



WHITE PAPER • THE 6 TO FIX PAPERS • PAPER 2 OF 2

The 6 To Fix *Program.*

How marketing gets built into a transferable system — the framework, the diagnostic, and the three-tier path.

ABOUT THIS PAPER

The 6 To Fix Program is **Paper 2 of The 6 To Fix Papers** — the methodology companion to Paper 1, *The Closing-Table Test*. Paper 1 makes the case: that the price a buyer pays for an owner-operated business is decided by six drivers, and that marketing owns all six. This paper describes the program that builds them — the framework, the diagnostic, and the three-tier path. Reading Paper 1 first is recommended but not required; this paper is written to be readable on its own.

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You cannot buy physical fitness the way you buy a treadmill — the equipment is real, but the outcome only exists if the work continues.

SECTION 01 · THE PREMISE

Why a *program*, not a project.

There is a companion to this paper called *The Closing-Table Test*, which we recommend you read before this one. It makes an argument: that the price a buyer pays for an owner-operated business is decided by six drivers, that marketing owns all six, and that most owners discover the gap between what they think the business is worth and what it actually fetches only at the closing table, when it is too late to fix. If you have read it, you know where the value comes from. This paper is about the work — *how* the six drivers get built, in what order, by what method, to what standard.

The first thing to settle is why the work is structured as a *program* rather than a *project*. The distinction is not cosmetic. A project has a deliverable and an end date. You commission it, you receive it, it goes on a shelf, and the business returns to running the way it ran before. Most marketing engagements an owner-operated business has ever bought were projects in this sense — a new website, a rebrand, a campaign, a logo. Each one produced a deliverable. None of them changed what the business *was* when a buyer came to look at it.

The six drivers cannot be built by a project, because the thing a buyer is actually paying for is not a deliverable. It is a *system* — a documented, repeatable, owner-independent way of finding customers, keeping them, telling the business' story, closing its work, and measuring whether any of it is working. A system is not something you receive. It is something that gets *built*, *installed*, and then *run*. You cannot buy a transferable marketing function the way you buy a website, for the same reason you cannot buy physical fitness the way you buy a treadmill. The equipment is real. The outcome only exists if the work continues.

So the 6 To Fix Program is built around a sequence rather than a deliverable. It moves a business through three states — knowing where it stands, having its strategy written down, and running that strategy as a system that no longer depends on the owner's daily attention. Each state is a real engagement with its own scope and its own output. But the *point* of each is the same: to move the six drivers out of the owner's head, where they cannot be valued, transferred, or inherited, and into documented form, where a buyer, a successor, or a new hire can find them, use them, and price them.

The rest of this paper describes that program in detail — the framework that organizes it, the diagnostic that calibrates it, and the three tiers that deliver it. The order matters, so the paper follows it. Here is how the framework works.

SECTION 02 · THE FRAMEWORK

Six areas, *one logic*.

The 6 To Fix Marketing Strategy Framework organizes the entire program. Before it is a diagnostic or a set of tiers, it is a *map* — a way of dividing the whole work of marketing into six areas that, taken together, cover the field with no gaps and no overlaps. The six areas are *Brand*, *Customer*, *Offering*, *Communications*, *Sales*, and *Management*. Everything a marketing function does, or should do, falls into one of them.

The choice of six is not arbitrary, and it is worth being precise about what each area contains, because the precision is what makes the framework usable rather than decorative.

Brand is the area that decides what the business stands for, who it serves first, and why its version of the offer is the one to choose. It governs positioning, audience priority, voice, and visual identity — the accumulated authority of the business in its market, considered as something that can be stated rather than merely felt.

Customer is the area that treats the customer base as an asset rather than a list. It governs the Ideal Customer Profile, the personas the business sells to, the economics of acquiring and keeping customers, the *intentional customer experience* the business designs and delivers at every point of contact, and the retention discipline that decides whether the most valuable customers stay. It asks who the right customers are, whether the business is acquiring more of them on purpose, whether it knows what they are worth, and whether the experience they have with the business is being designed — or left to chance.

Offering is the area that decides how the business' products and services are framed in the market *and delivered to the customer* — the value proposition, the unique selling proposition, the pricing rationale, the *delivery process* through which the offer actually reaches the buyer, and the competitive positioning that explains why this offer is *differently better* than the alternatives, rather than merely cheaper or closer.

Communications is the area that turns strategy into reach. It governs the channel mix, the editorial cadence, the messaging framework the whole team writes from, and the demand mechanism that creates and qualifies opportunity on a schedule rather than by accident. It is the difference between *activity* — posts get posted, ads run — and *infrastructure* — a documented engine with measured conversion at each stage.

Sales is the area that converts qualified opportunity into revenue, and decides what *kind* of revenue. It governs the sales process, the qualification criteria, the marketing-to-sales handoff, the pricing discipline at the point of close, and the institutional knowledge of the people who do the closing — captured in documents rather than carried in heads.

Management is the area that runs the marketing function *as a function*. It governs the KPI framework, the reporting cadence, the marketing budget, the assignment of who owns which decision, and the documentation discipline that holds the whole thing together. It is the area most owner-operated businesses have never built at all, because the owner *was* the management layer, and never needed to write down what only one person was ever going to do.

That is the map. Six areas, each a distinct domain of work, together covering the whole.

But a map of six areas is only half the framework. The more important half is the *logic* underneath — the reason these six, divided this way, behave as a single system rather than six separate disciplines. The logic has two parts.

The first part is that the six areas fall into two natural groups. The first three — Brand, Customer, Offering — describe what the business *owns*. They are **assets** in the most useful sense: things that exist in the market and the customer base, that took years to build, that a buyer inherits and a competitor would need years to displace. The second three — Communications, Sales, Management — describe what makes the business *run*. They are **systems**: documented, repeatable mechanisms that turn the assets into income on a predictable cadence, without the owner standing in the middle of every transaction. Assets are *what the business is*. Systems are *how the business works*. A business can have strong assets and no systems — many owner-operated businesses do, and it is precisely the profile that gets penalized at the closing table. The framework keeps the two groups distinct because the remedy for a weak asset is different from the remedy for a missing system.

The second part of the logic is the one that makes the framework more than an organizing scheme. *Every area is built to be documented and transferable*. This is the single standard that runs through all six. It is not enough for Brand to be strong in the owner's instincts; the brand strategy has to exist on paper, where a new hire, a successor, or a buyer can find it. It is not enough for Sales to live in a senior rep's twenty-five years of experience; the process has to be captured before the rep retires and the experience walks out the door. The framework does not just ask *is this area working*. It asks *is this area working in a form that survives the owner stepping away*. That second question is the one the closing-table room cares about, and it is the question the entire program is built to answer.

This is the whole framework: six areas, two groups, one standard. Six areas to cover the field. Two groups — assets and systems — to keep the diagnosis honest. One standard — documented and transferable — to make the work count where it gets counted. The next section connects this marketing map to the language a buyer actually uses, because that connection is the part of the framework no one else has built.

SECTION 03 · THE BRIDGE

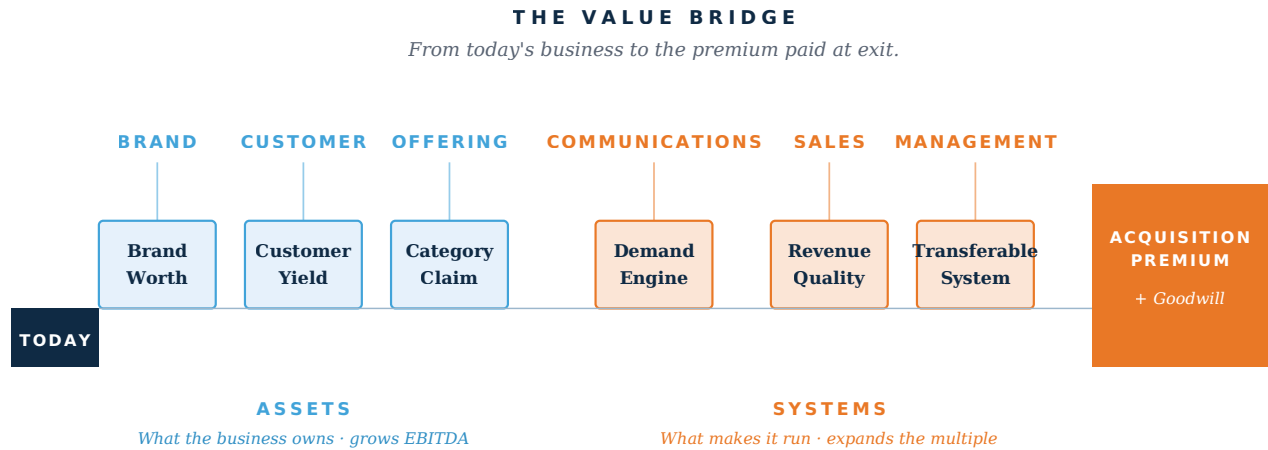
The 6-to-6 Bridge.

A marketing framework that organizes the work is useful to the people doing the work. It is not, by itself, an argument a buyer or a lender would recognize, because buyers and lenders do not speak in *Brand* and *Communications*. They speak in earnings, multiples, and the premium above book value. The 6 To Fix framework is unusual — and this is the part of the methodology that does the heavy lifting — because it translates one language directly into the other. Each of the six marketing areas maps to exactly one *value driver* a buyer pays attention to. We call the mapping the **6-to-6 Bridge**.

The bridge is one-to-one, and the discipline of the one-to-one is the point. Each strategy area on the marketing side has exactly one corresponding driver on the valuation side:

STRATEGY AREA	VALUE DRIVER
Brand	Brand Worth
Customer	Customer Yield
Offering	Category Claim
Communications	Demand Engine
Sales	Revenue Quality
Management	Transferable System

There is no scattering, no double-counting, no driver that two areas share and therefore neither owns. Marketing owns all six drivers outright — they are not split with operations or finance or the founder's gut. Run the six areas as a system and the six drivers get built. Run them as loose activity, or not at all, and the six drivers drain, quietly, by default.



The Value Bridge · Six strategy areas, six value drivers, two financial mechanisms, one premium.

The two groups from the previous section carry straight across the bridge, and they do different financial work on the other side. The three asset drivers — Brand Worth, Customer Yield, Category Claim — move the **EBITDA numerator**. They make the earnings number bigger: better brand worth means pricing power and less discounting; better customer yield means more profit per customer and more retention; better category claim means the business gets

called first and competes for higher-margin work. The three system drivers — Demand Engine, Revenue Quality, Transferable System — move the **multiple**. They do not just make earnings bigger; they motivate a buyer to pay a *higher multiple* for the same earnings, because earnings that arrive through a documented engine, with documented quality, inside a documented system, look more durable and more underwritable than earnings that arrive because the owner made them happen by force of will.

And both groups feed the same place. The premium a buyer pays above the net tangible book value of the business — the part of the price that is not equipment or inventory or receivables — is **Goodwill**. Assets build the number that gets multiplied. Systems decide what it gets multiplied by. Goodwill is the compounded result of both, accumulated over the years the business was either being built into something transferable or being run as a job the owner happened to have. Every one of the six drivers, on both sides of the bridge, terminates in Goodwill. That is why the framework treats them as one system and not six initiatives.

The bridge is also what makes the rest of the program legible. When the diagnostic in the next section scores a business low on the Customer area, that is not a marketing complaint — it is a statement that *Customer Yield*, a driver a buyer will price, is not being built. When a tier of the program documents the Sales area, it is building *Revenue Quality* into a form a buyer can underwrite. The marketing work and the valuation outcome are the same work, named twice. The bridge is what lets the program promise an owner something a marketing engagement normally cannot: that the money spent on the function shows up, eventually, in the number that gets decided in the room.

*Marketing owns all six drivers **outright**. Run the six areas as a system and the drivers get built. Run them as loose activity, and the drivers **drain** — quietly, by default.*

SECTION 04 · THE DIAGNOSTIC

The *two-dimension* scorecard.

The framework says what the six areas are and what they build. The next thing the program needs is a way to *measure* where a real business stands in each of them — honestly, repeatably, and in a form that points to the right next move. That instrument is the 6 To Fix Scorecard, and its single most important feature is that it scores every area on two dimensions that most marketing assessments collapse into one.

The first dimension is **Activity** — rated 0 to 10 in each of the six areas. Activity measures the quality and maturity of the marketing work actually happening: is there a brand presence, is content shipping, is there a sales motion, is anything being measured. It is the dimension most people mean when they ask, "How's our marketing doing?" A business can score well here while doing a great deal of competent, visible work — but Activity also captures whether the work is the *right* work, not only how much of it is happening. A high Activity score reflects both volume and fit.

The second dimension is **Documented Strategy** — rated in three states, *None*, *Partial*, or *Current*. This dimension ignores how much activity is happening and asks a different question: is the *strategy underneath* the activity written down, current within the last twelve months, and actually used in marketing decisions. A brand strategy that lives in the owner's head scores *None* no matter how strong the brand is. A positioning document written four years ago and never opened since scores *Partial*. Only strategy that is written, current, and in use scores *Current*.

The reason the scorecard insists on two dimensions is that *they are independent*, and the gap between them is the most diagnostic thing about an owner-operated business. This is the central insight of the entire methodology, so it is worth stating plainly: **a business can have high activity and zero documented strategy**. In fact most do. Campaigns get built, posts get posted, deals get closed — all of it run from the owner's head, in real time, week after week, on top of whatever happened last week. The activity is real. The strategy the activity is supposedly executing does not exist in any form a buyer, a successor, or a new hire could *find*. Collapse the two dimensions into a single "marketing score" and that gap vanishes — and the gap is the whole point.

ACTIVITY vs. DOCUMENTED STRATEGY

Where most owner-operated businesses sit — and where the program moves them.



The two dimensions of the scorecard, plotted. The program moves areas up and to the right.

The 2x2 is the picture of why this matters. Plot Activity on one axis and Documented Strategy on the other, and four quadrants appear. The one most owner-operated businesses occupy, for most of their life, is the high-activity / no-

documentation quadrant — the *hidden-risk quadrant*. From inside, it feels like marketing is working, because the activity is genuine and the phone rings. From the closing-table room, it looks like a function that *cannot transfer* — the buyer is being asked to underwrite the owner's head rather than the business' system, and the buyer prices accordingly. The goal of the program is to move each area up and to the right, into the quadrant where strong activity sits on top of documented strategy: *transferable performance*. The move is rarely *more activity*. It is almost always *the right activity, with the strategy underneath it documented so the right activity becomes repeatable*.

Because the two dimensions are scored across all six areas, they roll up into two top-line numbers that anchor everything downstream. The first is the **total Activity score, 0 to 60** — the sum of the six area scores, a single read on how much of the right marketing work the business is doing. The second, and the more consequential, is **Documented Strategy Coverage, 0 to 6** — the count of areas where documented strategy is *Current*. These two numbers are deliberately never blended into one composite, because blending them would re-hide exactly the gap the scorecard exists to expose. For owner-operated businesses in the lower-middle market, it is common to see a respectable Activity total sitting on top of a Documented Strategy Coverage of zero or one. That combination — real work, no written foundation — is not a failure to be embarrassed about. It is the normal starting condition, and it is the precise condition the program is built to fix.

The scorecard carries two further instruments that deepen the read without changing its logic.

The **Systems Maturity Score** (rated 0 to 20 across four cross-cutting dimensions) asks how the marketing operation runs *as a system* — regardless of how strong the activity is in any single area. The four dimensions are scored independently, 0–5 each. **Documented** asks whether the work is captured in writing — strategy, process, decisions, and learnings — in a form someone other than the owner can find and use. **Repeatable** asks whether the work runs on a cadence the owner does not have to drive in real time. **Measurable** asks whether marketing inputs and outputs are tracked, not just financial outcomes — whether the business can see what its marketing is producing without having to ask the owner. **Owner-Independent** asks whether strategic and operational marketing decisions continue when the owner steps away. A function can have respectable Activity in several areas while scoring low on all four — which is exactly the structural condition the program is built to address, and exactly the condition a buyer evaluates.

The **Value Driver Rating** restates the marketing findings in the language a buyer uses. Each of the six area scores is translated through the 6-to-6 Bridge into its corresponding value driver — Brand Worth, Customer Yield, Category Claim, Demand Engine, Revenue Quality, Transferable System — and each driver is rated against a peer benchmark for businesses of similar size and category, drawn from established valuation references such as the Pepperdine Private Capital Markets Report, the IBBA Market Pulse, and the Exit Planning Institute. The point of the translation is to make the valuation implication of each marketing finding *visible* in the language the next reader of the audit — a buyer, a lender, a successor, or the owner planning a transition — actually uses. The owner sees not just where the marketing stands but where the *enterprise value tied to that marketing* stands relative to comparable businesses. It is the same picture a buyer would build independently, produced before the buyer arrives.

Every score in the scorecard is evidence-based, not impressionistic. Each rating is triangulated from multiple sources — stakeholder interviews, existing collateral, the live digital footprint, competitive analysis — and each is supported by specific citations, so the number can be defended and, more importantly, *acted on*. A scorecard that cannot show

its work is an opinion. A scorecard that cites its evidence is a starting line. The next three sections describe the three tiers that run from that line.

SECTION 05 · TIER 1

The *Audit*.

The program has three tiers, and they correspond to three different things a business needs depending on where it stands. The first tier is the **Audit**, and its job is a single verb: *diagnose*.

The Audit is the right entry point when an owner suspects there is value being left on the table but does not yet know where. That is the most common situation, because the hidden-risk quadrant feels, from the inside, like things are basically fine. The Audit's purpose is to replace that feeling with a documented, evidence-based picture of exactly where the six drivers stand — what is strong, what is draining, and what the highest-value moves are. Critically, it does this not only by measuring *how much* marketing activity is happening, but by surfacing whether the activity is the *right* activity — work that fits the business' market, its customers, and its position — or whether real effort is being spent in the wrong direction. It is a diagnosis, in the medical sense: structured, calibrated, and honest, produced before any treatment is prescribed.

The diagnosis is built from evidence rather than from a conversation. A Tier 1 Audit assembles its picture from four parallel streams of research, each producing a different angle of view; every score in the Audit is required to rest on at least two of them.

Stakeholder interviews with the owner, the leadership team, and the people who carry the institutional knowledge — typically the senior sales and operations staff whose experience has never been written down — surface what only the people inside the business know about how the business actually works, what is intentional versus inherited, and where the institutional memory lives.

A full inventory of existing marketing collateral — the website, brochures, proposals, sales decks, social profiles — locates the gap between what the business *intends* to communicate and what its materials actually communicate today.

A channel-by-channel audit of the live digital presence, benchmarked against named competitors, measures the marketing as the market sees it — not as the business describes it internally.

A competitive and category analysis locates the business against the real alternatives a buyer would compare it to: the named competitors, the substitute solutions, and the structural position the business actually occupies in its category.

From that evidence base, the Audit produces six structured outputs. Three of them are the instruments defined in the previous section, now populated with the business' specific evidence rather than presented in the abstract: the **6 To Fix Scorecard** records the two-dimension rating across all six areas with the two top-line numbers; the **Systems Maturity Score** rates how much of the function runs as a repeatable, owner-independent system; the **Value Driver**

Rating restates the findings in the language of the six bridge drivers, benchmarked against peers. Three more outputs are unique to the Audit deliverable. The **Gap Analysis** walks area by area through what is working, what is missing, and — critically — whether each gap is an *activity gap* (the work isn't happening, or isn't the right work) or a *documentation gap* (the work happens but isn't a system), because those two problems have different remedies. An **AI-Readiness Assessment** identifies which parts of the marketing work could be produced through an AI-native system rather than rebuilt as in-house headcount — the capability that Tier 3 later deploys. And a **90-Day Roadmap** sequences the highest-leverage moves into a prioritized order of operations, tagged by impact, difficulty, and whether each item builds a durable system or runs a short-term piece of activity. The whole diagnosis is delivered as a written report and a readout presentation, so the findings can be reviewed, returned to, and acted on by people other than the person who commissioned them.

Two things distinguish the Audit from the kind of marketing assessment an owner may have participated in before. The first is that it is *calibrated*. The methodology rests on a defined rubric — Activity rated 0 to 10 in each area, Documented Strategy in three states (None, Partial, Current), each level defined by written criteria — that gets applied the same way to every business. The rubric is the primary calibration: it is what keeps the judgment from drifting toward whoever is in the room. As Strategic Glue's audit practice grows, a *growing base of completed audits* adds a second layer of calibration — peer reference points for what comparable businesses look like at each level — so that over time a given score carries not only a documented criterion but a sense of where it sits among similar companies. Scores are assessed against the rubric first, then sense-checked against the reference base. The order is deliberate; the rubric is what the discipline rests on, and the reference base deepens it.

One thing the Audit consistently surfaces is worth naming directly, because it shapes what the next tier of the program actually does. *The absence of documented strategy is rarely just a documentation problem.* In most owner-operated businesses, the strategy itself has not been fully developed in the first place — it has been *practiced*, not articulated; *intuited*, not tested; *implied*, not made coherent across the six areas. The Audit names both gaps where they exist: where strategy is developed but unwritten, and — more often — where strategy is still to be developed. That distinction is what makes the routing to Tier 2 honest rather than cosmetic. The fix is not to write down what is already there. The fix, in most cases, is to *develop the strategy that is partially there* and then to write the result down to a transferable standard.

The second thing that distinguishes the Audit is that it is built to *stand alone*. It is not a sales document that only has value if the owner buys the next tier. The diagnosis, the evidence, the gap analysis, and the prioritized roadmap are all documented in a form a business could execute against on its own. The Audit tells the truth about where the business stands regardless of who does the work that follows. That independence is what makes it trustworthy — and, not incidentally, what makes the recommendation it points to credible.

Because where the Audit points is the next decision. The two top-line numbers — Activity total and Documented Strategy Coverage — route the recommendation. A business with real activity but little or no documented strategy needs its strategy *developed and written down* before anything else will hold; that is Tier 2. A business that already has the documentation but no system to run it needs the function *operated*; that is Tier 3. The Audit's final job is to make that routing obvious, and to make it on evidence rather than on a sales instinct.

SECTION 06 · TIER 2

The *Documented Strategy*.

The second tier answers the diagnosis with a different verb: *document*. Where the Audit establishes that the strategy underneath the activity does not exist on paper — and that, in many areas, the strategy itself has not been fully developed in the first place — Tier 2 is the engagement that *closes both gaps* at once: by developing the strategy where development is what's missing, writing it down where documentation is what's missing, and — in the same work — defining what the *right* activity actually is in each of the six areas to support that strategy.

It helps to be exact about what "documented strategy" means here, because the word can sound like paperwork. It is not paperwork. Documenting the strategy is the act of moving the six drivers out of the place where they cannot be valued — the owner's head, the senior rep's memory, the team's shared instinct — and into a place where they can be inherited, executed by someone new, and underwritten by a buyer. The Audit found, almost certainly, that the business already *has* a strategy in some real sense: the owner can describe the brand, the team knows who the best customers are, the senior reps know how deals get won. Tier 2 does not invent strategy from nothing — the business already has real strategic substance in its operating practices and its institutional knowledge. But Tier 2 also does not merely transcribe what is there. It *develops* the strategy where it is incomplete, *sharpens* it where it contradicts itself, and *writes it down* to a standard that survives the owner walking out for ninety days. The result is a strategy that did not exist before in any rigorous form, even where some of its parts have always been present.

The Playbook covers all six areas, and the work in each is concrete. In **Brand**, it produces documented positioning, a defined audience priority, a differentiation statement, and a voice and tone guide — the brand made into something a new hire could read rather than absorb. In **Customer**, it produces a documented Ideal Customer Profile, the primary personas the business sells to, an acquisition strategy keyed to those personas, the intentional customer experience designed across every point of contact, and a retention strategy that treats existing customers as the asset they are. In **Offering**, it consolidates the scattered product strengths into a single value proposition, a written USP, a pricing rationale, a documented delivery process, and a competitive positioning the whole team can use. In **Communications**, it produces a documented channel strategy, a messaging framework everyone writes from, and an editorial cadence that ships on a calendar rather than on the owner's available time. In **Sales**, it captures the sales process, the qualification criteria, the marketing-to-sales handoff, and — often the most time-sensitive piece — the institutional knowledge of the senior people before it retires out of the building. In **Management**, it builds the KPI framework, the reporting cadence, and the documented structure of who owns which decision, so the function can be run and measured rather than merely performed.

The output is two kinds of deliverable, and the distinction matters. The first is the *Playbook* itself — the connected strategy document that shows how the six areas fit together into one coherent go-to-market, so no area is optimized in a direction that undercuts another. The second is a set of *standalone working assets* — the ICP, the personas, the messaging framework, the KPI dashboard specification, and the rest — each built to be lifted out and used on its own by the person whose job it owns. A strategy that only exists as a bound document gets read once and shelved. Strategy that exists as working assets gets *used* — which is the only form of documentation a buyer, a successor, or a new hire actually values.

Tier 2 is the right engagement when the diagnosis is clear and what the business needs is not more activity but the *right activity, built on a developed and documented foundation*. Tier 1 exposes the gap between what is happening and what should be happening. Tier 2 closes that gap by developing and defining what the right activity actually is, area by area, in a form the team can act on. It is the tier that moves the most areas from the hidden-risk quadrant toward transferable performance, because it directly closes the documentation gap that defines that quadrant — and, almost as often, the development gap underneath it. What it does not do, by itself, is *run*. A documented strategy is a foundation, not a function. Whether the business operates that strategy itself or has it operated is the question the third tier answers.

SECTION 07 · TIER 3

fCMO + Marketing Management + *AI-Native Execution*.

The third tier is *deploy*. It is the right engagement when the strategy exists — whether the business arrived with it or built it in Tier 2 — and what the business needs now is to *operate* the marketing function as a system, without rebuilding the owner's daily involvement into a full-time staff. Tier 3 is a three-part operating model: a **Fractional Chief Marketing Officer (fCMO)** providing strategic leadership, **marketing management** coordinating program execution, and **AI-native execution** producing the work at volumes and cadences a conventional team of equivalent cost could not reach. This section makes the case for what that capability *is* and *does*; the economics of it belong in a conversation, not in a public paper.

Start with the fCMO, because the human role at the top is what keeps the system pointed at the right outcome. A fractional CMO is senior marketing leadership engaged at the scale an owner-operated business actually needs — strategic ownership of the six areas, accountability for the value drivers, and the judgment to decide what matters this quarter — without the cost or commitment of a full-time executive hire most businesses in this band cannot justify and do not need. The fCMO owns the documented strategy, runs the roadmap, and makes the calls that require a marketer's experience rather than a marketer's hours. This is the part of the function that has always required a senior person, and still does.

Marketing management is the second human layer, and the one most easily overlooked. The fCMO sets direction; marketing management *runs the calendar* — coordinating production, owning the documentation discipline, holding the cadence that turns a strategy into a function. Without it, the fCMO ends up doing coordination work that does not require senior judgment, and the AI-native execution produces output that no one is integrating into a coherent program. Marketing management is the connective tissue between the strategic layer and the production layer. It is what keeps the system *running* on the days the fCMO is doing higher-leverage work, and what makes the production layer's output *land* in the business rather than pile up.

What is different — and what makes Tier 3 a genuinely new capability rather than a smaller version of an old one — is the execution layer underneath those two human roles. Traditionally, operating a marketing function meant building or buying *capacity*: a coordinator, a content producer, a designer, an analyst, each a hire or a contractor, each producing work at human speed and human cost, each holding part of the function in their own head. Tier 3 replaces

most of that recurring production capacity with an AI-native system — a proprietary production layer that executes content, reporting, enrichment, and campaign mechanics against the documented strategy. The fCMO directs it; marketing management coordinates it; the system produces. A large share of the recurring marketing work in a typical owner-operated business can be executed this way, with a human reviewing and approving rather than producing from scratch.

The capability case is not primarily about speed or volume, though both improve. It is about what the AI-native model does to *transferability* — the driver the whole program exists to build. Consider what happens to documentation in a traditional function: it is the thing everyone intends to do and no one has time for, because the people producing the work are too busy producing it to write down how. Documentation is the first casualty of a busy marketing team, which is exactly why the hidden-risk quadrant is so crowded. In an AI-native system, the relationship inverts. The system *runs from* documented strategy — the brand voice, the ICP, the messaging framework are the inputs that make the production work — so documentation is not an afterthought the team never gets to. It is the operating substrate, the thing without which the system produces nothing. And the system's output is inherently captured: the content, the reports, the campaign records exist as documented outputs by default, not as knowledge in someone's head. A function built this way does not have to be *made* transferable as a separate project. It is transferable because of how it runs.

This is the heart of the Tier 3 capability case. A marketing function operated as an AI-native system, directed by a fCMO and coordinated by marketing management, produces the three properties a buyer prices — documentation, measurability, and owner-independence — not as deliverables bolted on at the end, but as *structural byproducts* of the way the work gets done. The KPI dashboard is live because the system reports continuously. The strategy is current because the system cannot run on stale inputs. The function survives the owner stepping away because the owner was never the production capacity in the first place. The same engagement that operates the marketing also, by its nature, keeps the marketing *transferable* — which is the closing-table outcome the previous two tiers were building toward.

One boundary is worth stating, because it is part of the capability rather than incidental to it. The AI-native production system is Strategic Glue's own — a wholly owned operating layer, not a tool the client is handed and left to run. The *work* it produces belongs to the client: the content, the strategy assets, the documentation are the client's to keep, including if the engagement ends. But the system that produces them stays with Strategic Glue, which is what lets the same machine be pointed at the next client's documented strategy with discipline rather than rebuilt each time. For the client, the relevant fact is the outcome: a fully operated marketing function, producing transferable outputs, without the business having to build, staff, or maintain the production layer itself.

*An AI-native function produces the three properties a buyer prices — documentation, measurability, and owner-independence — **not as deliverables bolted on at the end**, but as byproducts of how the work gets done.*

SECTION 08 · THE SEQUENCE

How the tiers *connect*.

The three tiers are easy to mistake for a service menu, or for a sales ladder every client is meant to climb from bottom to top. They are neither. They are a *proportional response* to where a business actually stands, and the scorecard is what decides which response is proportional.



The three tiers as a sequence of verbs · Each one builds the input the next one runs from.

How the three tiers connect · Entry point set by the scorecard.

The through-line is three verbs: *diagnose, document, deploy*. Tier 1 diagnoses — it produces the evidence-based picture of where the six drivers stand. Tier 2 documents — it develops and writes the strategy underneath the activity into a Playbook and a set of working assets, defining the right activity area by area. Tier 3 deploys — it operates that strategy as an AI-native function directed by a fCMO and coordinated by marketing management. Each verb depends on the one before it being true: you cannot sensibly document a strategy you have not diagnosed, and you cannot deploy a function whose strategy is not documented. The order is not a sales ladder. It is the actual order in which the work has to happen for any of it to hold.

What that means in practice is that a business can enter the program at the tier its situation calls for, and the entry point is a finding rather than a default. The two top-line scorecard numbers do the routing. A business with real marketing activity but a Documented Strategy Coverage of zero or one belongs at Tier 2 — it has been running on activity without a written foundation, and the foundation is the binding constraint. A business that already has substantial documented strategy but no system running it belongs at Tier 3 — the writing exists; what is missing is the operation. And a business that cannot yet answer where it stands belongs at Tier 1, because every later decision depends on a diagnosis it does not yet have. Most owner-operated businesses, asked honestly, find they belong at Tier 1 or Tier 2 — not because they do too little marketing, but because they have never developed and/or documented a strategy.

The tiers connect the way medical care unfolds — diagnosis leads to treatment, treatment leads to ongoing care. The Audit's roadmap is the input to the Documented Strategy. The Documented Strategy is the input the AI-native

execution layer runs from to produce the tactics. Nothing produced in an earlier tier is thrown away in a later one; each output is the raw material for the next stage. And the standard that runs through all three is the one the framework set at the start — *documented and transferable*. Tier 1 measures against it. Tier 2 builds to it. Tier 3 operates in a way that maintains it. The verbs change; the standard does not.

The work, across all three tiers, is finally the same work: *build the six drivers into a transferable system before the room asks the question*. The tiers differ only in how much of that work the business has already done, and how much it needs done now.

SECTION 09 · THE OUTCOME

The closing-table *outcome*.

Step back from the framework, the scorecard, and the tiers, and the program resolves to a single outcome. Every part of it — the six areas, the bridge to the six drivers, the two-dimension diagnosis, the three verbs — is built to move a business from one state to another. The starting state is a business whose marketing works because the owner makes it work, week after week, from a strategy that exists only in the owner's head. The ending state is a business whose marketing runs as a documented, measured, owner-independent system that a buyer can see, a successor can inherit, and a lender can underwrite.

Those two businesses can have identical revenue and identical earnings in the year they are valued. *They will not be worth the same*. A buyer pays more for a business they can see clearly, understand fully, and inherit cleanly — and pays less for a business whose performance depends on an owner about to walk out the door. The companion paper, *The Closing-Table Test*, walks through the financial mechanics in detail — the specific levers that determine how much "more" or how much "less" a buyer pays for one business versus the other. This paper has described how those levers get built — by method, in order, to a standard, through a program rather than a project.

The reason to start before the room is in view is that the work takes years to compound and cannot be done in the quarter the business goes up for sale. Documentation written under deal pressure fools no one. A demand engine instrumented the month before diligence has no track record to show. The drivers a buyer prices are the drivers that were built *over time*, on purpose, while the business was still being run for its own sake. The closing-table room rewards the owner who treated the question as live for years before it was asked — and penalizes, automatically, the one who waited until it was.

STICKY POINT

A project gives you a deliverable. A program gives you a system. The six drivers a buyer pays for cannot be bought as a deliverable — they have to be built, documented, and run until the business no longer depends on you to make its marketing work. That is the difference between a business that owns its value and a business that is its owner's value. The program decides which one you've built.

Notes on *terms and method*.

6 To Fix areas

Brand, Customer, Offering, Communications, Sales, Management. The six strategic areas of marketing the framework organizes work into.

Value drivers

The 6-to-6 Bridge. Brand Worth, Customer Yield, Category Claim, Demand Engine, Revenue Quality, Transferable System. Each maps one-to-one to a 6 To Fix area and to a mechanism of enterprise value.

Assets vs. Systems

Brand / Customer / Offering build assets (what the business owns; moves the EBITDA numerator). Communications / Sales / Management build systems (what makes the business run; expands the multiple). Both feed Goodwill.

Goodwill

The premium a buyer pays above net tangible book value at acquisition. The compounded result of the six drivers built over time.

Activity Score

0–10 per area; measures both the volume and the fit of marketing work happening in that area. Sums to a 0–60 total.

Documented Strategy

None / Partial / Current per area; whether the strategy underneath the activity is written, current within twelve months, and used in decisions. The count of areas at Current is *Documented Strategy Coverage (0–6)*. The two dimensions are scored independently and never blended.

Systems Maturity Score

0–20 total, four cross-cutting dimensions scored 0–5 each: **Documented** (work captured in writing), **Repeatable** (runs on a cadence the owner does not drive), **Measurable** (inputs and outputs tracked), **Owner-Independent** (decisions continue without the owner).

Value Driver Rating

The six bridge drivers rated against a peer benchmark for businesses of similar size and category. Benchmarks drawn from established valuation references (Pepperdine Private Capital Markets Report, IBBA Market Pulse, Exit Planning Institute).

Three tiers

Tier 1 Audit (*diagnose*), Tier 2 Documented Strategy (*document*), Tier 3 fCMO + Marketing Management + AI-Native Execution (*deploy*). Proportional response, not a fixed sequence; entry point set by the scorecard.

EBITDA / multiple / Goodwill

Defined in the companion paper, *The Closing-Table Test (Paper 1)*, Section 3 and Appendix A.

WHAT'S NEXT

Start with the *diagnosis*.

The Strategic Glue 6 To Fix Scorecard rates your business across all six areas on both dimensions — activity a market can see and documented strategy a buyer looks for.

DIAGNOSE

Take the Scorecard.

About five minutes. Confidential rating, written diagnosis, and the recommended entry point into the program.

[STRATEGICGLUE.COM/SCORECARD](https://strategicglue.com/scorecard)

CONTINUE

Book a *15-minute call*.

A short conversation about the results — what they imply, and what would come next.

[STRATEGICGLUE.COM/BOOK](https://strategicglue.com/book)