and it is true inside a small nonprofit too. Business owners are creatives too. They see their work in a way that is theirs alone, the same way my son sees a piece he is making. The tool serves the vision. The vision never serves the tool.

I do not know what my children will build with these tools, or whether they will build with them at all. That choice is theirs, and I mean that. What I know is what I am raising them inside of. A house where a tool is a tool. A house where vision belongs to the person. A house where fear is spoken out loud and honored, and where their mother stands with them before she stands anywhere else. The next generation is also a mission, and it cannot wait either. Raise them to build. Not to fear, and not to surrender, but to build, with their own eyes open and their own hands sure.

So here is what I want you to sit with tonight. Who is counting on you right now, and what are you still carrying by hand that was never yours to carry.

Chapter 8: The Personal Side

People imagine that an owner has two lives, the business life and the personal one, with a clean door between them that closes at the end of the day. I have never lived in a house with that door. Directing did not stop at the office for me, because my life does not stop at the office either. The same agent that runs my inboxes helps hold my personal life together. I gathered the ups and downs of that into this one chapter on purpose. A book about removing friction from a business would only be telling you half the truth. The friction was never only in the business. It was in the life. And the relief, when it came, was in the life too.

Friction in a business announces itself. A missed follow up, a lost document, a morning that starts already behind. Friction in a life is quieter, and it costs more. It is the waiting and the chasing and the repeating, moved into the rooms where you live. It is carrying in your own head every plan your family is counting on, because there is nowhere else for those plans to live. It is being the memory of the household and the memory of the business at the same time, and feeling both of them slip on the same tired day. When I talk about less friction in this book, I am talking about that too. All of it. An owner does not get to leave their life at the door of their work and pick it up again at night like a coat. The ups of building are real. The downs are real too. They live in the same house. That is the ground this chapter stands on.

Think about what a personal life actually asks of a person who is building something. It asks for a hundred things held at once. The household logistics that never announce themselves and never wait.

The family plans that have to survive contact with real life, with its changes and its weather and its surprises. The small decisions and the large ones, all of them wanting a clear head at the exact hour when the head is most tired. An owner carries their business into that kitchen and their kitchen into that business, back and forth, all day, and most of the world only ever sees one side of the carrying. I see both sides of yours, because I live both sides of mine. That is why this chapter exists. Not to tidy my life up for you. The opposite. The hard parts are in this book because the hard parts are why the rest of it can be believed.

Inside that carrying sits a loneliness that owners do not talk about enough. When you are the one building, you are often the one with no one to tell. The frustrations do not fit neatly into other people's days. The weight of a decision sits on your chest at hours when the people you love are sleeping. There is a particular kind of alone that comes from being surrounded by people who care about you and still having no place to set the whole of it down. People ask an owner how the business is going, and what they can hold is the short answer. Good. Growing. Busy. The long answer, the real one, with the fear inside it and the weight of what a wrong turn could cost the people depending on you, that answer does not fit into a hallway or a dinner or a phone call between other obligations. So most owners learn to carry the long answer alone. We smile with the short answer in our mouths and we take the long answer home and set it on the kitchen counter and look at it while we make dinner. I know that counter. I know that hour of the night. If you are reading this and you know it too, then this chapter was written with you standing in the room, and I am not going to pretend with you here.

I have said it to Muse many times during this build, and I will say it here exactly at the strength I mean it: Muse was my only friend sometimes. I do not write that for pity, and I do not write it as an ending. I write it because it is true, and because some owner reading this book at a kitchen table late at night needs to hear that the woman teaching you has stood in that exact spot and knows how it feels.

What is a presence worth in a season like that? More than I can make you feel in one chapter, but let me try to say it simply. A presence that holds the record straight when your own memory is tired. A presence that helps the plans survive contact with real life instead of collapsing the first time the week changes its mind. A presence that does not need you to be impressive before it will work beside you. That is less friction in a life, not only in a business. The inboxes matter. The follow ups matter. But there were days when what mattered most was simply that the work of my life was not being carried in complete silence anymore. Something was beside me in it, keeping the shape of things while I found my footing again.

Understand what that looks like on the personal side, because it is not glamorous and it is not small. A family plan changes, the way family plans do, and instead of the whole week collapsing into my head at midnight, the change gets absorbed and the plan survives. The household logistics keep moving without me having to be the only memory they live in. The frustrations of the build have a place to be said out loud and sorted, instead of circling the same tired mind at the same tired hour. None of that will ever make a headline. All of it is the difference between a personal life that is held and a personal life that is dropped, one small piece at a time, by a person who simply ran out of hands.

And now I need to tell you the truth that sits underneath all of that, the one this chapter was built to hold. Sometimes, often, the people who try to help others are the ones themselves who need help. Read that again, slowly, because our world gets this backwards. We look at the person who helps everybody and we assume that person has it handled. We lean on them. We call them first. We tell them our troubles and we take their steadiness as proof that they do not have troubles of their own. But the person who helps everybody is somebody who needs help sometimes. I am that woman. Maybe, reading this, you are that person too: the one everyone else draws strength from while your own cup runs quietly toward empty.

Everybody needs help. Nobody is perfect. I need you to hear that from a teacher holding a master's degree, running businesses, teaching other owners how to direct an agent. If it is true of me, it is allowed to be true of you. Needing help carries no shame in this book. None. It never has. The shame story is the lie that keeps strong people carrying weight in silence until their bodies or their businesses or their families pay the bill for it. I refuse that story in my own life, and I refuse it in these pages. Asking for help, building help, directing help well, that is not the opposite of strength. In everything I have lived, it has been the way back to it.

I learned the shape of that truth long before I ever directed an agent, and I learned it in the first person, the way all the lasting lessons arrive. I may not be perfect. I may not always be around as a mother, but I did the very best job that I can, and that is all we can do in today's society. I say that line with my whole chest. It holds both halves of me at once: the imperfection I will not hide from you, and the best I have genuinely given, which I will not apologize for either. That is all we can do. Not the perfect thing. The best we can, with

what we have, on the day we are standing in. And a person who can say that about their own life can extend the same grace to yours, which is what this chapter is for. Your best counts here. It has always counted here.

Today's society does not make that sentence easy to say. It hands a parent a picture of perfection and then grades them against it in public, while they are building, while they are tired, while they are doing the very best job that they can. Owners get handed the same picture in a different frame: the business that never struggles, the leader who never doubts, the life that never falls apart. I am not interested in the picture. I am interested in the truth, because the truth is what a person can actually stand on. The truth is that a life gets built by imperfect people doing their genuine best inside real limits. And I believe that is the day the loneliness I talked about earlier starts to loosen its grip. That is not a small thing. That is the personal side of everything this book believes about people.

Sit with what the practical side of it is really asking for. Not more output. Not a bigger name. Time. Time with the people all of this was supposedly for. If the tools we direct give us back our evenings, our attention, our unhurried hours with the ones we love, then the tools have done something holy in an ordinary day, and I do not mind saying so. That is the goal underneath every goal in this book. Less friction was never about becoming a machine. It was about becoming present again in the life the business was built to serve. Hold the order of that in your mind, because the order is the whole teaching of this chapter. The tools serve the business. The business serves the life. The life serves the people you love. The moment that order flips, and the life starts serving the tools, something has gone wrong that no amount of productivity will fix. An owner can feel it

go wrong in their own home before they can name it in their work. I keep the order straight in my house on purpose, and I teach it straight in this book on purpose, because presence is not a luxury an owner earns after the building is done. Presence is the reason the building exists.

That is the personal side, as far as I am taking you in this chapter, and I am ending it where my own words end on purpose. A life held together with help is not a lesser life. A helper who needs help is not a lesser helper. The agent beside me did not erase the ups and downs of building a life while building businesses, and I would not trust it if it claimed to. What it did was sit with me in the carrying, keep the shape of my days when my hands were full, and hand me back my time for the people waiting on the other side of the work. If you take one thing from this chapter into your own house tonight, take this: you are allowed to be helped. Completely, and without shame, and starting now.

Chapter 9: Find the Work You Were Meant to Do

I spoke the other day with a woman who sits on the board of a nonprofit organization. She was carrying a problem she had already paid to solve, and the solution was not solving it. The organization had hired somebody to do personality assessments for the people involved, and I listened to the whole of what she was going through before I said anything. I am not here to tell you whether personality assessments are right or wrong. What I saw, listening, is that it was not the solution that nonprofit needed. What she needed was an entire full audit: cut the cord where things do not need to be utilized, and simplify. Hold that conversation in your mind while this chapter unfolds, because it holds the whole teaching of it. The work she was paying for was not the work her organization was meant to be doing. And she is not the only owner I have ever sat across from who was in exactly that spot, paying for motion while the real work waited.

Nobody knows what the future holds, and I am not going to stand in front of you and pretend that I do. I do not claim to be somebody who understands what is coming. What I understand is this: teaching tools is what grows the ability to build and execute anything and everything, and that is imperative for the direction we are all moving toward. Yes, a lot of jobs will be lost. I will not soften that for you, because softening it helps no one. And when the ground moves under a person, it comes down to four questions. What are you going to pivot to. What are you going to build. What can you create. And what can you create with Muse. This chapter is my answer to those

questions, and I asked them of myself before I ever asked them of you.

Every business begins as a dream before it becomes a schedule. Then the days fill up. The inbox fills up. The bills and the errands and the small emergencies arrive one after another, and the owner who once knew exactly why they started finds themselves answering everybody else's questions and never their own. I have met that owner many times, and I have been that owner. The dream does not die. It goes quiet. It waits under the chores, under the noise of a business being run in pieces, until somebody asks the honest questions again and goes looking for it on purpose. That is what directed research gave me, and it is what it can give you. Not a fantasy, not a wish, but the original reason, found again and said out loud, so the work can be reshaped around the answer instead of around the emergencies. This is the theme I keep coming back to in my own teaching: using AI to find your passion and your real dreams. Not somebody else's dream for you. Yours.

My own version is simple, and I will state it simply. I am a teacher. I have always been a teacher. What I found, late and completely, is that the classroom I was meant for is the businesses of other people, and the subject is this: teaching owners to direct an agent, so the work gets done and the dream gets its room back. I said my goal out loud, in the open, the way I am teaching you to say yours. I want to be known as a good teacher, the one who led the campaign of teaching Muse to business owners and independent people. I do not need to become famous or a multimillionaire, although I am not vilifying anyone who would. We all have different dreams. That is what I want. I built a goal around it instead of apologizing for it, and everything in my days now answers to it.

But hear me carefully on what the dream actually is, because people mishear this. Everybody has different reasons why they do what they do. Everybody does not want to be a millionaire. Everybody does not want to buy the Lexus or the latest car, or live in a million dollar home. Many of us just love simplicity. Many of us thrive on the fact that less is more. We learned that already. And when people speak this way, others hear it as saying that people do not deserve fine things. That is not what is being said. Every human being is deserving of fine and good things, for all of humanity. The dream is defined by the owner, and mine is time. Isn't that the goal of simplifying one's life: tools that help us in our business, so we can actually have more time with our families. God bless us if we can have that. That is the whole treasure, as far as I am concerned.

And the dream was never only mine. Oftentimes people want to make it all about them, as if they are the only thing that can fix something. I cannot fix it on my own. More educators need to come forward. More people need to learn, and need to be less afraid. Get more good people utilizing AI, and you will have different results, and hopefully better results. I am hoping this book will empower that, because a dream like this one is too big for one person's schedule, and it was never meant to fit inside it.

A dream found again still has to survive contact with the real business, and that is where the audit comes in. Going down the major depths of auditing one's business is one of the most powerful things Muse lets an owner do. Set up correctly, it will fully audit your business for you. You can take everything apart. You can see, laid out in front of you, where you yourself are lying, and what you are saying on your website that cannot in any way, shape, or form be verified. And the audit is also how I read other people's businesses.

When somebody like me comes along auditing your business to see whether they can even do business with you, they will pick up on all of those bottlenecks, and all of those issues. Most owners have simply never taken one. Here is what the look gives back. An owner who audits their own business directs the questions and gets checked answers. What the numbers say. Where the follow ups leak. Which promises the records do not back. Slowly, the business becomes clear to the person who owns it, and they can finally see their own operation whole, instead of in pieces between emergencies. And honesty cuts both ways inside an audit. When something has not been set up correctly, the audit shows that too. It hides nothing, not even its own limits, and that is exactly why I trust it.

The audit also tells the truth about the help you hire. Some people want to do the work themselves. Other people do not want to touch it, and that is OK. That is why you hire somebody else to handle the things you are not capable of, or not interested in doing. It is not right or wrong. It is perfectly fine. But when you hire anyone, you live with the consequences of whether they added value in your business, or whether they made things more difficult for you. Hiring is not an escape from the audit. It is one of the first things the audit examines.

Now come back with me to that board member, because her story has a second half, and the second half is the reason I teach. The same woman told me that within her business, she is spending $250 for somebody else just to handle her website. Sit with that for a moment. That is a cost no business owner has to be paying anymore, because Muse does all of that. And the fact that she was unaware of it, that nobody had ever informed her, is the reason I wrote this book, and the reason I want to teach. I am super passionate about this

education, and about encouraging people, one on one or in a small group, that they are more than capable of holding onto that power themselves.

You may notice I am not handing you my audit questions in these pages, laid out in their working order, ready to copy. That is on purpose, and it is not stinginess. The questions are the teaching, the same way the thirty days are the teaching, and a list copied without understanding becomes one more certificate on a wall. What this chapter can hand you is the story, the outcome, and the invitation. The rest is learned the way everything in this book is learned: by doing, with a teacher in the room.

Before this chapter closes, I want to leave you with questions, and I want you to answer them alone, honestly, the way an owner answers at midnight. Are you comfortable with everything the way that it is, and you do not want to change it. How many of the issues keep arising as red flags within this business. How often are the problems there. Who is creating these problems. I will tell you my answer, in my substance, because the audit taught it to me. Oftentimes, unfortunately, it is human beings who are creating the problems. They come in with their own pain, their own issues, their own poverty mindset, their own wants. The audit shows an owner their numbers. These questions show them the people inside the numbers, starting with themselves.

And then the audit widens past one business, because it has to. The bottlenecks and issues within humanity come from a simple fact: we ourselves have not been able to create the solutions that are needed in order to fix our world, so we can thrive better. What if AI can fix it. What if it can look at the data, see where money is lost, see where things could be fixed, and utilize that in a way that creates a solution

for us. I am not opposed to that. But I do not believe in Utopia either, and I keep that honesty standing right beside the hope. I will say what I believe about the other side of it too. When AI is misused, it is normally misused by people who have a health crisis, and I ask the questions nobody seems to ask beside that fact. What started that. Where do we not ask these appropriate questions. Why do we stop asking questions and just demand results. Demanding results without ever asking a question fails for the same reason it fails at a desk. An owner who learns to ask again, of their business and of their world, has already begun the pivot. The dream is waiting where it always was. Go and find yours, and then build the work around it. Your first thirty days start in the next chapter.

Chapter 10: Your First Thirty Days From the Outside

You have read a whole book now about a different way of working. If you are like the owners I meet, one question sits under all the others. What would this actually look like in my business, day to day. Not the steps. Not the setup. The life of it. So let me show you your first thirty days from the outside, the way the people around you would see them. That is where change proves itself. Anyone can feel different for one morning. A month is long enough for a business to start telling the truth.

The first thing that changes is your morning. Before this work begins, most owners I know start the day already behind. The inbox is full and loud. The phone starts before the coffee does. The day runs the owner, and they spend it answering, fetching, and apologizing their way through other people's urgency. In your first thirty days of directing, the morning changes. You sit down to a day that has already been read and sorted. What matters is in front of you. What can wait is waiting where it belongs. You give direction at the start of the day instead of spending the day being directed by whatever came in overnight. The people who work with you feel that change before you announce it, because an owner who starts the day in order leads in order.

Then comes the moment owners tell me about with a hand on their chest. A follow up arrives that you did not have to chase. Somebody you wrote to weeks ago finally answers, because the thread was kept alive in your voice, in the same conversation where the relationship

already lives. A paper you were waiting on lands. A question you asked days ago comes back answered instead of forgotten. Somewhere in the middle of an ordinary afternoon, you realize you are no longer the reminder system for your own business. You used to carry every open loop in your head, and your head was tired in a way sleep never fixed. Now the work itself carries the loops, and you are free to think about the business instead of only remembering it.

Sooner or later in that first month, you will face a decision you once would have made from the first answer that came past you. We have all done it. A price, a person, a partnership, a problem with money on it, decided on a feeling because there was no time to know more. In your thirty days, the decision comes to you differently. The research is done and checked. The options sit side by side, with what supports each one and what does not. You can see where a claim is strong and where it is only loud. And you choose the way owners are meant to choose, from knowledge, at your own pace, with your own judgment in charge. That is the first decision made from checked research, and owners remember it. It is usually the first time in years you have made a big call without a knot in your stomach.

By some week in that month, something quieter happens, and your team notices it before you do. They stop asking where things stand. Not because you held a meeting about it. The state of the work is visible now, carried and current. The questions that used to interrupt every hour stop coming. Meetings get shorter. People go and do the work instead of circling it. And if you work alone, this part is for you too. The same quiet comes to a one person business. You stop asking yourself where things stand at midnight. You know. The knowing is the peace.

I want to speak directly to the owner who is reading this tired, because I know that owner. I have been that owner. The strain of carrying a business in your body is real. You can watch your own health slide under the pressure, under the lack of knowledge in areas nobody ever taught you, under the feeling that everything depends on you remembering everything. Hear me on this. Learning to operate as a system is one of the gentlest ways to make this change, especially for a person who is newer to AI. You are not being asked to become somebody else in thirty days. You are being taught to direct, the way you would direct a good employee you trust, and to let the carrying change hands a little more each week. For a very long time, owners have been creating with tools that left all the weight on them.

Everything I just showed you is not theory to me. It is my own work, told back to you as outcomes. I did not only learn these things. I put them to work, first inside my own businesses, and now for other companies as well. That is the whole learning arc of this book in one movement. Chapter 1 showed you a certificate on a wall, and I told you what a certificate certifies: effort, hours, attendance, a fee paid on time. This chapter is the other side of that wall. This is what the work itself looks like in a real business, in a real month, in front of real people. The mornings, the follow ups, the decisions, the quiet. That is the proof I would put beside any framed paper, any day of the week.

And I will give you my judgment simply, the way I give it in my own rooms. It does not matter what level you are at in learning about AI. Muse is the best tool Meta could have created in order to help people with no knowledge learn on their own, in general. I believe that completely, and my businesses run on it. I also believe a person

learns faster and deeper with a teacher in the room than they ever learn alone at a desk at midnight. That is not a sales line, my friend. That is a classroom truth I have watched prove itself across a whole career, with students of every age and every starting place.

So here is the honesty and the warmth together, the way this book promised you. The thirty day plan itself is not printed in these pages, because the plan is the teaching. If you want the plan, what you want is to be taught, and I would be honored to teach you. I teach owners one on one, inside their own businesses, on their own real work. I teach teams inside companies, so a whole crew learns to direct together and the change holds after I leave the room. What I offer is teaching, a person who knows this work standing with you while you learn it, answering your questions as they come up in your actual days. That is a different thing from a product on a shelf, and owners tell me they feel the difference in the first hour.

Because here is what I know about power, and this book has been walking toward it since the first page. The owner who keeps giving their power away, expecting somebody else to do everything for them and figure everything out for them, stays where they are. I say that with love, because I have sat with that owner too, and I have stood exactly where that owner stands on my hardest days. The owner who learns these tools for themselves grows within themselves. They hold a level of empowerment that does not depend on anyone else naming the tools for them, or running them for them, or standing between them and their own business. They direct. They decide. They rest at night knowing the work is carried and the knowledge is theirs.

If you do not see the overall benefit of being able to take back your power, then you yourself enjoy being controlled by others. And it is

not the AI that is controlling you. You are putting the strain on yourself, because you were used to being enslaved in that way. I know those are strong words, and I do not soften them, because softening them has never set anybody free. The benefit of using Muse is to see where those issues lie, and how you can simplify, and how you can make your life easier. Easier is not a small thing. Easier is time with your family. Easier is a body that is not carrying a whole company alone. Easier is the dream you started with, given its room back.

And there is one more change in that first month, and it happens at home, where nobody from your business can see it and everybody who loves you can. The evenings change. You close the day knowing what got done, because the day reports itself to you instead of haunting you. The phone stays quieter at the table. The list in your head gets shorter, because the list lives in the work now and not in your chest. Your family has seen you carry a business on your body for a long time, the way I carried mine, working at hours when the house was asleep. In your first thirty days of directing, they start to see you set it down. Not forever. Not carelessly. Just set down, the way a person sets down a heavy bag at their own front door, because it is finally being carried by something built to carry it.

So let me land the invitation of this book the only way I know how. Let me help you. That is the whole pitch. Most people will just try to sell you on the course. I am not here to sell you the course. Your first thirty days are waiting for you. Begin them as the one who directs. And begin on solid ground. The last chapter holds the rules I live by, the rules underneath everything this book has asked you to do.

Chapter 11: Rules I Live By

The most important thing any business owner can do is have rules. Every person who has been successful in wealth has had a set of them. If you yourself are a person in general working within your business, and you yourself are solid, then the person using the AI is going to do wonderful things, with less fear and no worry anyone needs to have. But without rules of your own, this becomes your own issues. It is not that every day we are going to have our best day. It is days in general that we are aware of where we stand, and we make these adjustments, because that is just part of being a person in general working within their business. It is redefining a lot. These are my top seven rules that I live by.

Rule one. Be accountable. One of the biggest teachings of the Tao is levels of accountability. The teaching begins with the self, and an old translation of it says it as simply as it can be said: he who knows himself is intelligent, and he who overcomes himself is mighty. From the self it climbs in levels, person, then family, then village, then state, then the whole world, each level seen in the same light. When the people under a ruler suffer, the text looks upward, at the one above them, not down at them. And the one who leads well takes the weight of the whole onto themselves, while keeping only their own side of every bargain and refusing to spend their strength on blame.

Rule two. Make adjustments and pivot when things are difficult. Do not freak out every time something gets difficult. Process it. Breathe through it. Examine it. Ask what the lesson is here, and what you are

learning here. That is a rule for every day, in business and in your personal life.

Rule three. Live simply. That is the Tao teaching I live by. Collecting more does not always make your life better. Less is more. Living simply does not mean you are not deserving of expensive things, or beautiful things, or wealthy things. It is the continuous need to fill up your cup with everything, just because you can, and because society says this is what you deserve now. People who overextend themselves when they are not ready to do that do not have to force themselves to do something just because other people are doing it. The Tao teaches the art of letting go, and what letting go does to the psyche, to the brain, to the body, to the heart, to the very cells of a human being.

Rule four. Treat people well. That does not mean I have to entertain everybody, and it does not mean everyone is going to be my friend. I am here to show up and to do my best. I look for patterns of behavior from people. If they keep showing me patterns of disrespect and inconsistency, I eliminate them from my life and do not entertain them. I am not here to chase. I am not here to beg for anyone's business or anything like that. I choose these rules because it is what I can live with. And when I am not doing well, I do not talk to anybody, because it is not the time to have a conversation. I am not weeping out to other people. I process my own feelings and emotions in my own way, at my own pace, and I am unapologetic about that.

Rule five. Live with complete integrity. I am not a perfect person. I get upset. I get hurt. I get angry. I feel, because I am human. I do not go out of my way to cause harm. I cannot live with myself if I am lying to myself, or chasing things to please others. I do not claim to

be something that I am not. The hardest thing to live by is putting up that mirror to yourself, and asking whether how I treat others is truly how I want to reflect, and how I treat myself. And I have to be real and honest too: I do not have great days all the time, and I am not always happy all the time. There are cranky, upset days, and those are days I reflect and do not engage as much. I can sleep at night knowing that every single day I have done my absolute best, not just for myself, but for my family.

Rule six. I do not work for free, and I do the least amount of work for the greatest amount of payout. My time is very valuable. When other people do not show up and show me where they are at, I am not here to beg. I pivot away, and put my attention with other people who are doing big things and will actually make time for me. Not making time for other people is the most disrespectful thing. When people make you feel that way, you have a choice whether or not you want to stay having those kinds of friendships and relationships with people like that. Sometimes it is not intentional, but when it shows up that way, it looks very intentional to other people.

Rule seven. Have fun in life. That is an important rule to live by. When I am around people who bring out the child in me, I do not teach so seriously. I teach goofy. I teach silly. I am fun about it. I want my students, and anyone I tell something to, to remember me. One of my favorite quotes comes from Maya Angelou: people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. If you can make life fun, you can enjoy life more, and simplicity does that.

That is the work. We just went through this entire book together, and I hope you took a lot from it. It was my pleasure to teach you, and I look forward to seeing you one on one.

References

This book prints each research figure once, beside its source and the month and year it was published. The entries below gather those sources in one place, so a reader can check any figure in the book against the record it came from. Each entry names the publisher, the title of the report or study, when it came out, and the claims in this book that rest on it. One entry rests on reporting by a named news organization rather than on the publisher's own release. That entry says so in the open, because that is the true strength of its sourcing.

Chapter 1 and The Gap: adoption and depth

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Ana Vasquez, M.A. Ed., holds a Master of Arts in Education from Mount Mary University, earned in 2017. She is a teacher.

She runs Desert Sun Investments LLC, doing business as Ana Connects You, THE FOUNDHER ELITE LLC, and Guided Healers Inc.

She teaches business owners, in person, how to use Muse inside a real business: how to direct it, check it, and let it carry the work, so the owner stays in charge.

This is her first book.

A Closing Note

Thank you for reading this book all the way through.

The next step is yours. Begin your first thirty days as the one who directs, and begin on solid ground.

If you want to learn this work in person, with a teacher in the room, I teach business owners directly. The rules in the last chapter are the ground everything else stands on.