SHARING STRICTLY PROHIBITED - For personal use of the licensed account only - See MixCache.com Terms of Use.

From the MixCache.com library

SAMPLE COPY

SHARING STRICTLY PROHIBITED - For personal use of the licensed account only - See MixCache.com Terms of Use.

The Small-Business Growth Playbook

MixCache.com

SAMPLE COPY

Sample from MixCache.com - The Online eBook Marketplace

SHARING STRICTLY PROHIBITED - For personal use of the licensed account only - See MixCache.com Terms of Use.

Table of Contents

- **Introduction**
- **Chapter 1** Start with Unit Economics: Know Your Real Margins
- **Chapter 2** Define the One Market and One Offer
- **Chapter 3** The Three Metrics You Must Track
- **Chapter 4** Pricing for Predictable Profit
- **Chapter 5** Cash and Working-Capital Discipline
- **Chapter 6** Foundations of a Repeatable Lead Engine
- **Chapter 7** Lead Qualification and the Sales Playbook
- **Chapter 8** Conversion Optimization for Small Businesses
- **Chapter 9** Building a Customer Onboarding Machine
- **Chapter 10** Retention, Upsell, and Lifetime Value Growth
- **Chapter 11** Process Mapping and SOPs that Work
- **Chapter 12** Hiring and Onboarding for Role Fit
- **Chapter 13** Leading Small Teams Without Overmanaging
- **Chapter 14** Quality Control and Customer Feedback Loops
- **Chapter 15** Leveraging Freelancers and Strategic Partners
- **Chapter 16** Financial Forecasting and Scenario Planning
- **Chapter 17** Taxes, Compliance, and Smart Legal Structures
- **Chapter 18** Pricing, Discounts, and Collections Policies
- **Chapter 19** Insurance, Data Security, and Risk Mitigation
- **Chapter 20** How to Prepare for Investment or Sale
- **Chapter 21** Vision, Values, and Strategic Planning
- **Chapter 22** Building a Performance Culture Without Fear
- **Chapter 23** Managing Growth-Stage People Problems
- **Chapter 24** Systems for Continuous Improvement
- **Chapter 25** The Founder’s Health: Preventing Burnout While Scaling

SAMPLE COPY

Sample from MixCache.com - The Online eBook Marketplace

SHARING STRICTLY PROHIBITED - For personal use of the licensed account only - See MixCache.com Terms of Use.

Introduction

If you run a small business, you already know growth can feel like a moving target. One month revenue pops; the next month you're plugging holes in delivery, chasing invoices, and waking up at 3 a.m. wondering if you're building a business or a job that owns you. The irony is that most owners don't lack effort—they lack a repeatable system. This book exists to give you that system: practical, low-cost, tested playbooks that help you grow revenue, profit, and team capacity without grinding yourself into dust.

The Small-Business Growth Playbook is written for founders and leaders of companies with roughly $250K–$25M in annual revenue who want predictable, sustainable scaling. You may be a solo entrepreneur with part-time help, a managing partner of a boutique firm, a CEO of a small manufacturer, or the owner of a regional services company. If you're serious about steady progress—month after month—and want tools you can implement immediately, you're in the right place. You won't find academic theories here; you'll find checklists, scripts, dashboards, templates, and step-by-step processes you can put to work this week.

SAMPLE COPY

The promise of this book is simple: systems first. When you combine basic financial discipline (know your unit economics and cash), repeatable marketing and sales funnels (so leads and deals don't rely on heroics), scalable operations (so delivery is consistent), people practices (so the right team does the right work), and clear metrics (so you can manage by the numbers), growth becomes a process—not a gamble. Systems reduce decisions, clarify priorities, and free the founder from being the bottleneck.

Here's how the book works. Every chapter follows the same rhythm: it opens with a short, relatable story to ground the lesson, explains the core principle in plain language, walks you through a concrete framework, gives you a tactical checklist (6–12 items), offers a short case study, and closes with two practical exercises or templates plus 3–5 tools to try. Each chapter includes at least one figure, table, or downloadable template—like a KPI dashboard, a simple cash forecast, a sample onboarding plan, or a pricing decision tree. You'll leave each chapter with one clear takeaway and a 3-step action plan you can execute in one to three weeks.

The 25 chapters are organized into five sections, each building on the last. Section I, Foundations, gives you clarity on the numbers and focus: unit economics, a single target market and offer, the three metrics to track, pricing for profit, and cash discipline. Section II, Repeatable Marketing & Sales Systems, helps you build a steady lead engine, qualify effectively, improve conversions, onboard customers well, and

Sample from MixCache.com - The Online eBook Marketplace

SHARING STRICTLY PROHIBITED - For personal use of the licensed account only - See MixCache.com Terms of Use.

grow lifetime value. Section III, Operations and Scalable Delivery, turns what you do into documented processes, shows you how to hire and onboard for role fit, lead small teams without micromanaging, run quality and feedback loops, and leverage freelancers and partners. Section IV, Financial Management, Legal, and Risk, covers forecasting, smart legal structures, formal pricing and collections policies, risk and data security basics, and how to prepare for investment or an eventual sale. Section V, Leadership, Culture, and Sustainable Growth, shows you how to set vision and strategy, build a performance culture without fear, handle people challenges at growth stage, install continuous improvement systems, and protect the founder's health to avoid burnout.

Before we begin, let's name the common traps that stall otherwise great businesses. Many owners spread thin across too many markets and offers; they price on gut feel rather than on contribution margin; they operate without a weekly dashboard; they "market" when they're slow and stop when they're busy; they onboard customers inconsistently; they hire reactively; they hold meetings without agendas; they underinvest in collections; and they carry too much of the work in their own heads. Most of these issues share a root cause: a lack of simple, shared systems and the rhythms to maintain them. The good news is that you don't need complex software or a big team to fix this—you need a few well-chosen rules, routines, and templates.

Think of this book as a coach in print. I'll ask you to choose, to simplify, and to measure. We'll use a few non-negotiables: track revenue growth, gross margin percentage, and customer retention; maintain a 13-week view of cash; commit to one primary market and one core offer until it's systematized; and run weekly operating rhythms so issues surface early. You'll test prices, document key processes, and set clear expectations with your team. None of this is glamorous. All of it works.

You can read cover to cover or jump to your bottleneck. If you aren't sure where to start, use the 4-week starter plan below to build momentum fast. In one month, you'll have the essentials in place: clarity on your numbers, a focused offer and lead plan, a basic sales playbook, a consistent onboarding flow, and a simple operating rhythm. That foundation will make every chapter that follows easier to implement.

4-week starter plan: install the essentials without burning out

- Week 1: Clarity, Focus, and Cash
    - Build a simple unit economics model: define your core offer, list average price, direct costs, gross margin, CAC, and LTV. Identify your true contribution margin.
    - Choose one primary market and one core offer for the next 90 days; park everything else on a "later list."
    - Set up a 13-week cash forecast and define your minimum cash buffer. Review AR and AP; implement basic terms and follow-up cadence.
    - Establish your top three metrics: revenue growth rate, gross margin

SAMPLE COPY

SHARING STRICTLY PROHIBITED - For personal use of the licensed account only - See MixCache.com Terms of Use.

percentage, and customer retention. Create a one-page weekly dashboard.
    - Deliverables by Friday: unit-economics sheet, one-market/one-offer statement, 13-week cash file, and a KPI dashboard draft.
- Week 2: Leads and Sales, the Simple Way
    - Draft a 90-day marketing plan with three channels maximum: referrals, partnerships, and one scalable channel (content or low-budget paid).
    - Define your sales stages and create a simple qualification score. Write discovery and follow-up scripts plus a 5-email sequence.
    - Block two 60-minute prospecting windows per day for the next 10 weekdays. Track outreach → conversations → proposals → closes.
    - Deliverables by Friday: 90-day plan, pipeline board, qualification rubric, discovery script, and email templates.
- Week 3: Delivery and Onboarding at Scale
    - Map the top three delivery processes tied to your core offer. Document one SOP to 80% completeness using a lightweight template.
    - Design a customer onboarding checklist with a 30/60/90-day success plan. Insert at least two proactive check-ins and a feedback loop.
    - Schedule a weekly team meeting (30–45 minutes) with a fixed agenda and 10-minute owner huddle daily. Start 1:1s with direct reports.
    - Deliverables by Friday: one complete SOP, onboarding checklist + success plan, meeting agenda, and delegation tracker.
- Week 4: Pricing, Collections, and Operating Rhythm
    - Test one pricing improvement: a revised package, a minimum engagement size, or removing a discount. Prepare a pricing decision tree and talk track.
    - Finalize written collections and credit terms; implement a dunning sequence and late-fee policy that preserves relationships.
    - Install your operating cadence: Monday metrics review, Wednesday pipeline review, Friday retrospective; monthly financial and strategy review.
    - Deliverables by Friday: pricing test plan, collections policy with templates, and a documented weekly/monthly operating rhythm.

SAMPLE COPY

As you work through the plan, set realistic targets. In four weeks, aim to hold at least 10 qualified sales conversations, ship one pricing test, reduce days sales outstanding by 5–10 days, and complete one “golden” SOP that any team member can follow. Celebrate small wins; consistency is the multiplier. A modest improvement across pricing, conversion, and retention can double profit without doubling workload.

A word on tools: use the simplest stack that lets you see and share the work. A spreadsheet for cash and unit economics, basic CRM stages for pipeline, shared docs for SOPs, a lightweight dashboard for the three metrics—that’s enough to start. Upgrade tools only when the process is stable and the ROI is clear. The book’s templates are designed to be copied, customized, and used immediately with low or no cost.

Finally, this is a playbook you’ll grow into. The early chapters will help you stabilize and focus; the middle chapters will help you scale delivery and manage risk; the final

Sample from MixCache.com - The Online eBook Marketplace

SHARING STRICTLY PROHIBITED - For personal use of the licensed account only - See MixCache.com Terms of Use.

chapters will help you lead a healthier, more resilient company. If you implement the core practices and keep the weekly rhythm, you'll create a business that compounds: better margins, better customer outcomes, a stronger team, and a founder who has the energy to enjoy the journey.

You don't have to choose between growth and your health. With a systems-first approach—anchored in people and metrics—you can build a business that gets easier to run as it grows. Let's get to work.

SAMPLE COPY

Sample from MixCache.com - The Online eBook Marketplace

SHARING STRICTLY PROHIBITED - For personal use of the licensed account only - See MixCache.com Terms of Use.

CHAPTER ONE: Start with Unit Economics: Know Your Real Margins

A few years ago I met a founder named Miguel whose custom-printing company had just crossed seven figures in revenue. He was proud, and he should have been, but he was also baffled. Every month he printed more shirts and mugs than the last, and his bank account refused to grow at the same rate. When I asked him what he made on his best-selling product, he told me a confident but wrong number. He'd taken the price and subtracted the ink and blank apparel, ignoring the labor for setup, the tear-down, the rework, the shipping supplies, the credit-card fees, and the hour his team spent designing three revisions for a $25 order. His "best seller" was eating cash. Miguel had a revenue problem, yes, but what he really had was a unit economics problem.

Unit economics are the simplest truth in business. They tell you, per unit sold, how much money you make after the direct costs of making and selling that unit, how much it costs to acquire a customer, and how much that customer is worth over time. This isn't finance wizardry; it's arithmetic with discipline. When you know the unit, you can scale on purpose. When you don't, you scale on hope. And hope is a terrible growth strategy. Most small-business owners, like Miguel, can't say with certainty how much gross margin they really have. They rely on cash balance changes to gauge success. They guess at pricing. They feel busy, but the feeling hides a leaky bucket. Unit economics plugs the holes.

SAMPLE COPY

Here's the framework we used to help Miguel, and it's the same one you'll use. First, define the unit—the discrete product or service you sell, priced and delivered. Second, calculate contribution margin per unit by subtracting all variable costs. Third, compute customer acquisition cost (CAC) by dividing sales and marketing spend by new customers acquired in a given period. Fourth, estimate lifetime value (LTV) by multiplying contribution margin per purchase by purchase frequency and customer lifespan, then subtract CAC and churn effects. Finally, express gross margin as a percentage and watch how it changes with volume, pricing, and process improvements. This small set of numbers becomes your operating compass.

Start with the unit. Pick your core offer and write down its price, every cost that scales with that sale, and the time required to deliver it. Don't round up or down. Capture real numbers. For a service, include labor hours, direct overhead for delivery (software seats used only for client work), subcontractors, travel, and materials. For a product, include raw materials, packaging, freight-in, transaction fees, and pick/pack labor. If a cost is variable at the unit level—meaning it rises or falls directly with volume—include

Sample from MixCache.com - The Online eBook Marketplace

SHARING STRICTLY PROHIBITED - For personal use of the licensed account only - See MixCache.com Terms of Use.

it. If it’s fixed or semi-fixed (rent, leadership salaries, core software), it’s overhead and belongs in the next layer of the model, not in unit contribution. The truth lives in the details.

Once your variable costs are listed, contribution margin per unit is price minus variable costs. That’s the amount each unit contributes to covering fixed costs and profit. It’s not your net margin; that comes later. Contribution margin is the fuel tank of your business—the dollars available to pay rent, salaries, and taxes, and still leave something for growth. If this number is thin, volume won’t save you; it will just accelerate the drain. If it’s healthy, you can buy ads, hire, and invest with confidence. Get this number right and the rest of the model works; get it wrong and the rest is fiction.

Customer acquisition cost answers the next question: how much do you pay, on average, to get one new customer? To compute it, take your sales and marketing spend over a period—ads, content, commissions, tools, events—and divide by the number of new customers acquired in that same period. Be thorough. If your team spends time prospecting, include a fair portion of their loaded cost. If you ran a trade show, include the booth, travel, and follow-up. The goal is not perfection but a consistent, defensible number you can improve over time. CAC tells you the price of growth. If that price is higher than what a customer gives back, growth is just a treadmill with a steep incline.

Lifetime value tells you what a customer is worth over time. For a simple transactional business, LTV is contribution margin per purchase times average number of purchases per customer. For subscription or recurring businesses, it’s contribution margin per period times gross margin-adjusted lifetime in periods. Subtract churn. For relationship businesses, estimate average relationship length based on historical data. LTV becomes more powerful when viewed as LTV-to-CAC ratio and payback period. A healthy ratio is often 3:1 or better, and payback—the months to recover CAC from gross profit—should be short enough to fund the next sale without stressing cash. Aim for payback under six to twelve months depending on cash reserves and growth rate.

SAMPLE COPY

Gross margin percentage is your contribution margin divided by price, expressed as a percent. It shows how efficient your core offering is before overhead. Many owners watch revenue and net profit but ignore gross margin. That’s like watching a racecar’s speed while ignoring the engine temperature. If gross margin compresses as you scale—because you add discounts, or variable costs rise faster than prices—profit disappears even as top line climbs. Keep gross margin healthy by managing pricing, tightening variable costs, and designing offers that deliver efficiently. Guard this metric fiercely. It’s the engine that pulls everything else.

Build a simple spreadsheet model to make this tangible. Columns: unit name, price, variable cost items, contribution margin per unit, gross margin percentage. Then add

SHARING STRICTLY PROHIBITED - For personal use of the licensed account only - See MixCache.com Terms of Use.

a second section for acquisition: monthly ad spend, salaries for sales and marketing, other acquisition costs, new customers, CAC. Third section for lifetime value: contribution margin per unit, purchase frequency per year, average lifespan in years, LTV, LTV:CAC ratio, payback period in months. Use the spreadsheet to test scenarios: What if price increases by 10 percent while variable costs stay flat? What if CAC improves by 20 percent through better targeting? What if churn halves? The model shows which lever moves the business most.

Here's a short case study. BluePeak Marketing, a 10-person agency, sold social media management at $2,500 per month. They believed their margin was 60 percent because the "cost of goods" seemed low. When we built the model, we added the account manager's time (20 hours per month at a loaded rate of $75), design hours, software seats, and a 3 percent payment fee. Contribution margin was actually $1,050 per client, or 42 percent. CAC was $2,000, and average client life was six months, yielding an LTV of $6,300. LTV-to-CAC was 3.15 and payback was a scary six months. By redesigning the offer into a productized package with tighter scope and templates, they cut delivery time by 30 percent, raised price to $2,900, and targeted ads better to drop CAC to $1,500. Contribution margin rose to $1,680 (58 percent), LTV to $10,080, and payback to three months. Growth became profitable.

SAMPLE COPY

Tactical checklist to install unit economics this week:

- Pick your core unit or offer and write down its exact price.
- List every variable cost attached to one sale; don't guess.
- Compute contribution margin and gross margin percentage.
- Record your last 90 days of sales and marketing spend in detail.
- Count new customers in that period and calculate CAC.
- Estimate average purchases per customer and lifespan; compute LTV.
- Calculate LTV-to-CAC ratio and payback period in months.
- Create a one-page summary with these five numbers.
- Review the model with your finance lead or accountant.
- Identify the one lever that improves the model most (price, cost, CAC, churn).
- Draft a one-paragraph narrative that explains the unit economics to your team.
- Save the spreadsheet as a monthly recurring review with date-stamped versions.

Exercises to run immediately:

- Exercise A: Scenario test using the spreadsheet. Make three columns: Current, 10% price increase with no cost change, and 10% CAC reduction via targeting. For each, show contribution margin, LTV, LTV:CAC, and payback. Pick the highest-impact change that you can execute within 30 days and design a small experiment to validate it. For a price test, offer a revised package to the next 10 prospects and measure acceptance. For a CAC test, change one audience parameter or creative in your primary ad channel and track cost per new lead and new customer over two weeks.
- Exercise B: Time-and-cost audit for service businesses. For one typical job, log every step and who does it, including rework and client handoffs. Load actual

Sample from MixCache.com - The Online eBook Marketplace

SHARING STRICTLY PROHIBITED - For personal use of the licensed account only - See MixCache.com Terms of Use.

hourly rates and software costs into the model. If the job's contribution margin is below your target, redesign the job: add templates, reduce revisions, cap scope, or raise price. Build a 1-page "job blueprint" that standardizes the improved version and use it for the next 20 jobs to confirm the margin improvement.

Tools and resources:

- Spreadsheet software: Google Sheets or Excel for your unit economics workbook. Keep a single tab for the core model and separate tabs for experiments and monthly snapshots.
- Time-tracking tool: Toggl, Clockify, or Harvest to capture labor hours accurately for service delivery and sales activities.
- Accounting software: QuickBooks, Xero, or FreshBooks to pull accurate cost-of-goods-sold data and payment fees.
- Simple CRM: HubSpot (free tier), Pipedrive, or Airtable to track new customers, pipeline stages, and conversion rates for CAC calculations.
- Cost-of-goods calculator template: A prebuilt spreadsheet that prompts you for price, variable materials, labor, fees, and outputs contribution margin and gross margin percentage.
- Book reference: "The Little Book of Valuation" by Aswath Damodan for deeper context on LTV and discount rates, if you want to go deeper.

Case study: Sip & Grow Coffee Roasters, a small manufacturer and retailer, was selling $18 bags of specialty beans online. Their unit economics were murky. After mapping variable costs—beans, packaging, shipping labels, transaction fees, picking labor—they found contribution margin was only $4.50 per bag. CAC from Instagram ads was $12, and average customer bought three times per year for two years. LTV was $13.50 after churn, yielding a terrible LTV-to-CAC ratio of 1.12. The owner raised price to $22 by bundling two bags and a brewing guide, negotiated better shipping rates, and focused ads on lookalike audiences of past buyers. New contribution margin: $7.20. CAC fell to $9. LTV rose to $25.20. The ratio hit 2.8, payback dropped to under five months, and the roastery could finally afford to expand without panic.

SAMPLE COPY

Avoid these common mistakes. Counting fixed costs in contribution margin (it's not variable, so leave it out). Using gross profit from a P&L without verifying what's included. Ignoring payment fees and returns. Overestimating lifespan by using averages that include zero-purchase customers. Forgetting seasonality and treating monthly CAC as if it's constant. Assuming a "typical" job or customer exists when you have multiple segments. If you have more than one core offer, build unit economics for each separately. One blended model hides what's working and what isn't.

Set targets. As a rule of thumb, aim for gross margin above 50 percent for services and above 30–40 percent for physical products, then adjust for your industry. LTV-to-CAC of 3:1 is a solid target, but only if payback is within your cash capacity. If you're self-funded and growing cautiously, you might tolerate longer payback. If you're using paid ads heavily, push for shorter payback. What matters is that these numbers are

Sample from MixCache.com - The Online eBook Marketplace

SHARING STRICTLY PROHIBITED - For personal use of the licensed account only - See MixCache.com Terms of Use.

deliberate. You choose your targets based on cash reality, growth ambitions, and risk tolerance. You review them monthly. You improve them intentionally.

Where this leads next. When you know your true unit economics, you can price with conviction, invest confidently in growth channels, and stop wasting time on offers that don’t work. You’ll see exactly how much margin is available to build the team and systems that follow. The rest of this book builds on this foundation: Section I finishes with pricing discipline and cash buffers, Section II builds marketing and sales engines that respect your CAC, Section III scales delivery without crushing margin, and Section IV protects financial health. Everything downstream is easier when the unit works.

A simple narrative to make it real. Revenue is the story you tell the world. Unit economics is the math that keeps the story true. When the math is clean, decisions get easy. You know when to push on volume and when to fix the offer. You can pass on customers who cost too much to acquire or serve. You can reward the team for improvements that actually move profit. And you can stop guessing how much gas is in the tank. That’s what Miguel did. He learned the numbers, redesigned his most profitable product, raised prices on his worst, and within two quarters his bank balance finally matched his ambition.

Here’s the action plan for this chapter. First, define your core unit and build the model: price, variable costs, contribution margin, gross margin. Do this by Friday. Second, compute CAC and LTV using the last 90 days of data, then set a target for LTV-to-CAC and payback. Third, run one experiment to improve the strongest lever—test a price change, cut a variable cost, or refine your targeting to lower CAC—and measure the result for 14 days. Put the numbers on one page and review it with your team. Put a monthly 30-minute meeting on the calendar to revisit this model. This is the smallest system that makes the biggest difference. Start here.

SAMPLE COPY

Sample from MixCache.com - The Online eBook Marketplace

SHARING STRICTLY PROHIBITED - For personal use of the licensed account only - See MixCache.com Terms of Use.

This is a sample preview. Purchase the book to read the full content.

Visit MixCache.com to purchase the complete book.

SAMPLE COPY

Sample from MixCache.com - The Online eBook Marketplace