Your Own Printing Press.

You sell attention to advertisers every day. This guide shows you how to use it for your own pipeline.

THE THESIS OF THIS GUIDE

> *"If your media works for advertisers, it should work for your own sales team."*

I've worked for monopoly newspapers, broadcast television stations, 50,000-watt radio stations, and Division I athletics properties. Every one of them sold attention for a living. Every one of them ignored their own platforms when it came to generating leads for their own sales team. I watched it happen for twenty-five years — and for most of those years, I was part of the problem.

In 1996, my director of advertising at a monopoly newspaper said something I've never forgotten: "If we just answer the phones, we'll make a hundred million dollars a year. I need you salespeople to go get me the other twenty-five." She could say that because she ran the only daily in a major market, because the internet was in its infancy, and because advertisers with money to spend had no other serious option.

That world is gone. Today, very few in-demand buyers reach out until they're ready to buy, ready to negotiate, and already convinced you're a vendor they can't ignore. The pipeline that used to fill itself now has to be built — deliberately, systematically.

Here's the irony most media executives haven't yet confronted: **the tools to build that pipeline are already inside the building**. Your website. Your broadcast inventory. Your email list. Your print pages. Your venues, events, podcast, and signage. The same assets your sales team sells to advertisers every day — the most powerful lead generation infrastructure in the world, mostly unused.

This guide is short on purpose. One worksheet. One teardown. One case study. One next step.

> *"The pipeline that used to fill itself now has to be built — deliberately, systematically, and with the media you already control."*

The Owned Media Pipeline Audit

A diagnostic for media executives who want to know what they're actually sitting on.

Most media companies can quote the rate-card value of every ad unit they *sell*. Almost none can quote the unsold value of the same inventory they already *own*. That's the first problem to fix.

Fill in every row that applies. Cross out rows that don't. When finished, total the **Estimated Unsold Monthly Value** column and count the **Yes** answers in the final column. That number is what you're currently spending *zero* of on your own pipeline.

ASSET	CURRENT USE	MONTHLY REACH / IMPRESSIONS	EST. UNSOLD MONTHLY VALUE	LEADS?
Website	Homepage, display slots, sidebar, content pages	__________	$_________	Y / N
Email List	Newsletter subscribers, prospect database, lapsed readers	__________	$_________	Y / N

→ Continued on the next page

ASSET	CURRENT USE	MONTHLY REACH / IMPRESSIONS	EST. UNSOLD MONTHLY VALUE	LEADS?
Social Following	LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, X — company & personal	__________	$_________	Y / N
Broadcast Inventory	TV commercial slots, radio spots, streaming pre-roll	__________	$_________	Y / N
Print Inventory	Newspaper pages, magazine pages, inserts, sections	__________	$_________	Y / N
Physical Signage	Building, venue, billboards, vehicle wraps	__________	$_________	Y / N
Events & Venues	Ticketed events, conferences, live broadcasts, game days	__________	$_________	Y / N

→ Continued on the next page

Audit, continued.

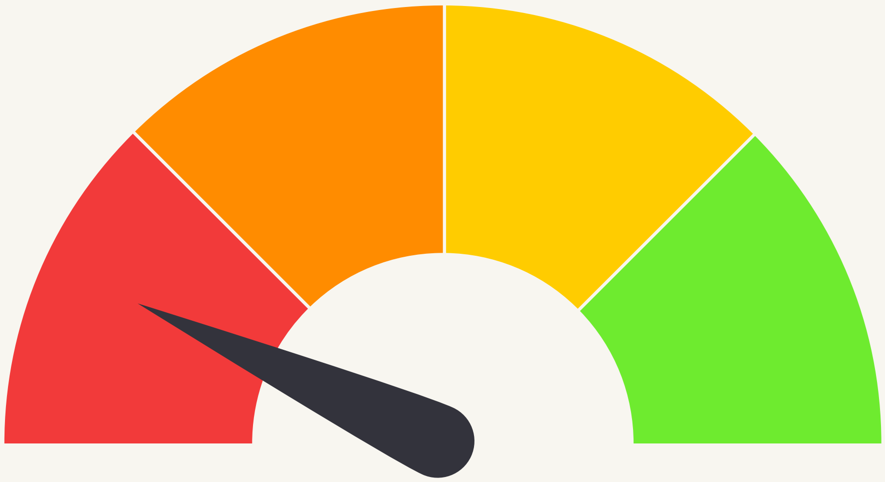
ASSET	CURRENT USE	MONTHLY REACH / IMPRESSIONS	EST. UNSOLD MONTHLY VALUE	LEADS?
Podcast / Owned Audio	In-house podcast, audio network, video podcast	__________	$_________	Y / N
Customer & Client List	Active advertisers, lapsed advertisers, warm prospects	__________	$_________	Y / N

TOTAL ESTIMATED UNSOLD MONTHLY VALUE → $ ____________________ ___ / 9

What did you just write down?

Whatever dollar figure now sits in the bottom right is the monthly value of inventory you already own, already control, and are spending zero of on your own pipeline. And whatever count sits in the final column — if it's fewer than three out of nine — tells you something important: your pipeline problem isn't a cold calling problem. It's an infrastructure problem. No amount of additional dials is going to fix it.

The next three pages explain why that's true, what the fix looks like, and what the numbers produced when I built it at a D1 athletics property staring down a $500,000 pandemic-sized hole in the budget.



If fewer than three of these assets currently generate leads,

your NBD problem is not rep effort.

It is infrastructure.

MORE DIALS WILL NOT FIX AN OWNED-MEDIA SYSTEM THAT IS NOT POINTED AT THE PIPELINE.

Your Platforms Are Not the Problem. Your Offer Is.

It's not that they can't. It's that they've only ever been asked to do one thing.

Most media executives assume that if their owned platforms could generate leads, they already would be. They're half right. The platforms can. They aren't. And the reason is structural.

The only offer a media company typically makes to its own audience is: buy advertising. That's a high-threshold offer. It appeals to people who are ready to buy today. Industry research consistently shows that's **one to three percent** of any market at any given moment. The other **ninety-seven percent** aren't ready yet — and they aren't being captured by anything currently on your site, on your air, or on your page.

A media kit waits for demand.
A low-threshold offer creates a signal.

HIGH-THRESHOLD

Buy Advertising.

- See our media kit
- Request a proposal
- Book a sales call
- Meet with a rep
- Contact us for rates

Appeals only to the 1–3% ready to buy today.

LOW-THRESHOLD

Learn Something Useful.

- Download this guide
- Watch this training
- Take this diagnostic quiz
- Read this industry report
- Get this case study

Captures the 97% who'll be ready in 60, 90, 180 days.

The low-threshold offer isn't an inferior version of the sales pitch. It's a different instrument for a different job: to make the 97% raise their hand before your competitors' 97% does.

When a prospect downloads your guide, they aren't buying. They're identifying themselves — telling you and your sales team, "I have this problem. I'm researching. I'll exchange my contact information for information that helps me think more clearly about it." That's a lead. Not a suspect your sales manager told you to call on. A lead.

RADIO STATION

"The Local Business Owner's Guide to What Actually Drives Foot Traffic in Our Market"

DIGITAL PUBLISHER OR NEWSPAPER

"5 Ways to Make Your Display Advertising Actually Work"

SPORTS OR EVENT PROPERTY

"The Sponsorship Guide for Brands Who Want Measurable ROI, Not Just Logo Placement"

Each one solves a specific problem for a specific audience. Each one costs nothing to download. Each one captures a contact record. Each one is worth more than a thousand cold calls.

→ Turn the page for the teardown.

A Side-by-Side from the Local Business Journal in My Hometown.

What the offer problem looks like in the wild — and what the fix looks like next to it.

These ads are currently running on the website of the business journal that serves my hometown — the paper I grew up reading. Bravo to them for at least using their own product to advertise their own product; most media companies don't even go that far. But look at the distance between what they're running and what I'd put in their place.

I'm using a real example because vague teardowns don't teach anything.

IBJ is a well-run publication — this isn't a knock on them. It's the industry standard I want you to beat.

Same inventory. Different ask. Different outcome.

Which set of ads do you think will generate the most leads, the top versions, or the bottom versions?

This is not a design critique. It is a pipeline critique.

1

Their headline describes what they do. Mine tells the reader what they get. "Envision Your Ad, Right Here" is a headline from the seller's perspective. "Reach 62,000 Decision-Makers" is from the buyer's. The number matters. The specificity matters.

2

Theirs has a high-threshold ask. Mine has a low-threshold offer. "Learn More" points to a web page with no direction and no conversion event. "Download Our Free Guide: 5 Ways to Make Your Ads Work Better" offers something useful to any local business owner — not just the 1–3% ready to buy today.

3

Theirs captures nothing. Mine captures a contact record. Click "Learn More" and you land on a page that doesn't ask for your information. Click "Click Here to Download" and you land on a page where submitting your contact information is the only available action.

This is the entire difference between an asset that generates leads and an asset that generates nothing. Not a creative problem. Not a design problem. Not a budget problem. **It's a question of what the ad is asking — and whether the answer creates a record in your CRM.**

→ Turn the page for the numbers.

What This Looked Like at Ball State.

A Division I athletics property. A pandemic-sized hole in the budget. Zero cold calls.

In 2020, I was running corporate sponsorship sales for Ball State Athletics — a D1 mid-major in Muncie, Indiana. The pandemic hit. Sponsors pulled spend. The department lost **$500,000** in revenue. Fan attendance cratered. The local economy wasn't helping. I couldn't cold call because nobody was at their office. I couldn't take meetings because nobody was having them. The traditional playbook had no move.

But I had media. So I built one low-threshold offer — a guide showing local businesses how to leverage our athletics platform — and promoted it across every owned asset we controlled.

BEFORE THE SYSTEM	AFTER THE SYSTEM
1–3	20–30
inbound sponsorship inquiries per year	*qualified leads per year, four consecutive years*

No paid ads. No cold calls. One offer. One landing page. Every owned channel pointed at the same conversion event.

$500K Pandemic revenue recovered	**73** New clients added	**100+** Qualified leads, '21–'25
0 Cold calls placed	**'22** Property of the Year	**'23** GM of the Year

THE ASSETS DEPLOYED — EVERY CHANNEL POINTED TO THE SAME OFFER

- Radio ads during live football & basketball broadcasts
- Display ads on the official athletics website
- Homepage link on every page of the site
- Physical & digital signage at highest-traffic venues
- Ads on the official athletics podcast
- Content across social media feeds
- Printed game-day programs
- One landing page, one offer, one form

Every channel pointed at the same offer. That's the system.

I didn't spend a dollar on paid advertising. I used inventory we already controlled — inventory that was either unsold or sitting idle. The cost was almost nothing. The return was transformational. The seventh edition of that guide is still generating leads today.

If your organization controls any media at all, you're sitting on the same infrastructure. The only question is whether you're going to use it.

The 30-Minute Diagnostic Call.

If the worksheet on pages two and three produced a number that bothers you, this is what comes next.

WHAT IT IS

A conversation about your specific media assets, your sales team, your average deal size, and where your pipeline is actually breaking. At the end, I'll tell you honestly whether this system is the right fit for your organization.

WHAT IT ISN'T

A sales pitch. If it's not a fit, I'll say so. Either way, you walk away with a clearer picture of where your pipeline problem actually lives — and which owned media assets have the most untapped potential. Worth thirty minutes even if we never work together.

THE CALL TENDS TO PRODUCE VALUE FOR ORGANIZATIONS WHERE...

1. Your sales team relies primarily on cold outreach while your owned platforms sit idle or underused for lead generation.

2. You have meaningful unsold inventory across your media — impressions, air time, print space, signage, social reach — that could be redirected toward your own pipeline.

3. Your average advertising or sponsorship deal is large enough that even 5–10 additional qualified leads per year would meaningfully impact revenue.

What Gets Installed

This is not a campaign. It is a pipeline asset.

Once a media organization sees the blind spot, the next question is not whether the idea makes sense. The question is whether the system actually gets built.

A working owned-media pipeline has six parts:

1. Owned Media Audit

We identify the inventory, audience paths, email lists, web placements, broadcast assets, social channels, signage, events, and other owned media that could be redirected toward new-business development.

2. Low-Threshold Offer

We create the guide, diagnostic, report, checklist, case study, or market-specific resource that gives a future advertiser or sponsor a reason to raise their hand before they are ready for a sales call.

3. Landing Page + Form

We build the conversion point where the prospect exchanges contact information for useful insight — creating a real record your team can follow up on.

4. Internal Media Campaign

We point unsold or underused inventory toward the offer, so the system runs through assets you already own rather than relying only on paid media or rep outreach.

5. Sales Follow-Up Path

We give your sales team a reason to follow up that is not "just checking in." The conversation begins with the prospect's stated interest, not a cold pitch.

6. Measurement + Optimization

We track the path from asset to lead to conversation to opportunity, then improve the offer, placements, and follow-up based on what the market actually does.

> *"A cold call asks for attention. Owned media earns it before the rep ever reaches out."*

TO BOOK THE CALL

Email me directly at:

Shane@WhiteCollarProspecting.com

Subject line: “Owned Media Diagnostic” Email me your organization, your role, and one sentence about where your new-business pipeline feels most dependent on manual outreach. I’ll reply personally within 24–48 hours.

Shane Nichols

FOUNDER, NICHOLS & ASSOCIATES
AUTHOR, WHITE COLLAR PROSPECTING

P.S. I take a maximum of two clients per month because this is not a template handoff. Every engagement requires me to personally map your owned assets, write for your market, and build the offer path your sales team will use.