BUILD A BUSINESS · BEGINNER · 13 MIN READ

Find your first customers with AI

Who to talk to, what to say, and how AI helps you write, post and follow up without sounding like a robot.

Pass the check (4 of 5) online to earn the “Customer Finder” badge:
https://digitalbuilders757.com/university/study/find-your-first-customers

Your first ten customers come from people, not ads

Before paid ads or a big launch, your first customers usually come from people who already know you or share the problem: friends of friends, local businesses you visit, groups and clubs, online communities, past coworkers. Ten real conversations teach you more than a thousand ad impressions.

Write down 30 names or places where your customer already spends time. That list is your first marketing plan.

Say it in one sentence

A positioning sentence keeps every message clear: 'I help [who] [get what result] by [how], without [the pain they hate].' For example: 'I help barbershops fill empty chairs with a booking page and text reminders, without another monthly app.'

Ask AI for 10 versions, pick the one a customer would repeat to a friend, and test it in conversations.

Where AI helps (and where it doesn't)

- Drafting: first versions of posts, emails, flyers and landing-page copy. Give it your positioning sentence, your audience and examples of your own voice.
- Research: lists of local groups, events and communities to visit; common questions people ask about the problem.
- Repurposing: turn one story (a before/after from a project) into a post, a short video script and an email.
- Follow-up: reminders and draft replies so no lead goes cold.
- Where it doesn't: relationships. Personal messages should be personal. Read, edit and send them yourself, and never send bulk messages to people who didn't agree to hear from you.

Show your work

Proof beats promises. Share real builds, short demos, before-and-after numbers and what you learned. A screen recording of you using a tool you built is the most persuasive thing you can post.

Make it easy to say yes: one clear next step (book a call, try the demo, reply 'yes') and a simple way to pay or sign up.

Track what works

Keep a simple sheet: who you contacted, where, what you said, and what happened. After two weeks, do more of what got replies. This is your first sales pipeline, and an automation can fill it in for you (see the automation guide).

Key terms

Positioning sentence
One line on who you help, what result, and how: easy for customers to repeat.

Sales pipeline
A tracked list of leads and where each conversation stands.

Landing page
A one-page site that explains an offer and asks for one action.

User research
Learning from the people who have the problem: interviews and watching them use things.

Lead
A person or business who might become a customer.

Call to action (CTA)
The one thing you want a visitor to do next, like 'Join the waitlist'.

Portfolio
A collection of real projects that shows what you can build.

Try it: Ten conversations in ten days

1. Write your positioning sentence and ask AI for 10 sharper versions; pick one.
2. List 30 people or places where your customer already is.
3. Draft a short, personal message for each of your top 10 (AI drafts, you edit every one).
4. Track replies in a sheet and note the exact words people use about their problem.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

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5 questions. Circle one answer for each; 4 or more correct passes. Answers are at the back.

1. Where do most first customers come from?

A. Paid ads on social media, targeted at everyone in your city
B. People who already know you or share the problem
C. Random cold spam
D. Billboards

2. What is a positioning sentence?

A. Your company's legal name
B. A type of ad
C. A one-line statement of who you help, what result, and how
D. Your logo

3. Which is the best use of AI in outreach?

A. Sending thousands of AI-written messages, since more messages means more replies
B. Pretending to be a customer
C. Posting AI-written reviews from 'happy customers' to build trust
D. Drafting messages you then personalise and send yourself

4. What's the most persuasive thing to share about a tool you built?

A. A short demo or before-and-after result
B. A long, detailed list of every feature and setting it has
C. Your tech stack
D. A stock photo

5. What is a sales pipeline?

A. A plumbing service
B. A list of people you're talking to and where each stands
C. A payment processor that moves money from customers to your bank
D. A website builder that turns visitors into sign-ups automatically

Official sites

SBA: Marketing and sales: https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/manage-your-business/marketing-sales
FTC: Consumer reviews and testimonials rule: https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/resources/consumer-reviews-testimonials-rule-questions-answers

Last reviewed 2026-11-25. AI tools change fast; check each tool's own site for current features, plans and prices.

ANSWER KEY

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1. B: People who already know you or share the problem
Early customers come from relationships and communities, which also teach you the most.

2. C: A one-line statement of who you help, what result, and how
It keeps every message clear and is easy for customers to repeat.

3. D: Drafting messages you then personalise and send yourself
AI drafts; you personalise. Bulk unwanted messages and fake reviews damage trust (and can break the law).

4. A: A short demo or before-and-after result
Proof beats promises: show it working and what changed.

5. B: A list of people you're talking to and where each stands
Tracking contacts and outcomes shows you what's working.