The Profits Reality Check Guide

Your Business Is Making Money. So Why Don't You Feel It?

Uncover the profit leaks, pricing gaps, and hidden expenses silently draining your business, so you can finally pay yourself what you're worth.

BY KATRINA COBB

In This Guide: Quick Links + Outline

INTRODUCTION

If you've found your way to this guide, you're already doing something most entrepreneurs never do: you're pausing long enough to look under the hood.

This guide is for you if…

- You're earning six figures or more, yet you constantly wonder where the money is going.
- You hesitate to invest in help or support because you don't trust your numbers.
- You feel like you should be further along by now—yet your bank account tells a different story.
- You've grown your business through talent, grit, and intuition…but not through financial clarity.
- You're tired of spinning 17 different plates just to keep the business running.
- You secretly fear you might be doing something wrong, and you feel embarrassed you haven't figured it out yet.

By the time you finish this guide, you will…

- Understand the biggest and most common places profitable businesses lose money without realizing it.
- Have clarity on which parts of your business need attention right now.
- Know the first steps to increasing your take-home pay and decreasing your stress.
- See a path to sustainable, confident growth, not just more hustle.
- Feel less alone, less ashamed, and more equipped to make grounded decisions as a CEO.

Why I Created This Guide

If you're reading this and starting to feel that familiar swirl of imposter syndrome -
Why isn't this working? What am I doing wrong? Why does everyone else seem to have it figured out?
- I want you to know something important:

You are not alone. And you're not failing.

What you are experiencing is incredibly common, especially among self-made founders who built their businesses through creativity, skill, and sheer force of will rather than formal financial training. You've grown fast, you've taken care of everyone else first— your team, your clients, your customers— and somewhere along the way, the business became something you never intended to build:

a Frankenstein operation of duct-taped systems, inherited expenses, and good intentions.

That doesn't mean you're irresponsible.
It means you've been busy building.

And when you're busy building, you don't always have the space, or the right guidance, to understand the *true* financial architecture of your business.

I've worked with countless clients who reached this same crossroads.

One example:
A multi–six-figure service provider who was so committed to taking care of her team, especially during several personal crises her contractors were facing, that she avoided paying herself at all. She feared that if she took even a dollar, she'd destabilize her business or fail the people who depended on her.

But when we sat down and looked at the numbers together, she realized she had *plenty* of margin. She just wasn't using it. She walked away with a plan- and gave herself a **$6,000 per month raise** nearly overnight.

Another example:
A product-based business earning over half a million dollars a year, yet the founder was paying herself below minimum wage.
Her profits were silently evaporating through:

- aggressive debt repayments
- high rent
- overspending on marketing that wasn't generating sales

- contractors who weren't delivering
- and products she *thought* were profitable that were, in reality, losing money.

Once we walked through each corner of the business and corrected the underlying structure, the fear dissolved. The stress dissolved. And for the first time, she had a strategy that actually stacked cash in the bank instead of draining it.

These situations aren't rare outliers. They're the norm.

Most entrepreneurs— whether service-based, product-based, or hybrid— were never taught the financial fundamentals that make a business sustainable, profitable, and supportive of the life you want.

Even the ones who went to business school get swept into the same trap:
running so fast, growing so quickly, and responding to so many demands that they never pause long enough to build the *infrastructure* that success requires.

That's why I created this guide.

To give you a moment to breathe.
To give you clarity.
To show you the exact places to look when your business "should" feel successful…but doesn't.

And to empower you to take your next step, whether that's using one of the profit calculators, or booking time for deeper strategic auditing with me.

You deserve a business that pays you well.
A business you feel proud of.
A business that gives you freedom, not just more pressure.

And you're closer to that reality than you think.

About the Author

Hi, I'm Katrina Cobb- Business Architect, strategic advisor, and former architect in the literal sense.

I earned my Master's degree in Architecture and Sustainable Design, then traded buildings for businesses when I realized what I was truly called to design: systems for freedom, sustainability, and wealth. I built my first multi–six-figure business with multiple locations before selling everything I owned, leaving the U.S., and rebuilding online from scratch as a digital nomad.

Since then, I've worked behind the scenes with six- and seven-figure founders, leading high-stakes restructures, pricing and profitability overhauls, system audits so things finally start to flow easier day to day, and business model redesigns. My zone of genius is seeing how all the moving pieces—offers, pricing, systems, team, operations, marketing, and delivery—integrate (or don't), and then re-architecting the business to run leaner, smarter, and more profitably.

In 2020, I co-founded a nonprofit that delivered over $1M in pro bono consulting to small businesses in crisis during COVID. I've led workshops, keynotes, and strategy sessions across three continents, and coached hundreds of entrepreneurs to shift from burnout and over-delivery to real freedom and clarity. My clients don't just make more; they feel better in their business and life again.

This guide reflects that perspective. I'm not here to give you fluff or theory. I'm here to show you what actually works to build a business that runs with integrity, efficiency, and freedom at the core. Because you didn't create this thing to be stuck inside it. You built it to live.

Let’s Talk About the Real Bottom Line (a.k.a. Profit Margin—And Why Yours Might Be Missing)

Most of what we see online talks about *gross revenue:* the total amount of money your business brings in. Those are the flashy numbers.

But that’s not what determines if your business is actually working.
Profit is.
And specifically: **profit margin**- the percentage of revenue that’s actually left over after the costs of delivering your product or service.

If that term sounds vague or intimidating, let’s simplify it.
Your profit margin is what’s left in your pocket after the real cost of doing business is accounted for.

It’s the difference between:

> *“I made $500K this year!”*
> and
> *“I made $500K this year…and paid myself $4K total.”*

Spoiler: that second one happens more often than you think.

What’s *Actually* Going On Behind the Numbers

Here’s the uncomfortable truth:
Most business owners don’t know their real profit margin.
Not just because the math is confusing, but because the **entire ecosystem of entrepreneurship** trains us to look at the wrong thing.

We’re taught to celebrate total sales.
We’re taught to look at growth as “more offers, more clients, more reach.”
But rarely are we taught to ask:

> “Is what I’m selling actually profitable? Is it sustainable? And is it allowing me to *live* the life I want?”

Let’s fix that.

What Profit Margin *Should* Look Like

Let's start with some basic benchmarks. These aren't universal, but they're a great gut check:

- **Service-Based Businesses:** You want to aim for **at least 60%** profit margins.

- **Product-Based Businesses:** A healthy baseline is **at least 40%**, ideally higher. *(I encourage a target of 60%+ with my clients)*

These numbers may sound high, especially if you're used to breaking even or padding your offers with "extra value." But let me be clear:

> **You do not exist to keep the lights on for everyone else while starving your own vision.**
> If your pricing isn't generating consistent profit *after delivery*, you're not running a sustainable business: you're running a high-stakes side hustle.

Why Profit Margin Needs to Be Built *Per Offer*, Not Just Per Year

Most founders glance at their Profit & Loss statements at the end of the month or year and think,

> "Well, we're technically profitable…so I guess it's fine?"

But here's the problem: when profit isn't **built into the offer itself**, you're gambling every time you sell.
One bad month of delivery costs, one tough client, one unplanned promotion…and you've erased your margin.

Instead, I want you to start calculating your profit per offer.
Because that's the only way to **guarantee** that growth = profit, not pain.

Where Service Providers Bleed Margin

If you sell services, you're especially vulnerable to invisible leaks. Here's what to check:

- **Time leakage**: Are you or your team spending way more hours than you're billing for?
- **Scope creep**: Are clients getting more than what they paid for—because you're afraid to hold boundaries?
- **Team costs**: Are you factoring in what your team actually costs to deliver? That includes not just client work, but also admin, prep, customer service, and onboarding.
- **Software or tech creep**: Are there added tools, seat licenses, or per-user fees tied to each new client?
- **Owner labor**: Are you doing unpaid work because you haven't budgeted a salary for yourself?

Where Product Businesses Get Trapped

If you sell physical or digital products, here's what often gets missed:

- **Labor costs**: Even if *you* are doing the work, that time has value. You need to build in the cost to replace yourself.
- **Packaging and labeling**: This isn't just aesthetic, it's cost. Add it.
- **Fulfillment and handling**: Who's packing, printing, shipping, sorting, and restocking? That's labor, too.
- **Low-margin "bestsellers"**: Just because a product sells well doesn't mean it's worth keeping. If the profit per unit is razor thin, it's draining your business, not growing it.
- **Marketing costs**: Ads, promos, influencers… if it's driving sales, it needs to be accounted for in your profit margin.

Why Most Entrepreneurs Miss This

You didn't start your business to crunch spreadsheets.
You started it to help people. To bring a vision to life.
And the truth is, when you're building from heart, profit can feel…secondary.

But here's the hard truth:

> If you don't design your offers to be profitable, you'll resent the business you worked so hard to create.

That’s what leads to burnout, financial stress, and losing the joy you once felt.

What To Do Next

Start by running the numbers. Not your annual numbers- your offer numbers.
What does it actually cost (in time, labor, money, tools, and support) to deliver each thing you sell?

If you’re feeling overwhelmed already, *because spreadsheets- ugh!*, I get it. That’s why I created a pair of plug-and-play calculators:
One for service providers, one for product-based businesses.
They’ll do the math for you. And they’ll show you in simple visuals where you’re solid and where you’re leaking profit.

Because once you see what’s working (and what’s not!) you get your power back.
And from there? You can make strategic decisions that actually move the needle on profit, time, and peace of mind.

Are You Actually Getting Paid... or Just Getting By?

Let's address the ugly unspoken reality of entrepreneurs:
Most founders - especially women - are *not* paying themselves like an owner.

You're paying yourself last, if at all.
You're waiting for things to "stabilize" or "grow a little more" before you take a raise.
You think of your pay as optional, while every contractor, tool, and subscription gets paid first.

And then you wonder why you still feel broke—even with a six-figure business.

Why Owner Pay Is *Not* a Bonus—It's a Requirement

You are the backbone of your business.
Your strategy, vision, risk tolerance, and resilience are the *only reason* your business exists at all.

> So why are you treating yourself like the intern?

The truth is, underpaying yourself is more than a money issue.
It's a symptom of an architecture problem in your business model.
And if you don't fix it, the whole thing will eventually collapse under the weight of your own exhaustion.

The Book That Flipped the Script for Me

If you haven't read *Profit First* by Mike Michalowicz, pause and go buy it. I don't get any affiliate kickback, I just believe every founder should read it.

The concept is simple but radical:

> **You pay yourself first. Then you run your business on what's left.**

It turns the traditional accounting model upside down:
Sales – Expenses = Profit
becomes
Sales – Profit = Expenses

That one switch changes everything.
You stop building a business that barely scrapes by.
You start building one that's designed to pay *you* first, and grow from there.

What Paying Yourself First Actually Looks Like

Profit First recommends owners start by taking **50% of total revenue** as owner pay in businesses under $250k, and setting aside **5–10% for profit**. Yes, really.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Real Revenue Range	$0-$250k	$250-$500k	$500k-$1M	$1M-$5M	$5M-$10M	$10M-$50M
Real Revenue	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Profit	5%	10%	15%	10%	15%	20%
Owner's Pay	50%	35%	20%	10%	5%	0%
Tax	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
Operating Expenses	30%	40%	50%	65%	65%	65%

Here are the chart recommendations from the book

Sound extreme?

Let's flip the question:

- Could you imagine pulling 50% of your revenue as consistent take-home?
- Could you imagine building a rainy day or bonus fund every month, without guilt or guesswork?
- Could you imagine knowing you'll be compensated every month, *regardless* of surprises?

If not, that's exactly why this conversation matters.

PS - This is precisely why having profitable products as the foundation of your business matters: because that profit has a purpose, namely, paying you, saving for taxes, and running the rest of your operation!

Owner Pay Isn't Just a Salary—It's the Payoff

When we talk about "owner pay," we're not only talking about W-2 payroll or a set monthly draw. It's bigger than that.

Think:

- **Distributions or dividends**
- **Tax-optimized bonuses**
- **Reimbursements for legitimate business investments**
- **Equity value as you build something saleable**
- **A business that lets you take real vacations—without it falling apart**

Whatever your structure or tax situation, the real question is:

> **Is your business consistently funding your life, your safety, and your future?**

If not, it's time to redesign the financial blueprint.

Your Take-Home Pay Should Be *Planned*, Not Leftover

Here's what I want every founder to internalize:

> The amount you *want* to take home should guide the business design.
> Not the other way around.

If you want to take home \$10k/month, you can't keep pricing things that cost \$8k/month to deliver and hoping volume will fix it. It won't.

If your overhead, expenses, or delivery model make it impossible to pay yourself without stress, *you do not have a viable business model* ***yet.***
Doesn't mean it's doomed. It means it's time to optimize.

What Happens As You Grow

As your revenue grows, your take-home percentage may shrink. But your actual paycheck should still increase.

Example:

- At $100K/year: maybe you're taking home $50K (50%)
- At $500K/year: maybe you're taking home $150K (30%)

And that's great—as long as:

1. You're getting *more* value, time, and lifestyle freedom
2. The rest is going toward strategic reinvestment, not mindless overhead

Why You Need to Pay Yourself NOW, Not Later

Because you didn't build this business to survive on scraps.

Because your vision matters.

Because you'll never scale something you secretly resent.

Because your family, your health, your future needs you to **thrive**, not just survive.

Are You Accidentally Eating Your Own Profits?

(*And blaming your business for not being more profitable?*)

Let's talk about one of the biggest, least-discussed ways founders sabotage their financial freedom:

👉 **Commingled spending that silently devours profit margin.**

It doesn't feel dangerous at first. It feels *normal*.
You're running hard, your business bleeds into your life, and some guru told you to "run everything you can through the business."

Coffee meetings? Business expense.
New shoes? Speaking gig.
Plane ticket? Research trip.
Groceries? Hosting a client dinner.

You're not crazy for doing this. And you're not alone.

The Problem Isn't the Expense- It's the Lack of Guardrails

The issue isn't that you're writing off some personal items.
It's that you're doing it without a clear **budget, threshold, or margin awareness**.

Without boundaries or visibility, "smart deductions" turn into a bottomless pit.
And suddenly there's *no money left* to grow the business… or pay yourself.

> It's not that your business isn't making enough.
> It's that your spending is outpacing your awareness.

A Real Client Example

One of my clients swore she was only paying herself $40K/year.

But when we ran the actual numbers?

👉 There was *another* $45K in personal expenses scattered across her business P&L.

That's $85K in total compensation she didn't even know she was taking.

No wonder she felt stuck.
She wasn't reinvesting in team.
She couldn't afford new equipment.
And she was blaming the business for not "scaling faster."

It wasn't the business.
It was the silent leak.

Commingling Creep: What It *Really* Looks Like

This is what sneaky profit leaks tend to look like in the wild:

- Swiping the business card for mixed personal/business grocery runs
- Booking travel and classifying 100% as business (when it's 60% leisure)
- Using business accounts to pay for wellness, clothes, beauty, household items
- Buying office "supplies" that are really personal upgrades
- Charging meals out that weren't truly tied to a client or team need
- Hiring services for yourself and writing them off without a clear business justification

Individually, they seem harmless.
Collectively, they gut your cash flow.

What to Do Instead (Without Feeling Deprived)

I'm not here to be your accountant or IRS agent.
You *can* and *should* leverage every legal advantage of being a business owner.

BUT—
You need to do it intentionally, and within a structure.

Here's how:

✅ **Know your profit margins first** (go back to Section 2)
✅ **Set monthly budgets for non-core categories** like travel, meals, development, wellness

✅ **Use your accounting software to actually track spending by category**
✅ **Treat these expenses as part of your owner pay, not separate from it**
✅ **Audit your P&L every quarter** with fresh eyes: what's fueling growth vs. what's just lifestyle inflation?

This is about *visibility*, not shame.

If you're choosing to pay for things this way and you've got the margins for it? Amazing.
If you're using it as a crutch because the business isn't generating enough? We need to fix the structure.

Bottom Line

> A business that funds your lifestyle is the goal.
> But a business that hides your lifestyle costs and drains your potential? That's not freedom. That's a trap.

So if you've been running everything through your business and still feel like you're broke at the end of every month…
It's time to look deeper. And get honest.

The next sections will walk you through the core numbers that *actually* matter, and how to keep more of what you earn.

Is Your Marketing Fueling Growth, or Setting Money on Fire?

Let's get one thing straight:
Marketing is not optional.
You can't grow a business in the shadows.
You cannot scale on word of mouth alone. It's not a strategy, it's a lucky accident.

But *how* you market, and *what* you invest in, is one of the biggest make-or-break decisions for your profitability.

Here's the painful truth:

> Most founders are overspending on marketing that doesn't work…
> …and underspending on what *actually does.*

The Hidden Problem: No ROI Tracking, No Strategy, No Visibility

It's not that you're not trying.
It's that you don't have the tools in place to measure and optimize.

Here's what I see constantly:

- Spending thousands on Google Ads but never checking which keywords convert
- Running Facebook campaigns that barely break even, but you keep funding them because you need the 'traffic'
- Paying an agency or contractor to "grow the brand" without clear deliverables
- Dumping all your time into social media when 75% of your sales come from email
- Believing visibility equals sales, when it might just be expensive noise

And worst of all?

> You can't point to one dashboard that tells you what's working and what's not.

The Fix: Data-Driven Marketing That Pays for Itself

Marketing should be an **investment with a return**.
You want a 2x, 3x, even 10x ROI on your spend.

The benchmark?

🟢 **5%–15%** of gross revenue is a normal marketing allocation
⚠️ But it should be driving **50%–100%+** of your actual sales

If it's not? That's not strategy, it's leakage.

Here's how to fix it:

- **Set up UTM codes** on all your links (social, email, paid, etc.)
- **Use tracking pixels** in ads and on thank-you pages
- **Review your dashboards weekly**: Shopify, Kajabi, Meta, Google, ConvertKit, etc.
- **Know your CAC (cost to acquire a customer)** per channel
- **Know your LTV (lifetime value)** per customer
- **Tag your list by source**, and track conversion rates by origin

The tech isn't the issue anymore.
The issue is ownership. And structure.

Learn to Trust, Then Verify

Marketing agencies? They'll sell you big promises.
Brand designers? Beautiful ideas.
Social media coaches? Viral dreams.

But here's your job as the owner:

> Trust your team, your strategy, your spend- **then verify the return**.

You can *absolutely* invest in big bold visibility plays…
But if you never check the ROI, you'll burn through budget and wonder where the money went.

And too many businesses die there.

What Marketing Data Actually Tells You

- Where to double down
- Where to cut back
- What's scalable
- What's a distraction
- What's earning
- What's draining

Once you know what's driving real results, your budget becomes a **growth lever**, not just an expense line.

Quick Check: Are You Wasting Money on Marketing?

If you can't immediately answer these…

- How much does it cost you to acquire one new customer?
- What's your return per $1 spent on ads or marketing?
- What's your highest-performing traffic or lead source?
- What marketing efforts convert best, and for whom?

…then you're flying blind.

It's fixable. But it's costing you until you do.

Overbuilt, Underperforming: Time to Audit Your Overhead

There's a myth that you need to grow your business to fix your financial stress.

But sometimes, the business isn't too small, it's just too expensive.

Let's talk about overhead.

Part One: Bloat

Modern entrepreneurs are surrounded by software, automation tools, plug-ins, and platforms promising the moon. Some deliver. But most just drain.

Add in fixed expenses like rent, payroll, and subscriptions, and suddenly your business becomes top-heavy, growing outward, but not upward.

You're spinning your wheels, bleeding cash, and wondering where all the revenue goes.

> This is where profit gets quietly erased.

Here's what I see over and over:

- Founders paying $300–$800+ monthly for tools no one is using
- Huge rent or lease obligations outpacing actual business activity
- Email lists with tens of thousands of cold subscribers racking up fees
- Teams manually recreating the wheel every week with no templates or systems, bloating payroll

It adds up fast. And it eats your margin before you see a dime.

Benchmark Alert: What's Normal?

Physical Businesses:

- Rent should be under 10% of gross revenue

- Payroll (non-production/admin) should stay under 30% of gross

Virtual/Online Businesses:

- Total software + subscriptions ideally < 8% of gross
- Combined overhead (tools, team, ops) < 35% of gross revenue
- Admin payroll under 25% unless fully scaled

If you're above these? It's not necessarily bad—but it better be producing ROI.

Part Two: Inefficiency

Maybe your overhead is justified. But is it optimized?

If you're paying a team, are they working from systems that actually increase capacity?

If you're paying for project management software, are you using the templates and automation features, or just checking boxes?

If you're paying for inventory or email marketing platforms, are you leveraging alerts, segmentation, or optimization tools? Or is it all still manual?

You're not just paying for access -> you're paying for outcomes.

So ask:

- Is this tool or person **saving time**?
- Is it **increasing capacity** to serve or produce more?
- Is it **generating revenue or conversion uplift**?

If not- why are you paying for it?

The Clean-Up List: Where to Start

Subscriptions – Audit quarterly. Cut unused tools. Combine where possible.
Email Platforms – Do a list hygiene scrub every 3–6 months. Remove dead weight.
Rent – Can it be reduced, sublet, or renegotiated? Is it really worth it?
Team – Can they be made more efficient through SOPs, templates, or automation?
Systems – Is your software being used to full capacity—or just sitting idle?

Pro Tip: Use Data, Not Emotion

> What got you here won't get you there.

The expenses that once felt justified may no longer be serving you.
What felt "important" in the early days may now be a drain.
What your ego or the gurus told you was necessary may have become a distraction.

This is maturity in business.
You don't just look at what you spend, you ask **why**.
You look for **evidence** that it's working.

That's what CEOs do.

Real Example:

I once worked behind the scenes in a coaching business that looked wildly successful on the surface. But inside their client management system, it turned out the fancy automation had been set up incorrectly, and no one had double-checked it.

I uncovered over $100,000 in active failed membership payments that had never been recharged or recouped. Worse, many of those clients *still had access* to programs and communities despite their cards failing or subscriptions being cancelled. No one had flagged it because no one was tracking the numbers or auditing the systems.

It wasn't malicious. It was simply the cost of inattention. Six figures, gone. Quietly. Silently. Without anyone realizing until I pulled the reports.

Final Word: Clean, Streamline, Reclaim Your Margin

Business overhead is a silent killer when left unchecked.
But it's also a massive opportunity.

Reclaiming 5%, 10%, even 20% of your gross back into profitability or owner pay is completely doable, and often requires zero new sales.

Just smarter architecture.

Your P&L Is Lying to You (If You Don't Track This)

Let's name the other elephant in the room: **debt.**

Almost nobody builds a business without incurring it, especially self-funded founders.

Maybe you put expenses on your personal credit card and told yourself you'd "pay it back later."
Maybe you took out a business line of credit, or used a Shopify loan because it was fast and easy.
Maybe you just kept spending, hoping the next sale would cover the last charge.

Either way, if you're not actively accounting for the **true cost of debt**, it's probably why:

- You feel broke even while making strong sales
- You're unable to pay yourself what you should
- You're not growing, even though you're "busy"
- You feel like the math never quite adds up

Here's why: **most debt payments aren't on your P&L.**

They're on the balance sheet. Or the cash flow statement.
So unless you're manually factoring them in, you'll never see the full picture of why your profit disappears.

Reality Check: What You Need to Know

You can't fix what you won't face. Start here:

1. **List every debt:**

    - Business and personal
    - Credit cards, loans, Shopify advances, lines of credit
    - Include original amount, current balance, interest rate, minimum payment, and estimated payoff time

2. **Run the math:**

    - Are you paying minimums or making progress?
    - Are you paying mostly interest, or actually reducing the principal?

    - What's the total you're spending on debt service monthly? (This is real money, so include it in your net profitability calculation.)

3. **Do you have enough margin to support the paydown?**
    - Or is it eating the cash you should be stacking?
    - If your net profit is $6K/month and your debt payments are $4K, you've got a serious leak.

Hidden Danger Zones

🛑 **Credit Cards** – Especially ones used for random business expenses. If you're only making minimums, you're bleeding margin every month in interest and gaining nothing.

🛑 **Revenue-Based Loans** – Like Shopify loans that take 25% of every sale automatically. If your margins are 10–20%, you're in the red before you even ship the product.

🛑 **Personal Debt from Startup Costs** – If your take-home pay is $5K/month but you're paying $2K+ in personal debt from earlier investments, no wonder it feels like the business isn't "providing."

🛑 **Deferred Payments and 'Buy Now Pay Later' Tools** – These can silently snowball when not tracked as hard liabilities.

Example: How One Business Owner Reversed the Drain

One client was losing 25% of every sale to Shopify's auto loan payback. It looked manageable…until we realized her monthly net margins were only 20%.

She was falling behind every day without realizing it.

We refinanced that debt into a longer-term, 6% fixed-rate loan. Paid off Shopify. Freed up thousands in monthly cash flow.

She went from overwhelmed and stuck to finally able to invest in the team and tools she needed to grow.

Not All Debt Is Bad—But It *Must* Be Smart

Here's the deal:

✔️ Debt can be leveraged for growth
✔️ Debt can help you invest ahead of revenue
✔️ Debt can build momentum

But only **if**:

- You understand the terms
- You build repayment into your margin
- You regularly re-evaluate if it's still serving you

If you're paying 24% APR on a card for business dinners you don't remember, that's not leverage.
That's erosion.

What to Do Now

1. **Get clear on your numbers.**
   Run a debt analysis. Figure out which debts are most toxic. List interest rates from high to low.

2. **Build a paydown plan.**
   Snowball, avalanche, consolidate- pick a strategy, but make sure it's intentional.

3. **Stop ignoring cash flow.**
   Don't just look at profit. Look at **when** the money hits and how much is immediately siphoned off to debt.

4. **If you can, refinance.**
   Lower rates. Better terms. More breathing room.

5. **Use debt only when it accelerates ROI, not when it patches over leaks.**

Don’t Let Shame Keep You Stuck

Debt isn’t a moral failure.

It’s a tool.
But like any tool, it cuts both ways.

The key is **visibility + strategy.**

If you’re serious about building real wealth, debt cannot be the blind spot that destroys your margins.
This is your call to take back control.

Wrap-Up: You’re Closer Than You Think

If you’ve made it this far, you’ve already done what most business owners never do:
You’ve looked under the hood.

You’ve probably had some “oh shit” moments, and maybe a few “aha” ones too.
Maybe you already know exactly where the leak is.
Maybe you still feel like you’ve been running hard just to stay stuck.

Either way, the goal of this guide was never to overwhelm you.
It was to **empower you**.

To give you clarity.
To help you understand the core architecture of your business: how the systems, the pricing, the money flow, and the decisions all fit together.
Because *when you understand how it works, you can finally control it.*

Not by guessing. Not by hustle.
But by pulling the right levers at the right time.

> That’s how you reclaim profit.
> That’s how you pay yourself like an owner.
> That’s how you buy back time and scale sustainably.

And no, you don’t need to do it all today.
Even one change, one insight, one area of focus can completely shift the trajectory of your business.

Why I Made This

I created this because I see the same patterns over and over:
Brilliant, heart-centered founders making real money… but barely feeling the rewards.

Not because they aren’t smart or driven.
Because they never learned the architecture behind profitability.
No one ever showed them how to look at their business like a system.

But I do.

That’s my zone of genius.
I trained as an architect, and now I help founders redesign their businesses the same way:
System by system. Function before form. Results before ego.

You're not broken.
You're just ready for the *next level of thinking.*

Next Steps: Ready for Some Real Clarity?

If this guide stirred something in you - an *"oh… that explains it"* moment or a new sense of possibility - here are the two best ways to keep the momentum going.

1. Book a Business Architecture Audit

If you want the quickest path to understanding what's actually going on in your business (and what will make the biggest difference next), this is where you start.

You'll fill out a guided intake, and I'll dig into the numbers, the systems, the offers, and the way everything is currently working behind the scenes.

From there, you'll receive:

- A simple, clear breakdown of where profit is leaking
- A personal video explaining what I see and what I suggest as your next moves
- The three highest-impact shifts to make now
- A grounded starting point to stabilize and strengthen your business

Your Investment: $497 (this is an asynchronous review, no live calls required though you'll have messaging access to me to ask any questions)

Or upgrade to a $997 package that includes a 30-minute live session to walk through everything together.

This is the perfect option if you want an expert, honest look at your business before making bigger decisions.

→ Book your Business Architecture Audit

2. Apply for High-Level Coaching or my Intensive

If you're already bringing in steady revenue and you know it's time for deeper structural change, not more hustle, then you may be a fit for my private coaching or the Business Architecture Intensive.

These containers are for founders who are ready to:

- streamline what's become too heavy or complicated
- clean up operations so the business runs smoothly again

- strengthen profits and cash flow
- build a team and system they can trust
- and finally grow with more ease instead of more pressure

Private Coaching is my full, six-month partnership.
The Business Architecture Intensive is a shorter 45-day, focused reset designed to create fast, meaningful momentum.

If you're feeling the nudge toward big change and want support from someone who's done this many, many times… the next step is a Business Architecture Fit Consult.

→ Apply for a Fit Consult

Wherever you choose to begin, I'm here to support you in creating a business that feels lighter, stronger, and far more aligned with the life you want to live.

- Katrina