Find Your First 100 Readers

A 30-day workbook

MAYA CHEN

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How to Use This Workbook

You wrote a book. Maybe it is finished, maybe it is one last read-through away from finished. Either way, the hard part you expected is done, and a different hard part has turned up: nobody knows the book exists, and the thought of telling them makes you want to go and write another one.

This workbook is for that exact moment. It does not ask you to build an audience, become a personality, or spend money on advertising. It asks you to find one hundred readers, one small ask at a time, over thirty days.

What counts as a reader

A reader is a person who has your book, or a chapter of it, and has said something back to you about it. A follower is not a reader. A like is not a reader. A hundred readers is a hundred people you could name, or at least count.

You will keep a running tally on the last page of this workbook. Start it at zero and be honest with it. The number matters less than the habit of counting.

The shape of each day

Every day asks for thirty to sixty minutes. Most days that time splits the same way:

Part	Minutes	What you do
Read the lesson	5 to 10	One short lesson, no more
Do the exercise	15 to 30	Write in this book, in pen
Send one thing	10 to 20	A message, a reply, a request

The lessons are short on purpose. The exercises are where the work happens, and the messages you send are the point of the whole thing.

The four weeks

Week 1 names your reader: one person, described well enough that you could spot them in a room. Week 2 turns that into a one-sentence promise and a single page you can send to anyone. Week 3 finds the places where that reader already gathers, and gets you useful in those places before you ask for anything. Week 4 is the asking, the delivering, and the routine that keeps going after this workbook ends.

Each week ends with a checklist. Tick what you did, not what you meant to do. A half-ticked checklist is useful information, not a failure.

Three rules

1. Write in the book. Later exercises use earlier answers, and you will want them in one place.
2. One ask a day is enough. If you do more, good. If you do one, you are on schedule.
3. No invented numbers. When you count readers, count people. When you describe your book, describe what it does, not how many people it has helped.

If you miss a day, do not double up. Pick up where you left off. Thirty days can take thirty-five, and the readers will not know the difference.

Week 1: Your Reader

Days 1 to 7. This week is about one person. Not a market, not a demographic, not "busy professionals". One person, described so clearly that when you see them in a comment thread or across a table, you know.

Lesson 1: One reader, not an audience

When you sit down to tell people about your book, the instinct is to widen the net. If you say the book is for "anyone who struggles with sleep", surely more people will want it than if you say it is for night-shift nurses.

In practice the opposite happens. "Anyone" belongs to nobody, so nobody forwards it, nobody says "this is for you", and nobody feels seen. The night-shift nurse, on the other hand, reads that sentence and stops scrolling. She sends it to two colleagues. One of them mentions it in a break room where eleven other nurses are eating.

Priya, who wrote a book on shift-work sleep, spent her first month describing it as "a practical guide to better sleep for busy people". She sold it to her sister. When she changed one line to "for nurses and paramedics who work nights and cannot switch off when they get home", she found her first twenty readers in a fortnight, mostly through one ward's group chat.

Your reader already exists. You probably wrote the book with a version of them in mind. This week you make that version specific enough to find.

Exercise 1: Name your reader

Days 1 and 2. Answer each question in a sentence or two. If you know a real person who fits, use them and use their real first name; you will be writing to them on day 7.

1. Their first name (real or borrowed):

2. What they do most days, in plain words:

3. The moment they would reach for your book. Be precise about the hour, the room, and what just happened:

4. What they have already tried that did not work:

5. What they would say if a friend asked, "What is going on with you lately?"

6. One thing about them that has nothing to do with your book, so they stay a person:

Lesson 2: The words they use

Your reader does not describe their problem the way your book describes it. You may have a chapter called "Circadian Disruption in Rotating Shift Patterns". Your reader says, "I sleep fine on my days off and then it all falls apart."

The difference matters because you are about to go and find this person in places where they talk. You will find them by their words, not yours. And when you tell them about your book, you will use their words back to them, so it sounds like an answer to something they said rather than a lecture about something they had not named.

Tomás wrote for first-time managers in family restaurants. His chapter titles were about delegation and accountability. His readers said things like "I cannot be the only one who notices the fridge is dirty" and "my mother still overrules me in front of the staff." Once he listened for those sentences, he could hear his readers everywhere.

Do not guess at these if you can help it. If you have any access to real people who fit your reader, ask them. If not, write your best version now and fix it after day 7.

Exercise 2: Their words, not yours

Days 3 and 4.

1. Three things your reader says out loud about the problem. Write them as full sentences, in the first person, the way they would say them to a friend:

2. The exact phrase they would type into a search box at eleven at night:

3. The question they would ask someone who had already solved it:

4. One sentence in your book that answers that question. Copy it out. If you cannot find one, note the page where the answer lives:

Lesson 3: The first ten names

You have fewer than two hundred followers anywhere. Good. Followers are not where your first readers come from. Your first readers come from people who already know you, and from the people they know.

Make a list of ten real people. Each one either fits the reader you described in Exercise 1, or knows someone who does, or would simply be pleased to hear from you and might surprise you. Former colleagues count. The parent from the school run who once mentioned your topic counts. The person you met on a course three years ago counts, if you can still find their email.

You are not going to sell to these ten people. Not this week. You are going to ask two of them a question, because you need to check that your reader description is right before you build anything on top of it.

Here is the message. Change the words to sound like you, but keep the shape: one line of context, one specific ask, and a way out.

> Hi Sam, I hope things are good. I have finished the book I mentioned last year, the one for new managers in family restaurants. Before I do anything with it, I want to check I have the reader right. Could I ask you two questions by message sometime this week? Five minutes, no obligation, and no need to read anything.

The two questions

When they say yes, ask these, one at a time:

1. "When it was at its worst, what did you say to yourself about it?"
2. "What did you try first, and what happened?"

Write down what they say, in their words. That is your day 7.

Exercise 3: Ten names and one conversation

Days 5 to 7. List ten people. Next to each name, note how you know them and whether they fit the reader, know one, or are a friendly face.

1. Name and connection:
2. Name and connection:
3. Name and connection:
4. Name and connection:
5. Name and connection:
6. Name and connection:
7. Name and connection:

8. Name and connection:

9. Name and connection:

10. Name and connection:

Circle two. Send them the message on day 6. On day 7, write down what they told you, as close to their words as you can manage:

Go back to Exercise 2. Cross out anything they proved wrong and write the better version in the margin.

Week 1 checklist

- I named one reader and described a specific moment they would reach for my book
- I wrote three sentences in my reader's own words, not mine
- I found one sentence in my book that answers their question
- I listed ten real people
- I sent the two-question message to two of them
- I wrote down what at least one of them said
- I corrected my reader description with what I heard

Week 2: Your Promise and Your Page

Days 8 to 14. Last week you named a reader and listened to how they talk. This week you write the one sentence you will say to them, and you build the one place you will send them. Both are small. Both get used every day for the rest of this workbook.

Lesson 4: A promise is one sentence

People do not pick up a book because it is good. They pick it up because it seems to be for them and seems to do something they want done. Your promise is the sentence that carries both. It is what you say when someone asks, "What is your book about?", and it is what sits at the top of the page you will build in Lesson 5.

A working promise has four parts. Draft it with the template before you make it sound human:

> For [your reader] who [their situation, in their words], this book [what it does] so that [what changes].

Priya's first draft: "For nurses and paramedics who work nights and cannot switch off when they get home, this book gives a week-by-week sleep routine that fits around a rota, so that days off stop being a write-off."

That is too long to say out loud, but it is honest and complete. The spoken version came later: "It is a sleep routine for night-shift nurses, built around the rota instead of fighting it."

Notice what is not in it. No "ultimate", no "transform", no "secrets". Your reader is tired of being promised things. A plain sentence that sounds like it was written by someone who has stood in the break room is worth more than any adjective.

Draft three. Say each one out loud to the kitchen wall. Keep the one that does not make you wince.

Exercise 4: Three drafts and a test

Days 8 to 10. Fill in the template three times, each with a different emphasis: one on the situation, one on what the book does, one on what changes.

1. Draft one:

2. Draft two:

3. Draft three:

Now the spoken version. Cut the one you like best down to something you could say in one breath:

On day 10, send the spoken version to two people from your Exercise 3 list, ideally the two you already spoke to. Ask one question only: "Does this sound like a book you would pick up, or one you would send to someone? If someone, who?" Write what they said:

Lesson 5: Your page

Every ask you make from now on ends with a place to send people. Without that place the ask fizzles, because the person has to go and search for you, and most will not.

Your page is one page. It might be the book's page on the retailer where it is sold, if you can edit the description. It might be a single page on a simple site. It might be a pinned post on the one profile you already have. What it is matters less than what it says, and it says five things, in this order:

1. The promise, at the top, in the spoken version.
2. Who it is for, in one line, using the reader's own words from Exercise 2.
3. Three things they will be able to do after reading it. Not chapter titles: outcomes.
4. How to get it: a price and a link, or "email me and I will send you a copy" if it is not on sale yet.
5. How to reach you. A plain email address you actually check.

That is the whole page. Do not add a biography longer than three lines (you will write it in Lesson 6), a list of endorsements you do not have, or a newsletter box that leads nowhere. The page's only job is to let a person who has just heard about your book say yes without effort.

Lena, a coach who wrote for people returning to work after a career break, spent a week on a site with a blog, an about page, and a resources section. Nobody read the blog. The page that found her readers was the one with the promise, three outcomes, and a line that said, "If you are going back to work in the next three months, email me and I will send you the first chapter."

Exercise 5: Write the page

Days 11 to 13. Write the page here first, then put it wherever it will live. Keep the paper version; you will read it back on day 30.

1. Promise (spoken version, from Exercise 4):

2. Who it is for, in their words:

3. After reading it, you will be able to:

4. How to get it (price and link, or the offer to send it):

5. How to reach me:

6. Where the page lives (the address you will paste into messages):

Lesson 6: Three lines about you

People ask about the author only after they have decided they might want the book, so the biography comes last and stays short. Three lines. The first says what you have in common with the reader. The second says why you could write this book in particular. The third is something human.

Tomás: "I ran my parents' restaurant for six years before I understood what managing actually meant. I wrote this book for the version of me who was told to 'just take over' with no idea how. I still cannot walk past a dirty fridge."

That is not a list of credentials. It is a reason to trust him, told in the reader's language, with a line at the end that the reader will recognise.

Leave out anything the reader would not ask about. Degrees, awards, and the name of your employer belong in the bio only if your reader would want to know them before trusting you. Priya's readers wanted to know she had worked nights. They did not need to know where she trained. If you are a coach, say who you coach and for how long, in one line, and resist the urge to list your methods.

Exercise 6: The bio

Day 14.

1. What I have in common with my reader:

2. Why I could write this book:

3. Something human:

Add the bio to the bottom of your page. Then open the tally on the last page of this workbook and write down today's number of readers, even if it is zero or two.

Week 2 checklist

- I wrote three drafts of the promise using the template
- I cut one down to a spoken version I can say in one breath

- I tested the spoken version on two people and wrote down their answer
- My page has the five parts, in order, and nothing else
- The page lives at an address I can paste into a message
- I wrote a three-line bio and added it to the page
- I opened the tally and wrote today's number

Week 3: Where Your Readers Already Gather

Days 15 to 22. You have a reader, a promise, and a page. Now you go where the reader already is. Not where you wish they were, and not where other authors are. Where your particular reader spends time, asks questions, and listens to people they trust.

Lesson 7: They are already somewhere

Your reader did not wait for your book to start looking for help. They asked a colleague. They typed the eleven-at-night search from Exercise 2. They joined a group, subscribed to a newsletter, listened to a podcast on the drive home, or went to a meeting in a community hall. Somewhere there is a room, real or online, where a hundred of your readers are already gathered and already talking about the thing your book answers.

Places come in four kinds:

Kind	What happens there	Examples
Where they ask	Questions and answers, mostly between strangers	Forums, members' groups, question threads under other people's posts
Where they listen	One voice, many listeners	Podcasts, newsletters, a column in a trade magazine
Where they meet	People in a room	Professional associations, courses, staff rooms, library events, local meetups
Who they trust	A person whose recommendation carries	A team leader, a tutor, a union rep, a well-known member of a group

You need eight places, spread across the four kinds. Finding them is a search job, and the search terms are the reader's words from Exercise 2, not your book's title. Priya searched for "night shift sleep tips" and found a forum thread that had been running for two years, a podcast for emergency workers, a hospital wellbeing newsletter that took guest pieces, and a members' group run by a paramedic who answered every question personally.

Do not judge a place by its size. A group of ninety people who all fit your reader is worth more than a group of ninety thousand who mostly do not.

Exercise 7: The places list

Days 15 to 17. For each place, write its name, its kind, who runs it or is listened to there, and roughly how many people are in it. Aim for two of each kind.

1. Place, kind, who runs it, size:
2. Place, kind, who runs it, size:
3. Place, kind, who runs it, size:
4. Place, kind, who runs it, size:
5. Place, kind, who runs it, size:
6. Place, kind, who runs it, size:
7. Place, kind, who runs it, size:
8. Place, kind, who runs it, size:

Circle the two you already belong to, even loosely. If you belong to none, join two today. Read for a day before you write anything.

Lesson 8: Show up before you ask

Here is the rule that makes the next two weeks work: you do not mention your book in a place until you have been useful there three times.

Useful means answering a question someone actually asked, fully, in your own words, with no link. If someone in the forum says "I sleep fine on days off and then it all falls apart", Priya writes four sentences about what she has found helps on the first night back, and stops. No "I wrote a book about this". No signature line. Just the answer.

This feels slow. It is not. It does three things at once. It teaches you how the place works and what people there care about. It gets your name recognised by the people who run it. And it means that when you do mention the book, in Week 4, you are a member who happens to have written something, rather than a stranger who arrived to sell.

A useful answer is short, specific, and ends without a pitch. If you cannot resist adding the pitch, you are not ready yet, and that is fine. Answer another question.

Tomás answered questions in a restaurant owners' group for ten days before anyone asked what he did. When someone finally did, three people had already recommended his replies to others. He never posted a link. Someone else did.

Exercise 8: Three useful things

Days 18 to 20. Pick two places from Exercise 7 where questions get asked. Each day, answer one question in one of them. Log it here.

1. Day 18. Place, the question, and the first line of my answer:

2. Day 19. Place, the question, and the first line of my answer:

3. Day 20. Place, the question, and the first line of my answer:

What did I notice about how these places work, and what do people there keep asking?

Lesson 9: The hosts and the helpers

Every place has a person. The podcast has a host who needs a guest next month. The newsletter has a writer who needs a piece for the week they are away. The group has an admin who is tired of answering the same question and would like someone else to write the answer they can pin. The association has a programme organiser with a slot to fill.

These people are not gatekeepers. They are busy people with a recurring need, and you can meet it. The offer is always the same shape: you do a specific piece of work for their audience, in their format, and you ask for nothing in return except your name and where to find the book.

To a podcast host

Adjust the specifics, keep the shape: one line showing you have listened, one line on who you are in relation to their audience, one specific offer, one easy way out.

> Hi Jordan, I listened to your episode with the paramedic on rota fatigue, and it was the first time I have heard someone say out loud that days off are the hard part. I am a nurse who worked nights for nine years, and I have just finished a short book on sleep routines built around the rota. If it would be useful, I could come on and talk through the first three nights back, in practical terms, for about twenty minutes. No worries at all if it is not a fit for the show.

To a group admin or newsletter writer

> Hi Ana, I have been in the group for a couple of weeks and I keep seeing the question about what to do in front of staff when a parent overrules you. I have written a short, practical answer that you are welcome to pin or use in the newsletter, with or without my name on it. Would that help?

Note what these messages do not do. They do not attach the book. They do not ask the host to read it. They offer work first.

Exercise 9: Five people and one message

Days 21 and 22. From your places list, choose five people who run a place or are trusted in one. For each, write what you could offer them, specifically.

1. Name, place, and what I can offer:

2. Name, place, and what I can offer:

3. Name, place, and what I can offer:

4. Name, place, and what I can offer:

5. Name, place, and what I can offer:

Write your version of the message to the first one, in your own words:

Send it on day 22. Write the date you sent it here, so you know when a week has passed:

Week 3 checklist

- I listed eight places across the four kinds
- I searched using my reader's words, not my book's title
- I joined or subscribed to at least two of the places
- I answered three questions in three days without mentioning the book
- I wrote down what people in those places keep asking
- I chose five hosts or helpers and wrote what I could offer each
- I sent one offer message and noted the date

Week 4: Ask, Deliver, Repeat

Days 23 to 29. Everything so far has been preparation. This week you ask people to read the book, you deliver when they say yes, and you build the habit that outlasts the workbook. You will feel the urge to skip the asking and do more preparing. Notice the urge, and ask anyway.

Lesson 10: The small ask

An ask is small when the person can say yes in under a minute and the yes costs them almost nothing. "Buy my book" is not small. "Can I send you the first chapter?" is. Every ask you make this week is small, specific, and sent to one person or one place at a time.

There are four asks, and they go in order. You do not skip to the fourth.

1. The read: "Can I send you a chapter?"
2. The copy: "Would you like the whole thing?" At a price, or free for the first ten. Your choice.
3. The pass-on: "Do you know one person this is for?"
4. The word: "Would you write two lines about it where you found it?"

Each ask has a script.

To a friend from your ten

They already know about the book, because you asked them the two questions in Week 1.

> Hi Sam, thanks again for answering my questions last month; they changed the first chapter. It is finished now. Can I send you that chapter? No need to say anything about it unless something strikes you.

In a place where you have been useful

In reply to a question you would have answered anyway:

> This is the exact thing I spent a year working out, so here is the short version: [four useful sentences]. I have written it up properly as a short book, and I am happy to send the chapter on this to anyone who wants it. Reply here or message me.

To one of the ten you have not spoken to yet

One at a time, never as a group message:

> Hi Dev, I have finished the book on [your promise, spoken version]. I am trying to find its first hundred readers without shouting about it, and I thought of you because [the honest reason]. Would you like a copy, or do you know one person it is for?

That last line makes the pass-on ask at the same time, and it gives the person a way to help even if the book is not for them. Most people want to help. They need to be asked for something they can actually do.

The word, later

The fourth ask comes only after someone has told you, unprompted, that the book helped. Then, and only then:

> I am glad it was useful. If you have five minutes, would you write two lines about it wherever you found it, or wherever the next person like you would look? Honest is more useful to me than kind.

Never offer anything in exchange for those two lines, and never tell people what to write. A short, honest note from a real reader is worth more than a paragraph you drafted for them.

Exercise 10: Your three asks

Days 23 to 25. Write each script in your own words, so it reads like a message you would send. Then send one a day: day 23 to a friend, day 24 in a place, day 25 to someone from your ten.

1. To a friend (the read):

2. In a place, after a useful answer (the read, offered openly):

3. To one of the ten (the copy, plus the pass-on):

Lesson 11: Deliver, then follow up once

When somebody says yes, what happens next decides whether they become a reader or a person who once said yes.

Send what you promised within a day. A chapter as a plain attachment or a link, with two lines: "Here it is. The part most people find useful starts on page four." Nothing else. No survey, no request for a review, no newsletter link.

One week later, send one question. Not "did you read it?", which invites a guilty no. Ask something they can answer either way:

> Did you get as far as the bit about the first night back? I am curious whether it matched what you have seen.

If they read it, they will tell you, and you can make the next ask: the whole book, or the pass-on. If they did not, they will usually say so, and often say why, which is information. Either way, thank them, and let it go. One follow-up, never two.

Lena wrote each person's name in the tally the moment the chapter went out, with a small mark beside it, and changed the mark to a tick only when they replied about the content. On day 30 she had sent forty-one chapters and had nineteen ticks. Nineteen readers she could name, from a standing start. The other twenty-two were not failures. They were people who had said yes once and might again.

Exercise 11: The delivery note and the one follow-up

Days 26 and 27. Write both messages now so that you never have to compose them on the day.

1. The delivery note (two lines, including where to start reading):

2. The one follow-up question (about the content, answerable either way):

3. Who has said yes so far, and what I sent them:

Lesson 12: Silence is not a no

Most messages you send this week will get no reply. This is not about you or the book. People are busy, messages sink, and a request from someone they like sits in the "I will reply properly later" pile until later never comes.

So count what you control. Count asks sent, not replies received. Ten asks with two yeses is a good week. You cannot make the other eight say yes, but you can send the next ten. If a week passes with no reply, send the one follow-up. After that, leave it, kindly. People come back months later saying they finally read it.

The hard part of asking is not the writing. It is the ten seconds before you press send. So make that moment smaller. Write the message the night before. In the morning, open it, read it once, and send it before you have read it twice.

Exercise 12: The asks log

Days 23 to 29. Fill this in every evening. Each line: who, which ask, what happened, the next step.

1. Day 23:
2. Day 24:
3. Day 25:
4. Day 26:
5. Day 27:
6. Day 28:
7. Day 29:

Asks sent this week, and yeses:

Week 4 checklist

- I wrote three asks in my own words
- I sent one ask to a friend, one in a place, and one to someone from my ten
- I sent the chapter within a day of every yes
- I wrote the delivery note and the follow-up question in advance
- I sent one follow-up, and only one, to anyone who went quiet after a week
- I filled in the asks log every evening
- I counted asks sent, not replies, and updated the tally

Day 30: The Review and the Routine

You have done four weeks of small, specific work. Today you look at what happened, honestly, and you write the routine you will keep, in the time you actually have.

The review

Open the tally. Count the people who have the book, or a chapter of it, and have said something back to you about it. That is your reader count. Write it down, whether it is four or ninety. Then look at where those people came from. Expect to find that most of them came from one or two places and one kind of ask, and that the rest of the month was spent learning which two.

Lena's count on day 30 was nineteen. Twelve came from her offer to a newsletter writer, who ran her piece with a line at the bottom. Four came from the ten names. Three came from a single group thread. The routine she kept was built around the newsletter and the group, and she dropped the rest without guilt.

Exercise 13: What happened

1. Readers I can count today:
2. Asks sent over the thirty days:
3. The place that produced the most readers:
4. The ask that worked best, in the words I used:
5. The thing I dreaded that turned out to be fine:
6. The thing I will stop doing:

The routine

The routine is thirty to sixty minutes on the days you choose, and it has four parts. Show up: ten minutes in one place, answering one question or reading what people are asking today. Ask: one ask, to one person or

one place, in the words you have already written. Deliver: send anything you owe, and the one follow-up to anyone who has been quiet for a week. Count: one line in the tally.

That is all. Not a content calendar, not a platform. A short daily practice that adds readers one and two at a time, which is how the first hundred always arrive.

Exercise 14: Write it down

1. The days I will do this, and at what time:

2. The one place I will show up in first:

3. My default ask, copied from the log entry that worked:

4. Where the tally lives after this workbook:

The final checklist

- I have a named reader, described in a specific moment
- I have a one-sentence promise I can say in one breath
- I have a page with the five parts and a bio
- I have a places list of eight, and I know which two matter
- I have contacted ten people I know and five people who run a place
- I have a delivery note, a follow-up question, and three asks written in my words
- I have a reader count that I did not round up
- I have a routine with a day, a time, a place, and a default ask

If your count is a hundred, well done. If it is not, you have the thing that gets you there. Keep the routine, keep counting, and let the book do the rest.

The tally

One person per line: their name, the date you sent the book or chapter, and a tick when they reply about it. Continue on a separate sheet when you run out of lines.