



The Social Media Management Business

Stacked monthly retainers for work you can batch from anywhere. A consistency business the gurus keep mis-selling as a virality business.

\$115-730

START LEAN

14-30 days

FIRST DOLLAR

80-90%

TYPICAL MARGIN

Is this your business?

Every local business owner knows they should be posting and almost none of them want to do it. Social media management turns that universal dread into stacked monthly retainers: predictable, fully remote, and started for less than the cost of a decent office chair. Here is what the course-sellers skip: this is a consistency business, not a virality business. The operators who win treat it like a route, not a stage.

\$115-730

LEAN STARTUP COST

\$1,000-2,500

STANDARD BUILD

14-30 days

TIME TO FIRST DOLLAR

80-90%

TYPICAL GROSS MARGIN

Yes, fully

SOLO-FRIENDLY

Yes, entirely

HOME-BASED

BUILT FOR THESE FOUNDER TYPES

THE STORYTELLER

THE OPERATOR

2/5 difficulty

THE HONEST FIT TEST

You will live inside other people's brands: their voice, their customers, their 9 p.m. 'can we post this tomorrow' texts. If you need every post to be your own creative statement, this will chafe. If you like systems, batching, and the idea of six clients paying you every month for work you have templated, this is one of the cleanest laptop businesses there is.

Who pays, and why now.

There are over thirty million small businesses in America, and most treat social media the way people treat flossing: they know they should, they feel guilty that they do not, and they will pay to make the guilt go away. The owner of a med spa or a taqueria did not get into business to make Reels at 11 p.m. Social media management sells the one thing they cannot buy anywhere else: the feeling of being handled. The product is not posts. The product is 'I never think about this again.'

Demand has three reliable drivers. First, the profile is the new first impression: customers check Instagram before they walk in, and a feed that died in March reads as a business that might have too. Second, the video shift: platforms now hand local businesses free reach for short video, and almost no owner has the time or stomach to make it. Third, the algorithm rewards consistency over brilliance, which is exactly what a systematized operator sells and a busy owner cannot produce.

Competition looks scarier than it is. This niche is buried in course-bros selling 'agency in a weekend' dreams, \$99 Fiverr packages, and teenagers with a Canva login. That noise is your opening. A professional who shows up on time, posts on schedule, reports on calls and bookings instead of likes, and answers the phone is competing with almost nobody. You are not really up against agencies. You are up against the owner's nephew, and the nephew quits by week six.

The honest constraint: one client pays \$800 to \$2,500 a month, so this business scales by stacking and keeping clients, not by landing one whale. Churn is the enemy. The operators who clear six figures solo all do the same two things: they niche down so one content engine serves many clients, and they send a monthly report that connects posts to phone calls. Everyone else re-sells their entire book every year.

WHO BUYS	WHAT THEY PAY	WHAT THEY ACTUALLY WANT
Restaurants and cafes	\$800-1,200/mo	A feed that looks alive, event pushes, and butts in seats on slow nights
Med spas, salons, gyms	\$1,200-2,500/mo	Before-and-afters, bookings, and a brand that justifies premium prices
Home services and contractors	\$800-1,500/mo	Trust signals: job photos, reviews amplified, proof they are legitimate
Real estate agents and teams	\$1,000-2,000/mo	Listings dressed up, personal brand maintained, sellers impressed

THE AVERAGE LOCAL RETAINER

\$1,500

Six clients at the average retainer is \$9,000 a month, fully remote, with no inventory and almost no overhead. The entire game is landing six good ones and keeping them: which is a systems problem, not a talent problem.

Every dollar, before you spend it.

This is one of the cheapest legitimate businesses on the planet to open. The phone in your pocket already shoots better video than what most local businesses post. Spend on the legal foundation and the scheduling stack; let revenue buy everything else.

THE LEAN BUILD · START HERE	WHY IT EARNS ITS PLACE	COST
Laptop and phone you already own	Your studio, your office, and your camera crew	\$0
Scheduling tool (Metricool, Buffer, or Later)	Batch a month of posts in one sitting; this is the assembly line	\$0-25/mo
Canva Pro + stock library	Templates are how one person serves six brands without burning out	\$13-30/mo
LLC + business license	Your liability wall. See the legal page	\$50-500
Professional liability (E&O) insurance	You are publishing on someone else's behalf; mistakes are public	\$30-60/mo
One-page portfolio site + domain	One page, three case studies, one button. Done	\$20-100
Business bank account + bookkeeping app	Separate money from day one; future-you says thanks	\$0-15/mo
Lean total		\$115-730 all-in

THE STANDARD BUILD · ADD AFTER FIRST REVENUE	WHAT IT UNLOCKS	COST
Phone gimbal + wireless lav mic kit	Unlocks paid content days at client locations: the stickiest upsell	\$100-250
Clip editing software (CapCut Pro or Descript)	Short video is where the reach is; captions are non-negotiable	\$10-30/mo
Client reporting tool (Metricool premium tiers)	The monthly report is your retention engine; automate it	\$20-80/mo
Niche template library buildout	Twenty reusable post frameworks for YOUR industry; time more than money	\$0-200

THE RULE

Do not buy a camera, a course, or an agency software suite before client three. The \$2,000 'AAA agency accelerator' teaches nothing this playbook does not, and the DSLR stays in the bag. Templates, batching, and answered messages are the whole machine.

Clean from day one.

The legal risks here are not dramatic, but they are specific: you are publishing in public, on someone else's behalf, inside accounts you do not own. Every item below exists because some manager learned it the expensive way.

- Form your LLC:** File in your home state, get the EIN free at irs.gov, open the business bank account. THE LAUNCHPAD Module Three walks every step.
- Service agreement with hard scope:** Post counts, platforms covered, revision limits (two rounds), response-time expectations, and a 30-day out for both sides. Scope creep is the silent killer of every retainer business: the contract is your only fence.
- Access the right way: never passwords:** Use Meta Business Suite partner access, TikTok Business Center, and LinkedIn page roles. Holding a client's password makes you the suspect in every lockout and the liability in every breach. Partner access protects you both.
- Content ownership and licensing:** Contract states the client owns delivered content for their channels, you keep portfolio rights, and all stock assets are licensed through your accounts. Never lift music or images: platforms mute, strike, and sometimes sue.
- Platform terms of service:** No bots, pods, purchased followers, or engagement schemes, ever, even when a client asks. You can get a business's account restricted, and 'the client wanted it' is not a defense they will accept or forgive.
- FTC basics:** Giveaways need official rules, sponsored content needs disclosure, and fake reviews or testimonials now carry explicit federal fines. If you write it and it is paid for, it gets labeled.
- Confidentiality and no-poach:** You will see customer lists, promo calendars, and revenue numbers. A one-page mutual confidentiality clause makes serious clients trust you faster.

INSURANCE, SPECIFICALLY

Professional liability (E&O) is the core policy: \$30-60 a month covers you when a wrong-account post or a tone-deaf caption turns into a client demanding damages. Add cyber liability once you manage five-plus accounts, since you are a single point of compromise for all of them. General liability matters only if you shoot on client premises regularly.

WATCH FOR

The crisis post. One day a client will be in the news, or a customer dispute will blow up in comments, and the feed you run becomes the front line. Put a crisis clause in the contract: scheduled content pauses on notice, statements come from the owner, and emergency work bills separately. Deciding this in advance is the difference between a professional and a scapegoat.

Requirements vary by state and city. Verify with your state, city clerk, and a licensed professional. Education, not legal advice.

Three doors. Real numbers.

Price by the month, scope by the platform, and anchor with the middle door. Local retainers run \$800-2,500 in nearly every American market. Below \$800 you will resent the account by week three; above \$2,500 you are competing with real agencies and need real ad management to justify it.

	RECOMMEND	
<p>DOOR ONE</p> <h2>The Presence</h2> <p>\$800-950/mo <small>starter</small></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ 12 posts per month on 2 platforms◆ Branded templates in your visual system◆ Community management: comments and DMs answered◆ Monthly one-page report	<p>DOOR TWO</p> <h2>The Engine</h2> <p>\$1,500/mo <small>most-booked</small></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ 20 posts per month on 3 platforms◆ 4 short-form videos cut and captioned◆ Stories and review amplification weekly◆ Monthly report tied to calls and bookings◆ Quarterly strategy call	<p>DOOR THREE</p> <h2>The Full Voice</h2> <p>\$2,200-2,500/mo <small>premium</small></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Everything in The Engine, daily presence◆ Quarterly on-site content day included◆ 8+ short-form videos per month◆ Boosted-post management (ad spend separate)◆ 48-hour turnaround on requests

PRICING NOTES FOR THIS BUSINESS

- Floor: \$800 a month, no exceptions. Below that you are a freelancer with a boss, not a business with a client.
- Each additional platform is +\$200-400 a month. Platforms are work; never throw them in free to close.
- Charge a one-time onboarding fee (\$300-500): strategy, brand voice doc, template build. It filters tire-kickers.
- Sell quarterly commitments, not month-to-month: social results need 90 days and so does your case study.
- Any client who wants a weekly meeting pays Door three prices. Meetings are the most expensive thing you sell.

THE UPSELL THAT PAYS THE RENT

The content day. A quarterly two-hour visit where you shoot 90 days of raw footage at their location: \$400-600 per session. It feeds the feed, deepens the relationship, and makes you nearly impossible to replace, because the next manager starts with an empty camera roll.

Names, not strategies.

The portfolio paradox hits this niche hard: everyone wants proof, and you have none. The answer is not to wait. It is to manufacture proof in 30 days using your own account, two founding clients, and spec work so specific it embarrasses generic agencies.

1 Your own accounts first

Your business profile is your storefront. Run it like a client account for two weeks before pitching anyone: posting schedule, branded templates, short video. When a prospect checks you out, and they will, the proof is the feed itself.

2 Two founding clients at half rate

Pick two businesses you genuinely like, offer 90 days at 50% in exchange for a case study, a review, and permission to publish their numbers. This is how you buy a portfolio honestly: with discounted excellence, not free desperation.

3 The dead-account list

Scroll your city's businesses and list ten with a last post older than three months and a rating above 4.5 stars. These are good businesses with abandoned feeds: the easiest yes in the niche, because the guilt already exists.

4 Spec work done right

Build a two-week sample content calendar for one specific business, using their photos, their voice, their offers. Send it free, no strings. Five hours of spec beats five hundred cold DMs, because it proves the work instead of describing it.

5 Businesses you already buy from

Your barber, your gym, your favorite lunch spot. You already know their slow days and their best products. Warm familiarity plus a sample calendar converts at rates cold outreach never touches.

6 One owner community

The chamber mixer, the local restaurant association, the med spa owners group. Pick one room and become the person who answers social questions generously. Rooms full of owners produce referrals in clusters.

THE EXACT ASK

"Hi [name], I run a social media studio here in [city]. I noticed [business] has a 4.8-star rating but the Instagram has not posted since March: that gap is costing you customers who check the feed before they visit. I put together a two-week sample content calendar for you, built from your own photos and offers, no strings attached. Can I send it over? I am taking two founding clients this month at half my normal retainer while I build my local case studies, and I would love for you to be one of them."

THE FOUNDING-CUSTOMER DEAL

Two founding clients at 50% off for 90 days, in exchange for a written case study, a Google review, and permission to share their before-and-after numbers. At day 91 they convert to full rate or roll off, and you announce publicly that founding spots are closed. Real scarcity, honestly retired, converts better than discounts that never die.

Owned, earned, then paid.

You are selling marketing, so your own marketing is the audition. The engine is proof published in public, one warm room, and an audit offer that does the selling for you. Paid ads are unnecessary until you are turning clients away.

CHANNEL, RANKED	WHY IT WORKS HERE	THE FIRST MOVE
Your own social accounts	Prospects judge the shoemaker's shoes before anything else	Post your process, client wins, and honest numbers twice a week, every week
The free 3-point audit DM	Specific, generous, and impossible to confuse with spam	Three concrete fixes for THEIR profile, screenshots included, no pitch until they reply
Local owner rooms (chamber, BNI, niche associations)	Owners hire people they have met; referrals cluster in rooms	Attend one room monthly; answer social questions generously; never hard-pitch
Case studies and reviews	One documented win outsells a hundred promises in a guru-soaked niche	Publish a numbers-included case study per quarter; ask every happy client for a review
Referral engine	Every client knows ten owners; vendors and neighbors trust each other	At day 90, ask each client for one introduction; offer a month at 20% off for closed referrals

FIVE CONTENT PIECES THAT WIN THIS NICHE

- We took over this dead account 60 days ago: here is exactly what happened (numbers included)
- What a social media manager actually costs in [city], and when you should not hire one
- The before-and-after profile glow-up carousel (your niche's single best performer)
- Five posts every [niche] business should publish this month: free, steal them
- How I batch a full month of client content in four hours (process content builds trust)

THE REVIEW MACHINE

Ask at the monthly report, at the exact moment the numbers are on screen: 'That 40% jump in profile calls came from the work we did together. Would you put that in a Google review? I will text you the link right now.' Reviews from business owners read differently than consumer reviews: each one is a small case study, and ten of them make you the default choice in your zip code.

One unit, one month, no fog.

Two honest snapshots: what one average client month actually nets you, and what a steady solo book of six looks like. These use the middle door at \$1,500 and real tool costs. No guru math, no 'imagine 40 clients' slides.

ONE UNIT: ONE CLIENT MONTH AT \$1,500	AMOUNT	A WORKING MONTH: SOLO, 6 CLIENTS (STEADY STATE)	AMOUNT
Revenue	\$1,500	Revenue (mixed retainers)	\$8,700
Software share (scheduling, design, stock)	-\$45	Software stack (tools, stock, AI)	-\$220
Payment processing (2.9%)	-\$44	Subcontract clip editor (overflow)	-\$400
Insurance + overhead share	-\$36	Insurance, phone, internet share	-\$180
Gross profit (10-12 hrs of batched work)	\$1,375	Marketing (rooms, boosts, cards)	-\$150
Tax reserve (27%)	-\$371	Pre-tax profit	\$7,750
Yours, per client month	\$1,004	Tax reserve (27%)	-\$2,093
		Owner take-home	\$5,657

BREAK-EVEN

1 client

A single \$800 founding retainer covers the entire lean startup cost in its first month. After that, every client is margin. The barrier to entry here was never capital: it is the discipline to keep posting for someone else when nobody is applauding.

Illustrative figures at typical market rates; your market, prices, and costs will differ. Run YOUR numbers in the One-Page P&L from THE LAUNCHPAD, Module Six. Remember the 25-30% tax reserve on every dollar of profit.

Pre-decided, so motivation is never consulted.

WEEK ONE: FOUNDATIONS

- LLC filed, EIN issued, business bank account open
- E&O insurance bound; certificate saved
- Scheduling tool + Canva configured; 10 templates built
- Your own business profile launched and posting
- Pricing doors finalized with the \$800 floor written down

WEEK TWO: DOORS OPEN

- Dead-account list of 10 local businesses built
- Two spec sample calendars created and sent
- Founding offer pitched to 5 warm contacts
- First audit DMs sent (3 concrete fixes each)
- Service agreement template finalized with scope limits

WEEK THREE: MOMENTUM

- First founding client onboarded; partner access set up
- First month of their content batched and scheduled
- One owner room attended; 5 real conversations
- Second founding client closed or pipeline at 10 warm
- Case study scaffolding started: baseline numbers screenshotted

WEEK FOUR: THE SYSTEM

- First monthly reports delivered with business metrics
- Review and referral asked at each report
- Founding offer publicly retired or final spots announced
- Weekly cadence locked: batch Monday, engage daily, report Friday
- Month-one P&L done; pick one growth lever for month two

DAY 30 VERDICT

Green light: 2 paying clients, your own feed alive, and a pipeline of 5+ warm conversations. Yellow: one client and crickets: your spec work is too generic, make it about THEIR business and re-run week two. Red: zero clients despite 25+ real asks: your proof is invisible. Stop pitching for two weeks, run your own account like a flagship client, then return with screenshots.

How this business fails, and how it grows.

THE FIVE KILLERS

- ✕ **Selling virality**
Promise a million views and you have promised the algorithm's mood. Sell consistency, professionalism, and reported business results: the things you actually control.

- ✕ **No scope, no fence**
Unlimited revisions, 9 p.m. texts, and 'one quick extra post' will eat a retainer alive. The contract defines the work; everything outside it has a price.

- ✕ **Holding passwords**
Partner access exists for a reason. The manager holding the login is the first suspect in every hack and the hostage-taker in every breakup. Do it right from day one.

- ✕ **Vanity-metric reporting**
Likes do not renew retainers. Report profile calls, direction requests, bookings, and review velocity: the numbers an owner already cares about.

- ✕ **The everyone client list**
A florist, a law firm, and a gym means three content engines for three checks. Niche down: one industry means one engine, six checks, and a third of the work.

THREE SCALE PATHS

- 1 **The niche agency**
Own one industry in many cities: 'the social studio for med spas.' One template library, one content engine, and referrals that travel inside the industry's own conferences and group chats.

- 2 **The services ladder**
Your clients already trust you with their brand. Email, reputation management, and boosted-ad management bolt onto the same retainer: lifetime value doubles with zero new logos.

- 3 **The pod model**
Hire an editor and a community manager, keep strategy and client relationships yourself, and run 15-20 accounts. Your job becomes quality, reporting, and sales: the agency, in miniature, without the agency bloat.

YOUR FIRST HIRE

A part-time clip editor or VA at client five or six, handling captions, scheduling, and comment triage. They free the 30% of your week that is production, not judgment, and they are your systems test: if your brand-voice docs and templates cannot guide a stranger, you have a job, not a business.

THE STAIRCASE CONTINUES

The playbook is the map. The machine is waiting.

Everything this playbook describes, Epic Advisory Group can build with you: the brand, the cinematic website, the entity, the engine. Describe your idea to the Launch Engine and see your business real in about sixty seconds, free.

- The Launch Engine: your idea, built free, in about a minute
- THE ASCENT: Founder Edition: the eight-module course
- Launch-in-a-Box: entity, brand, site, and first campaign, one flat price
- Growth, capital readiness, and the path to the public markets

"There is no right age. There is only the decision."



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