

The Founder Story Interview Guide

How to run a 60-minute onboarding call that uncovers the stories, beliefs, and voice your client's content actually needs.

For Famous Founders Agency Partners

Why This Call Changes Everything

The quality of every piece of content, every pitch, and every article your client's VA produces is determined almost entirely by what comes out of this 60-minute call.

Brandpod is a powerful platform. Trained VAs are skilled executors. But neither can manufacture depth, specificity, or genuine voice from thin air. If the input is generic, the output will be generic. If the input is rich with real stories, strong opinions, and authentic language, the output will be the kind of content that actually builds authority.

Your job on this call is not to gather information. It is to excavate it.

THE CORE MINDSET SHIFT

You are not filling out a form. You are not conducting an intake session. You are a podcast host sitting across from a fascinating guest – and your job is to find the moments, the beliefs, and the stories that nobody else knows.

The survey template is a safety net. It is not the agenda.

Before the Call: How to Prepare

Do not send the survey to your client beforehand. When people fill out a survey in advance, they give you their polished, pre-edited answers – the ones they think you want. That is exactly what you do not want.

Instead, spend 20 minutes doing this before the call:

- Look at their LinkedIn profile – what do they post about, and what gets the most engagement?
- Read their website bio and About page – what story are they already telling, and what feels missing or flat?
- Google them – have they been on any podcasts, written any articles, spoken anywhere? What topics came up?

- Note 2 to 3 things that seem interesting but underdeveloped – these become your curiosity anchors on the call

You are not researching them to show off that you did homework. You are researching them so you can notice what is absent – the texture and specificity that their public presence lacks – and go looking for it.

Opening the Call: Set the Tone in the First 2 Minutes

How you open this call determines how open your client will be for the next 58 minutes. Most people arrive expecting a form-filling exercise. Reframe it immediately.

SUGGESTED OPENING:

Before we dive in, I want to tell you what this call actually is – because it might not be what you are expecting.

I am not going to walk you through a questionnaire. I am going to ask you questions the way a good podcast host would – and I really want you to just talk. Long answers are great. Tangents are welcome. If something feels like it might not be relevant, say it anyway.

The best content we are going to create for you will not come from the obvious stuff on your LinkedIn. It is going to come from the stories you probably do not think to tell – the moments that shaped how you think, the things you believe that most people in your space would argue with, the experiences that made you who you are.

So let us just have a real conversation. I will guide it. You just talk.

Then: start the recording, confirm they are comfortable being recorded, and begin.

The 5 Layers of a Great Founder Story

Every compelling personal brand rests on five things. Your interview needs to uncover all five. Do not move on from a layer until you have something real – not a polished answer, but an actual story or a strongly held belief.

← what the world already sees →

Layer 5 — The vision

What are you building, and why does it matter beyond you?

Layer 4 — The method

How do you actually work, and why does it work when others fail?

Layer 3 — The belief

What do you believe that most of your field gets wrong?

Layer 2 — The hard part

Where did you struggle, fail, or almost quit?

Layer 1 — The origin

Why did you really start? Not the rehearsed version.

← where authority is actually built →

Layer 1 – The Origin

Why did they start doing what they do? Not the LinkedIn version. The real version.

- Walk me back to the moment before you started this. What was actually happening in your life?
- Was there a specific moment you remember, or was it more of a slow realization?
- What were you afraid of when you made that decision?
- What would have happened if you hadn't done it?

What you are looking for: a specific scene, not a summary. Push until you can picture it.

Layer 2 – The Hard Part

Where did they struggle, fail, or almost quit? This is where authority is actually built.

- What is something that went badly wrong early on, that you now realize taught you everything?
- Tell me about a time a client, a project, or a decision completely humbled you.
- What do you know now that you wish you had known at the beginning?
- What is the most expensive mistake you have made in this business?

What you are looking for: honesty, specificity, and a lesson that only comes from having lived it. Generic struggle is not useful. Specific, instructive failure is gold.

Layer 3 – The Belief

What do they believe about their industry, their clients, or their craft that most people would disagree with or push back on?

- What is something you believe about your field that most of your peers would say is wrong?
- If you could change one thing about how your industry operates, what would it be?
- What advice do most experts give that you think is actually harmful?
- What do your best clients understand that your worst clients never seem to get?

What you are looking for: a genuine, possibly controversial point of view. Opinions that nobody could argue with are not opinions – they are filler. Push for something with an edge.

Layer 4 – The Method

How do they actually do what they do, and why does it work when other approaches don't?

- Walk me through what actually happens when you work with someone. Not the marketing version – the real version.
- What do you do that most people in your space don't do?
- Why does your approach work when others fail?
- Tell me about a client result that surprised even you.

What you are looking for: proprietary thinking and specificity. Anyone can describe a service. You want the specific reasoning, philosophy, and approach that makes this person different.

Layer 5 - The Vision

What are they building toward, and why does it matter beyond just them?

- If everything goes the way you want it to, what does the world look like in 10 years because of your work?
- Who are you ultimately trying to help, and why do you care so much about that specific person?
- What is the thing you want to be remembered for?
- Why does any of this actually matter?

What you are looking for: mission language and emotional resonance. This is what makes content shareable and what makes audiences feel a connection that goes beyond the transaction.

First Answer

Polished, expected, rehearsed

Surface

The real story

Scenes, beliefs, and hard-won failures that build real authority

Interviewer Techniques That Pull Out Real Answers

Most people, when asked a deep question, give a surface answer first. That is not the answer. It is the door to the answer. Your job is to open it.

The Pause

When someone finishes answering, wait 3 to 4 seconds before speaking. Most people cannot tolerate silence and will fill it with something more honest than what they just said. This is one of the most powerful tools in any interviewer's kit.

The Echo

Repeat the last 3 to 5 words of what they said as a question. It signals that you heard them and invites them to go deeper without you having to form a new question.

Client says: ...and that is when I realized the whole industry had it backwards.
You say: The whole industry had it backwards?
Client: [now tells you the real story]

The Specificity Push

Whenever an answer is vague, push for a specific example. Vague answers produce vague content.

- Can you give me a specific example of that?
- Tell me about a real client or a real situation where that happened.
- What did that actually look like in practice?

The Permission to Go Deeper

Sometimes people self-edit because they think they are being too negative, too personal, or too bold. Give them permission.

- You can be completely honest here – this is just between us and the VA team.
- I actually want the uncomfortable version of that story, if you're willing to share it.
- Don't worry about sounding polished – the raw version is always more interesting.

The Tell Me More

The simplest prompt in any interview. Use it constantly: Tell me more about that. Three words. Infinite utility.

The pause

Wait 3–4 seconds before speaking. Silence pulls out something more honest than the first answer.

The echo

Repeat their last 3–5 words as a question. Signals you heard them and invites them deeper.

Specificity push

Ask for a concrete example whenever an answer is vague. Vague answers produce vague content.

Permission to go deeper

Tell them you want the raw, unpolished version. People self-edit until you explicitly give them permission not to.

Tell me more

Three words. Infinite utility. The simplest prompt in any interview. Use it constantly.

What to Avoid on the Call

- Do not ask leading questions that suggest the answer ('So would you say you're passionate about helping people?')
- Do not interrupt a good story to ask the next question on your list
- Do not accept the first answer to a deep question – it is almost always the rehearsed version
- Do not let the call become a pitch session for what the client wants to be known for – follow the truth, not the brand they have decided on
- Do not rush. Silence is productive. Awkwardness is productive. Polished efficiency is not.
- Do not skip the hard questions because they feel intrusive – the best content lives right behind those questions

After the Call: What to Do Before You Submit

Once you have the transcript, send it straight to the Brandpod team along with the details below. Our AI scrapes the transcript to extract the key stories, voice patterns, beliefs, and standout moments – so nothing gets lost.

WHAT TO SEND TO BRANDPOD:

1. Full transcript of the onboarding Zoom call
2. Confirmed list of the client's goals (AEO content, podcast pitching, article publishing, event/keynote outreach)
3. Any content restrictions, brand voice notes, or topics to avoid
4. Samples of their writing and preferred writing style (LinkedIn posts, articles, emails – anything that shows their authentic voice)

Send to: hello@brandpod.ai with subject line: DFY Onboarding – [Client Name]

Quick Reference: The Interview at a Glance

Phase	Minutes	Goal
Open and reframe the call	0 to 5	Set the tone; position this as a conversation, not a form
Origin story	5 to 20	Find the real reason they do this work
The hard part	20 to 30	Uncover failures, lessons, and hard-won expertise
Beliefs and opinions	30 to 42	Surface the strong point of view that sets them apart
Method and proof	42 to 52	Get specifics on approach, results, and what makes them different
Vision and mission	52 to 60	Understand what they are building and why it matters

A Final Note

The founders who get the best results from the Brandpod Done For You service are the ones whose onboarding calls produced something real. Not a polished brand summary – a person. Someone with a specific history, a genuine perspective, and things to say that only they could say.

That is what this call is for. The VA team will handle everything that follows. Your job is to make sure they have something worth working with.