



The Videography & Drone Business

Brand videos at \$1,500-7,500, drone shoots at \$150-400 on repeat, and a Part 107 certificate that locks out the hobbyists. Sell the story, fly the premium.

\$2,000-4,500

START LEAN

14-30 days

FIRST DOLLAR

55-70%

TYPICAL MARGIN

Is this your business?

Video is the format every business is told it needs and almost none can produce, which is why brand videos bill \$1,500-7,500 while real-estate drone shoots at \$150-400 stack into weekly volume. The drone is the wedge: an FAA Part 107 certificate takes weeks to earn and instantly separates you from every hobbyist quoting illegally. The full business is a ladder: drone work pays the bills now, brand stories build the rates, and monthly content retainers build the company.

\$2,000-4,500

LEAN STARTUP COST

\$6,000-12,000

STANDARD BUILD

14-30 days

TIME TO FIRST DOLLAR

55-70%

TYPICAL GROSS MARGIN

Yes, fully

SOLO-FRIENDLY

Yes (on location)

HOME-BASED

BUILT FOR THESE FOUNDER TYPES

THE STORYTELLER

THE BUILDER

3/5 difficulty

THE HONEST FIT TEST

You will carry gear, chase light and weather windows, study airspace maps, and spend three hours editing for every hour shooting. Clients buy outcomes, not footage, so you must learn story structure, not just camera movement. If you can already cut a sequence people watch to the end, this playbook turns that skill into invoices.

Who pays, and why now.

Every platform that matters now ranks video first, and every business owner knows it: their feeds are full of competitors who figured it out. But producing watchable video requires a stack of skills (shooting, audio, story, editing, delivery specs per platform) that businesses cannot hire internally at small scale. That gap is the business. A solo operator who can plan, shoot, and cut a clean brand story sells into a market that already believes it needs you.

The drone is the smartest entry wedge in the trade. Real-estate listings, construction progress documentation, roof and property inspections, and tourism boards all buy aerial work at \$150-400 per shoot, often on standing schedules. The work is fast (an hour on site), the demand is weekly, and the legal barrier is real: commercial drone flight requires an FAA Part 107 certificate, which most casual pilots never get. Certification plus insurance puts you on the short list every brokerage keeps.

Above the drone tier sits the real margin: brand story videos at \$1,500-7,500 for the two-to-three minute piece that anchors a website, plus event coverage, testimonial films, and the format that changes the business model entirely: the monthly content retainer. One shoot day a month, cut into a dozen platform-ready clips, at \$1,800-3,500 monthly. Three retainers is a baseline salary before any one-off project lands.

Competition splits cleanly: kids with drones and no certificate at the bottom, production companies with five-figure minimums at the top, and a wide-open middle where a professional solo operator with legal flight status, insurance, and story instincts can own a local market. The middle is where the recurring money lives.

WHO BUYS	WHAT THEY PAY	WHAT THEY ACTUALLY WANT
Real estate agents and brokerages	\$150-400 per listing shoot	Aerials and walkthroughs that win listings, delivered in 48 hours
Small businesses and brands	\$1,500-7,500 per brand video	The story piece that makes their website feel like a real company
Builders, roofers, and construction	\$250-600 per progress or inspection flight	Documented progress and roof views without ladders or liability
Marketing-hungry businesses (retainers)	\$1,800-3,500 per month	A steady feed of platform-ready content without hiring staff
Events and venues	\$800-2,500 per event film	Highlight reels that sell next year's tickets and bookings

THE LEGAL MOAT

Part 107

Any drone flight for compensation requires an FAA Remote Pilot Certificate. Most hobbyists quoting against you do not hold one, cannot get insured, and cannot legally take the job. The certificate costs a few weeks of study and immediately shrinks your real competition.

Every dollar, before you spend it.

The lean kit is a hybrid mirrorless camera, one fast lens, real audio, and a certified drone: enough to deliver paid work in every category below the cinema tier. Buy used bodies and lenses, buy the drone new (battery health matters), and treat the Part 107 as equipment: it is the purchase competitors skip.

THE LEAN BUILD · START HERE	WHY IT EARNS ITS PLACE	COST
Hybrid mirrorless body (used) + fast lens	One body that shoots clean 4K covers brand, event, and real estate work	\$900-1,800
Drone (sub-250g or mid-tier with good camera)	Buy new for battery health; register it with the FAA	\$500-1,100
FAA Part 107 exam + study course	The legal license for every commercial flight; study 2-3 weeks	\$175-350
Audio kit (wireless lav + shotgun mic)	Audiences forgive soft footage, never bad audio; this is non-negotiable	\$200-400
Lights (one key light + reflector)	Interviews and product shots stop depending on weather and windows	\$120-300
Editing software + music licensing subscription	Licensed music only: one copyright strike can kill a client's channel	\$35-75/mo
Drone liability insurance	On-demand per-flight or annual; brokerages and venues require proof	\$40-100/mo
LLC + portfolio site	Liability wall plus a reel page that closes deals; see the legal page	\$100-400
Lean total		\$2,070-4,525 all-in

THE STANDARD BUILD · ADD AFTER FIRST REVENUE	WHAT IT UNLOCKS	COST
Second body or cinema-line camera (used)	Two-angle interviews and backup on paid shoots	\$1,200-2,500
Gimbal stabilizer	The walking shots that make brand work look expensive	\$300-600
Upgraded drone with obstacle sensing + extra batteries	Construction and inspection contracts demand longer, safer flights	\$1,000-2,200
Edit machine upgrade + storage array	4K timelines punish weak hardware; render time is unpaid time	\$800-2,000

THE RULE

Buy for the job you have booked, not the showreel in your head. The trade is full of \$30,000 cinema kits paying off credit cards from real-estate shoots a \$1,500 kit handles identically. Clients buy the cut, the story, and the on-time delivery. No client has ever renewed a retainer because of a camera body.

Clean from day one.

Drone law is federal, specific, and enforced, which is excellent news: rules this clear become a moat for whoever follows them. Beyond the FAA layer, this business runs on the same contract and licensing hygiene as photography, with one addition: music rights, where a single lazy choice can damage a client.

- Earn the FAA Part 107 certificate first:** Any drone flight for business purposes (even a free shoot that markets your services) requires a Remote Pilot Certificate. Study airspace, weather, and regulations for two to three weeks, pass the knowledge exam at a testing center, and carry the certificate on every job.
- Register the drone and broadcast Remote ID:** Commercial drones register with the FAA (small fee, three years), and current rules require Remote ID broadcast, which new drones include. Label the registration number on the aircraft.
- Check airspace and get authorizations:** Controlled airspace near airports requires authorization, granted in minutes through LAANC-enabled apps for most flights. Flying without it is the violation that actually generates fines. Make the airspace check a written line on every shoot checklist.
- Carry drone liability insurance:** On-demand per-flight policies or annual coverage at \$500k-1M liability. Brokerages, builders, and venues ask for certificates, and a drone meeting a windshield is not a conversation to have uninsured.
- Form the LLC and contract every project:** Video projects sprawl: contracts must define deliverables, revision rounds (two, then hourly), timeline, usage rights, and payment schedule (50% to book, 50% on delivery). Scope creep is this trade's silent margin killer.
- License every note of music:** Client videos with unlicensed tracks earn copyright strikes, muted ads, and angry calls. A subscription music license covering client commercial use is the cost of doing business; keep license records per project.
- Releases and location permissions:** Recognizable people in commercial work need releases; private property aerials and on-site shoots need the owner's permission in the contract. Public-space rules for drones vary by city and park system: check before the client is standing next to you.

INSURANCE, SPECIFICALLY

Drone liability plus general liability is the working floor, and on-demand drone coverage lets you scale premiums with actual flight days. Add scheduled equipment coverage once the kit passes \$5,000, and errors-and-omissions once retainers and event work (unrepeatable moments) anchor your income.

WATCH FOR

The 'just this once' uncertified flight. The FAA fines real money per violation, competitors report illegal operators (it is their moat too), and an uncertified, uninsured flight that injures someone is personal financial ruin. The certificate takes three weeks. There is no job worth taking before it, and every job is easier to win after it: certified and insured is the first line of your pitch.

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 deliverable and outcome, never by the day rate alone: clients cannot evaluate a day rate, but they can evaluate 'a 90-second brand film plus six vertical cutdowns.' Quote the package, define revisions in writing, and remember the editing hours are two-thirds of every job.

	RECOMMEND	
<p>DOOR ONE</p> <h2>The Listing Flight</h2> <p>\$225–350 per property</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Aerial photos + 60-second cinematic cut◆ Part 107 certified, insured, airspace-cleared◆ 48-hour delivery, MLS-ready formats◆ Volume pricing at 4+ listings monthly	<p>DOOR TWO</p> <h2>The Brand Story</h2> <p>\$2,400–3,800 most-booked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Half-day shoot: interviews, b-roll, aerials◆ 2-3 minute anchor film for website and ads◆ Six vertical cutdowns for social included◆ Licensed music and two revision rounds◆ 50% books the shoot date	<p>DOOR THREE</p> <h2>The Content Engine</h2> <p>\$1,800–3,500 per month, retainer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ One shoot day per month at your locations◆ 10-12 platform-ready clips delivered monthly◆ Quarterly strategy call on what to film next◆ Priority scheduling and 72-hour rush option◆ Three-month minimum, then month to month

PRICING NOTES FOR THIS BUSINESS

- Floor: no flight under \$150, no edited deliverable under \$400. Small jobs still carry travel, airspace checks, and edit hours.
- Define revisions in the contract: two rounds included, then \$95 per hour. 'One more small change' is how \$3,000 projects become \$1,800 projects.
- Cut verticals from every horizontal shoot and price them in: the same footage serves the website and the feed, and clients pay for the package, not the pixels.
- Raise brand-video pricing \$400-600 after every three completed projects; your reel is compounding even when your rates forget to.

THE UPSSELL THAT PAYS THE RENT

The retainer pitch at delivery. Every finished brand video ends with the same client realization: 'we need more of this, regularly.' Answer it before they ask: 'most clients move to a monthly content day after this: same crew, same quality, twelve clips a month.' One-off projects are auditions; retainers are the business. Three of them cover your fixed costs for the year.

Names, not strategies.

Your first ten clients split by tier: realtors and builders buy the drone work this week, while one or two small brands become your first story projects. Lead with the certificate and insurance: in this trade, legality is a sales pitch.

1 Real estate brokerages (three offices)

Pitch the office meeting, not agents one by one: a 90-second sample reel of one listing, volume pricing, 48-hour delivery. One brokerage relationship is 5-10 flights a month forever.

2 Builders, roofers, and contractors

Progress documentation and roof inspections on a monthly standing schedule. They are buying risk reduction (no ladders) and marketing footage in the same flight: charge for both.

3 One local business you already love

Your first brand story should be a business whose story you can tell well: founding rate, full effort, finished film. This single piece is the portfolio that sells every brand project after it.

4 Wedding and event videographers (as a subcontractor)

Established shooters need certified drone pilots and second cameras constantly. Subcontracting pays \$300-600 a day while your own client list grows: the trade's version of second-shooting.

5 Local Facebook groups and your chamber of commerce

Post the listing reel and the brand film where business owners gather. Chamber mixers are rooms full of people who all just got told they need video this year.

THE EXACT ASK

"Hi, I'm [name]: I run a video and drone production company here in [town]. I'm FAA Part 107 certified and insured, which matters because most drone quotes you'll get aren't legal to fly commercially. I'm taking ten founding clients this month: listing flights at \$225 or a full brand story at founding pricing. Can I show you the 90-second reel from [recent project]?"

THE FOUNDING-CUSTOMER DEAL

Ten founding clients: listing flights at \$225 and one brand story slot at 25% off, in exchange for a Google review on delivery and permission to feature the work in your reel. The founding brand story is the most important sale of your launch: choose a client whose finished film will sell the next ten, then retire founding pricing loudly.

Owned, earned, then paid.

Your marketing is your output: every delivered project, cut into proof. The engine is a reel that stays current, drone partners who book weekly, brand work that markets itself on client channels, and a Google profile that catches every 'videographer near me' with budget attached.

CHANNEL, RANKED	WHY IT WORKS HERE	THE FIRST MOVE
The reel, everywhere	Video clients buy in 90 seconds of watching, not reading	Update the hero reel quarterly; pin it to every profile and proposal
Instagram + TikTok + YouTube	Your own channels prove you understand the platforms clients want to win	Two clips weekly from real projects; aerials perform reliably everywhere
Google Business Profile	'Drone photography [town]' and 'video production near me' are buyer searches	Claim it, load project clips and photos, collect a review per delivery
Brokerage and builder partnerships	Standing weekly volume beats chasing one-off projects	Monthly check-ins with three offices; volume pricing sheet in their inbox
Client channels as billboards	Every delivered video runs on the client's audience with your name in reach	Negotiate a credit or tag in the contract; their reach becomes your funnel
LinkedIn for retainer buyers	Marketing managers who sign retainers live there, not on TikTok	Post one project breakdown a week: the brief, the approach, the result

FIVE CONTENT PIECES THAT WIN THIS NICHE

- The 60-second listing transformation: phone photos vs your aerial cut
- What a brand video costs in [your city], explained honestly
- One shoot day, twelve pieces of content: the retainer math on screen
- Airspace, certificates, and why your drone guy needs both (the trust post)
- Behind the edit: raw clip to finished sequence in 45 seconds

THE REVIEW MACHINE

Ask at delivery, in the same message as the final files: 'If this hit the mark, a Google review mentioning the project type would do a lot for a local crew: direct link here.' Reviews naming a deliverable ('brand video', 'drone shots of our build') rank you for exactly those searches, which is the entire local game.

One unit, one month, no fog.

Two honest snapshots: one mid-range brand story priced with contractor help and licensing inside it, and a working month that mixes one brand project, steady listing flights, and a retainer. The 10% gear fund is mandatory: batteries age, drones meet trees, and sensors fail on schedule.

ONE UNIT: ONE BRAND STORY AT \$2,900	AMOUNT	A WORKING MONTH: SOLO, 1 BRAND VIDEO + 12 FLIGHTS + RETAINER	AMOUNT
Revenue	\$2,900	Revenue (project + listings + retainer)	\$7,750
Audio contractor (shoot day)	-\$250	Contractors (audio, second shooter)	-\$350
Travel, music, stock licensing	-\$135	Software, music, stock licenses	-\$250
Payment processing	-\$84	Travel + fuel	-\$210
Gear fund (10%)	-\$290	Insurance (drone + liability)	-\$140
Gross profit (~30 hrs total)	\$2,141	Gear fund (10%)	-\$775
Tax reserve (27%)	-\$578	Pre-tax profit	\$6,025
Yours, per project	\$1,563	Tax reserve (27%)	-\$1,625
		Owner take-home	\$4,400

BREAK-EVEN

1 brand video + 6-8 flights

The lean kit plus certification is recovered by your first brand story and a couple weeks of listing flights. The certificate itself pays back fastest of all: it is the line on your pitch that wins work from every uncertified hobbyist quoting against you, starting the day you pass.

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

- Part 107 study course started (or exam scheduled if ready)
- LLC filed, EIN issued, business bank account open
- Lean kit assembled; drone registered with the FAA
- Contract templates set: deliverables, revisions, 50/50 payment
- Pricing locked: flight floor, brand packages, retainer structure

WEEK TWO: DOORS OPEN

- Part 107 exam passed; insurance bound with certificates ready
- Practice flights logged; airspace check made a written habit
- One sample listing shot (your house, a friend's, free) and cut
- Portfolio page live with the sample reel
- Founding offer announced; three brokerages pitched

WEEK THREE: MOMENTUM

- First paid listing flights delivered inside 48 hours
- Founding brand story client chosen and shoot date booked
- Google Business Profile claimed; first review requested
- One builder or roofer pitched on monthly progress flights
- Subcontractor intro made to one established videographer

WEEK FOUR: THE SYSTEM

- Brand story shot; edit in progress with licensed music
- Volume pricing sheet sent to every brokerage contact
- Reviews requested with every delivery message
- Month-one P&L done; hours per deliverable measured
- Retainer pitch drafted for delivery day of the brand film

DAY 30 VERDICT

Green light: certificate in hand, 6+ paid flights, brand story shot or delivered, one standing weekly client forming. Yellow: flights happening but all one-off: push the brokerage office pitch and the builder standing schedule; volume relationships are the model. Red: certified but under 3 paid jobs despite 25+ pitches: your reel or your pitch order is off; lead with the 90-second sample and the legality line, and re-run the brokerage circuit before buying any gear.

How this business fails, and how it grows.

THE FIVE KILLERS

- ✗ **Flying commercially before certification**
Real fines, reportable violations, void insurance, and competitors watching. The Part 107 takes three weeks and becomes your best sales line. No exceptions, including 'free' marketing shoots.

- ✗ **Unlimited revisions**
Video invites infinite opinions, and every uncontracted revision round is unpaid week. Two rounds in writing, then hourly: the clients worth keeping respect the structure.

- ✗ **Unlicensed music**
One copyright strike mutes a client's ad campaign and ends the relationship. Subscription licensing costs less than one lost client; keep records per project.

- ✗ **The cinema-kit debt spiral**
Financing \$25,000 of gear for real-estate shoots a basic kit handles is the trade's signature mistake. Book the work, bank the gear fund, and upgrade from revenue.

- ✗ **Chasing one-offs forever**
Project-to-project video is feast and famine with render times. The operators who build wealth stack standing flights and monthly retainers until the baseline covers life, then let projects be upside.

THREE SCALE PATHS

- 1 **The retainer stack**
Five content-engine retainers at \$2,500 average is \$12,500 monthly before a single project lands. Sell the retainer at every brand-video delivery, and protect renewal with quarterly strategy calls that prove the clips are working.

- 2 **The drone services company**
Construction progress, inspections, mapping, and tourism contracts on standing schedules, eventually with a second certified pilot. Less cinematic, wildly recurring: this path becomes a real operations business with contracts measured in years.

- 3 **The production company**
Raise the ceiling: \$7,500-25,000 brand campaigns with contracted crews (audio, gaffer, second camera) under your direction. You graduate from shooter to director, and your story instincts, not your hands, become the product.

YOUR FIRST HIRE

An editor, not a shooter: outsource the assembly cut and cutdowns once retainers fill your timeline, keeping the final pass and color in your hands. Editing is two-thirds of every job's hours, and a \$400-700 per-project editor doubles your shooting capacity immediately. The handoff test is a written style guide: reference cuts, pacing notes, LUTs, and delivery specs on one page. No page, no hire, no scale.

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."



Epic Advisory Group

EPICADVISORYGROUP.NET