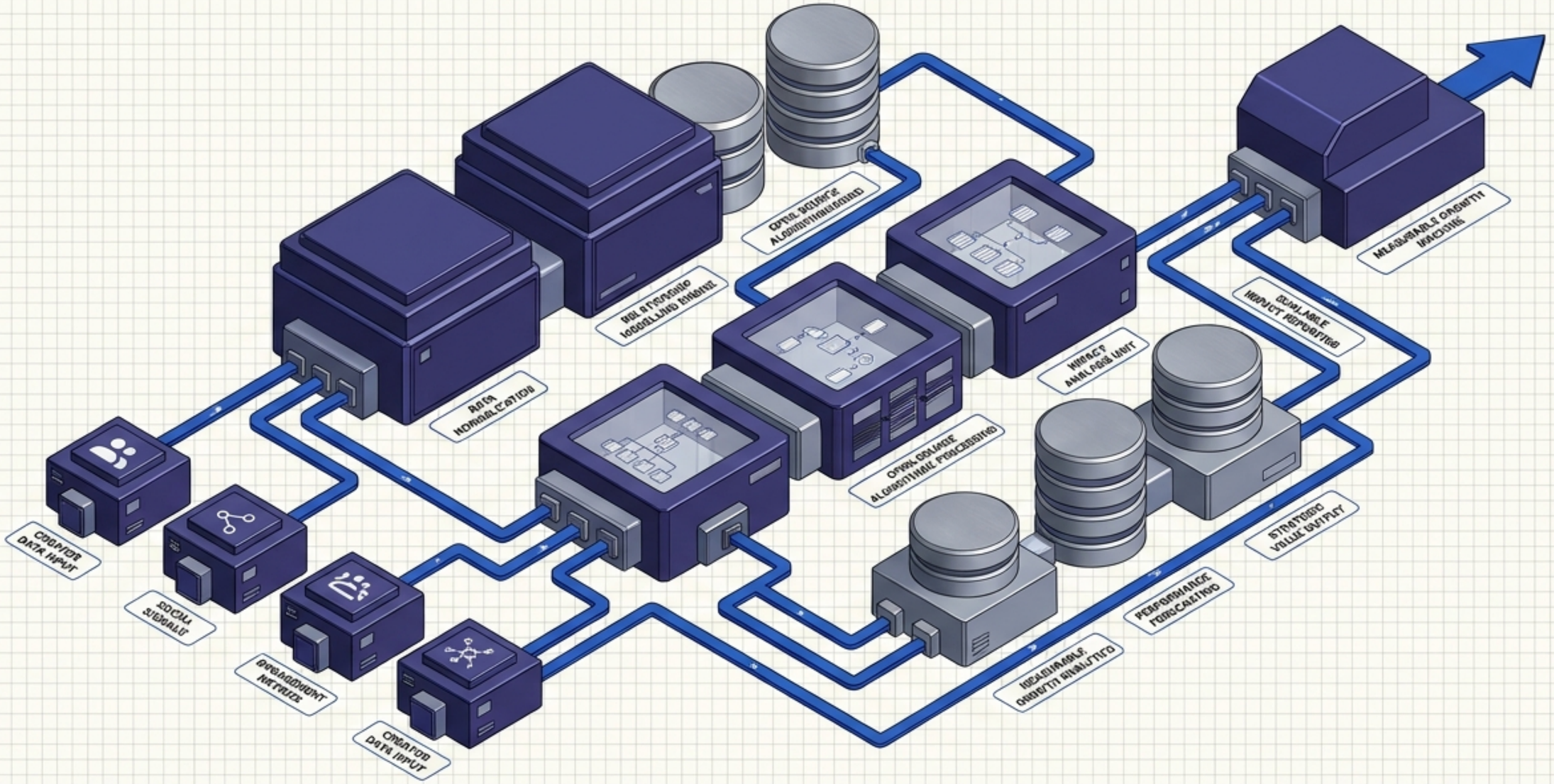
Engineering Influence

A rigorous, open-source blueprint for turning creator relationships into a measurable growth machine.



Gemini Notebook

Influence is a measurable distribution channel, not a viral lottery ticket

The Vanity Lottery



- Buying reach via discounted paid media.
- Chasing viral view counts and vendor-supplied Earned Media Value.
- Relying on black box platforms and unverified creator metrics.
- Throwing cash at unproven hype.

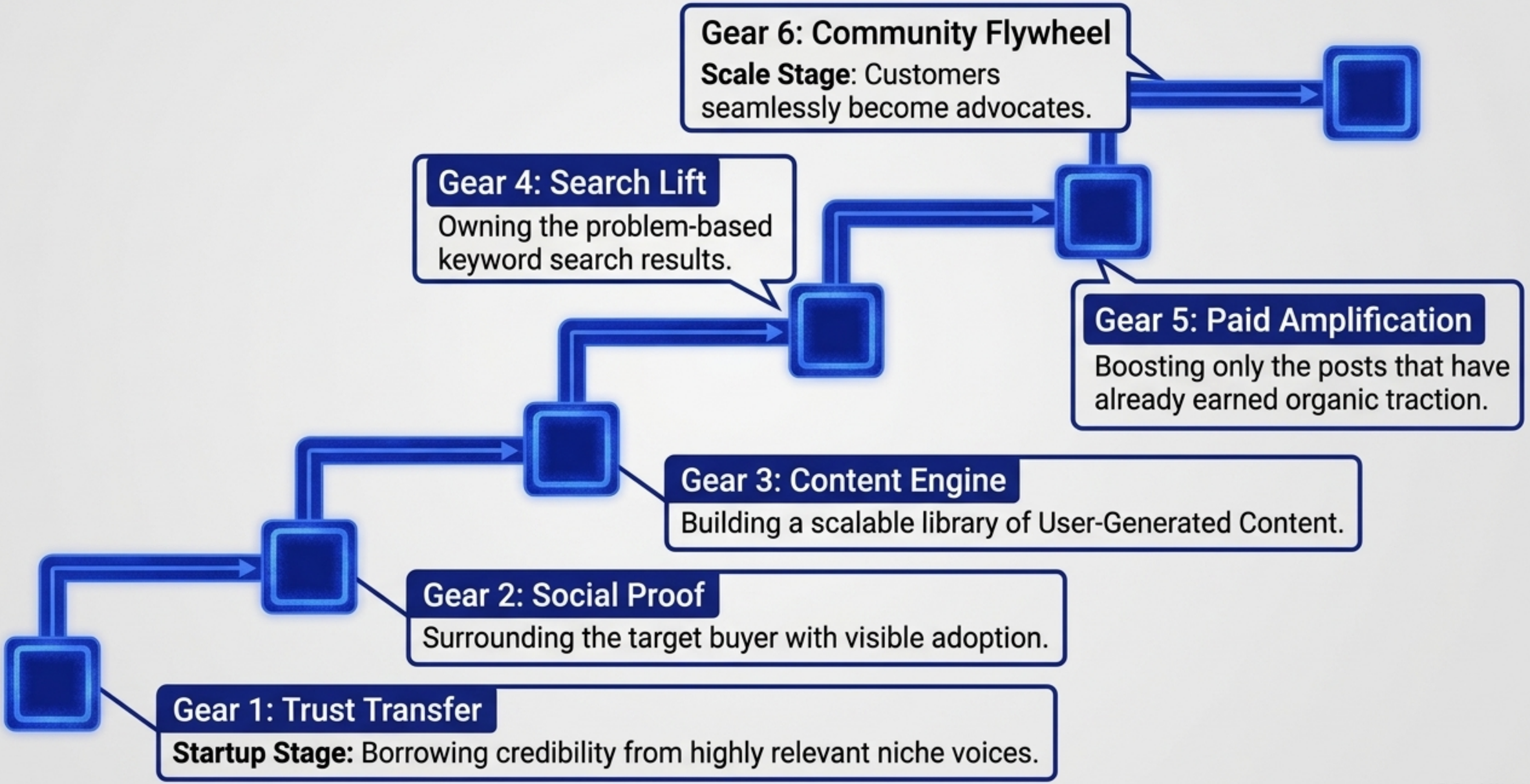
The Engineered Channel



- Borrowing trust from an owned audience.
- Measuring incrementality, code redemptions, and unique link clicks.
- Owning the data via self-hosted, open-source analytics stacks.
- Scaling spend only after organic traction is proven.

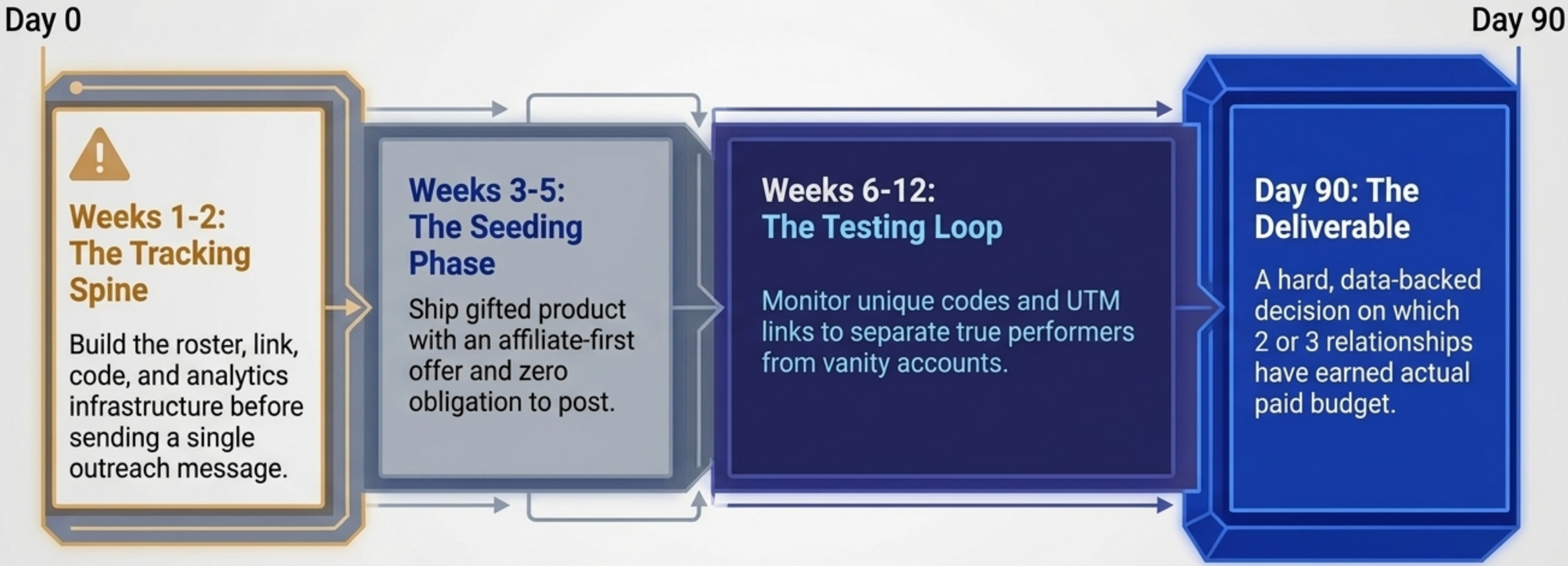
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Shift growth mechanisms to match your brand's operational stage



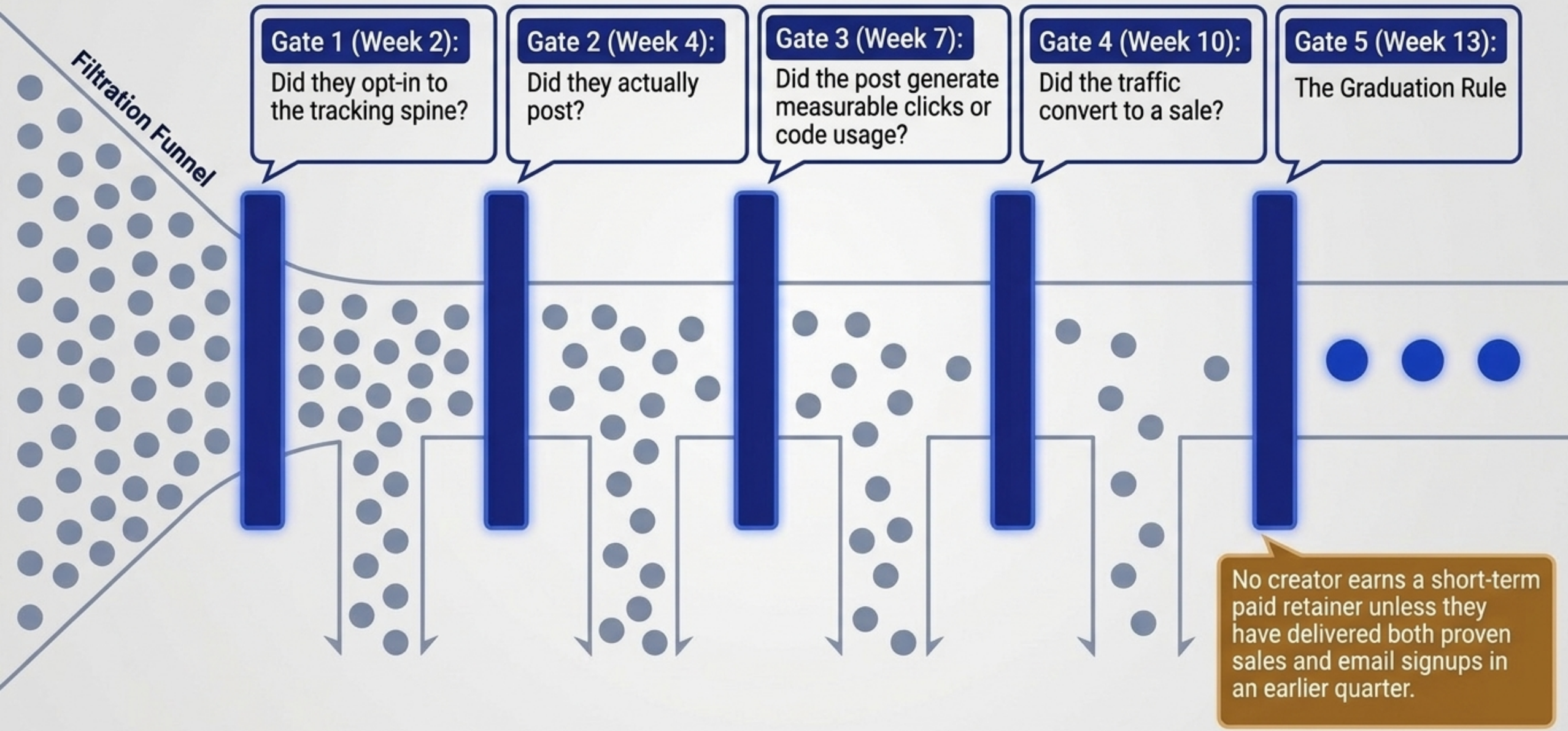
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The 90-day zero-cash sequence demands time, product, and strict discipline



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Graduate creators through five strict decision gates



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Confusing attribution with incrementality is the costliest error in measurement

Attribution



Attribution asks: Which touchpoint gets the credit? It maps the path a buyer took, but cannot prove the path caused the purchase.

Incrementality



Incrementality asks: How many sales would not have happened without this program? It identifies the true **net-new revenue** generated by the creator.

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Deploy a multi-instrument spectrum to expose tracking blind spots



Promo Codes: Tracks direct conversions.

Blind Spot: Codes leak to coupon sites, artificially crediting creators for organic sales; misses view-through buyers.

Tracked Links (UTM): Captures intent and specific campaign sources.

Blind Spot: Bio links lose parameters; users switch devices before buying.

Post-Purchase Surveys: How did you hear about us?

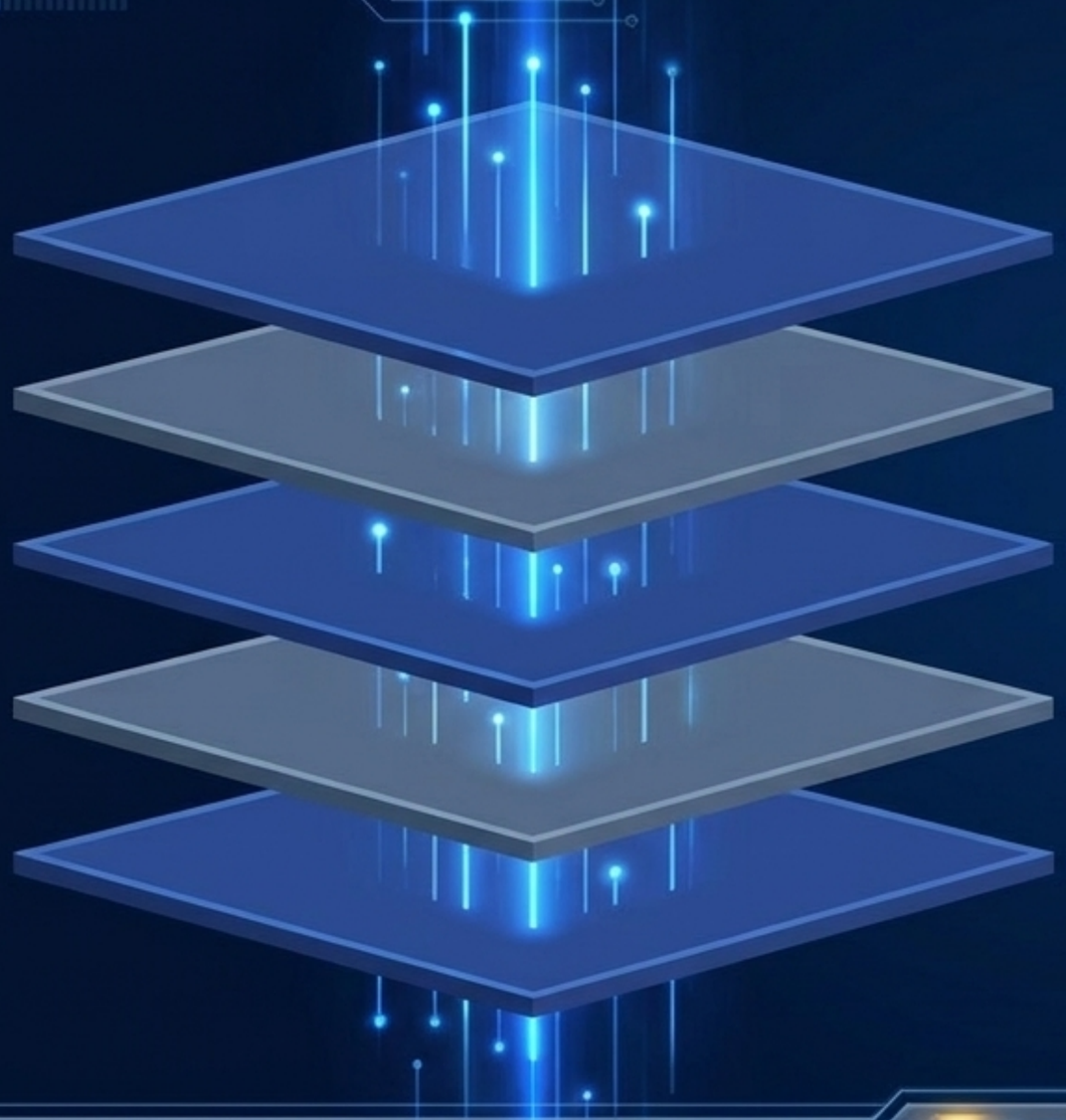
Blind Spot: High survey mentions but low code usage indicates broken attribution links.

Holdout Tests: Compare active markets against markets entirely isolated from campaigns.

Blind Spot: The ultimate incrementality check, but requires significant operational discipline to isolate markets.

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Build a five-layer, self-hosted analytics stack at zero license cost



Layer 5: The Analyst: A named human owner running a mandatory weekly review. The stack cannot measure delayed purchases or store sales without human context.

Layer 4: The Dashboard (Metabase)
Visualizes the data for executive review.

Layer 3: The Record Keeper (Baserow)
An open-source database acting as the single source of truth for the roster, codes, and compliance.

Layer 2: Site Analytics (Matomo / Umami / Plausible)
Tracks traffic and behavior without relying on black-box platform pixels.

Layer 1: The Link (Shlink / YOURLS)
Generates unique, owned short links.

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Separate vendor hype from documented business reality

	The Viral Myth	The Documented Reality
Stanley Quencher	A single viral creator post caused a massive brand turnaround.	Ashlee LeSueur bought 5,000 units wholesale to prove the market, took inventory risk, and partnered on color launches alongside strict retail scarcity.
Prime Hydration	Mega-creator reach guarantees permanent dominance.	$250M first-year hype rapidly outran the actual product, leading to a reported 50% UK sales drop, heavy discounting, and class action lawsuits.
Gymshark / Fashion Nova	Exact, massive ROI multipliers from single posts.	Evidence is astonishingly thin, relying almost entirely on unverified CEO quotes rather than independent financial data.

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A signed contract does not transfer your liability under FTC rules

Creator Scandal: Reputational damage from creator behavior.

Disclosure Failure: Missing, hidden, or ambiguous Ad labels.

The Brand Firewall

The Advertiser is Liable: The FTC's 2016 Warner Bros. Shadow of Mordor settlement proved brands answer for creator actions. Disclosures hidden below a 'Show More' button result in brand penalties.

Product Claim: Making unsubstantiated health or performance claims.

Fake Followers: Buying engagement, penalized under the 2024 Consumer Reviews Rule.

Minor Safeguarding: Profiling children or lacking guardian consent.

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Execute a rigid response clock to contain creator crises

Hour 1: Containment & Evidence

Pause all paid amplification and upcoming scheduled posts.

Capture time-stamped screenshots and video evidence of the infraction before asking the creator to delete anything, preventing cover-up allegations.



Day 1: Decision & Statement

Enforce correction in place, or terminate the relationship.

Issue a plain, factual statement: What happened, what is ours, what we did, and what comes next.

Hour 4: Assessment & Contract Review

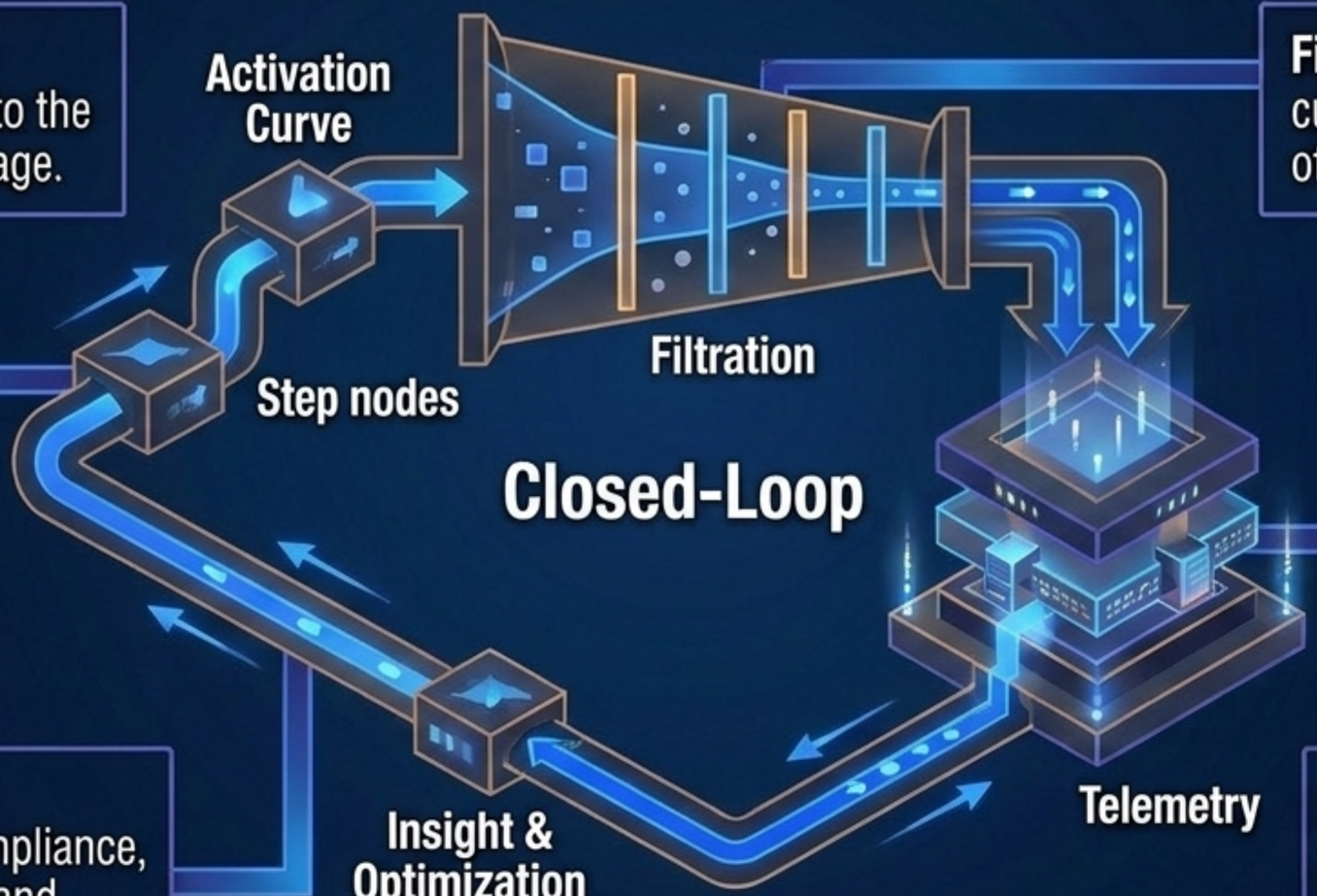
Review the specific contract levers: Takedown windows (24-48 hours), morals clauses, and clawback provisions. Consult counsel.

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Rapid growth is rigorous, disciplined engineering

Feed the Mechanisms: Match the creator brief to the brand's exact growth stage.

Filter the Roster: Ruthlessly cut vanity metrics in favor of tracked codes and links.



Enforce the Floor: Rely on written FTC compliance, automated monitoring, and pre-built crisis protocols.

Own the Telemetry: Self-host the analytics stack to protect data and verify incrementality.

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