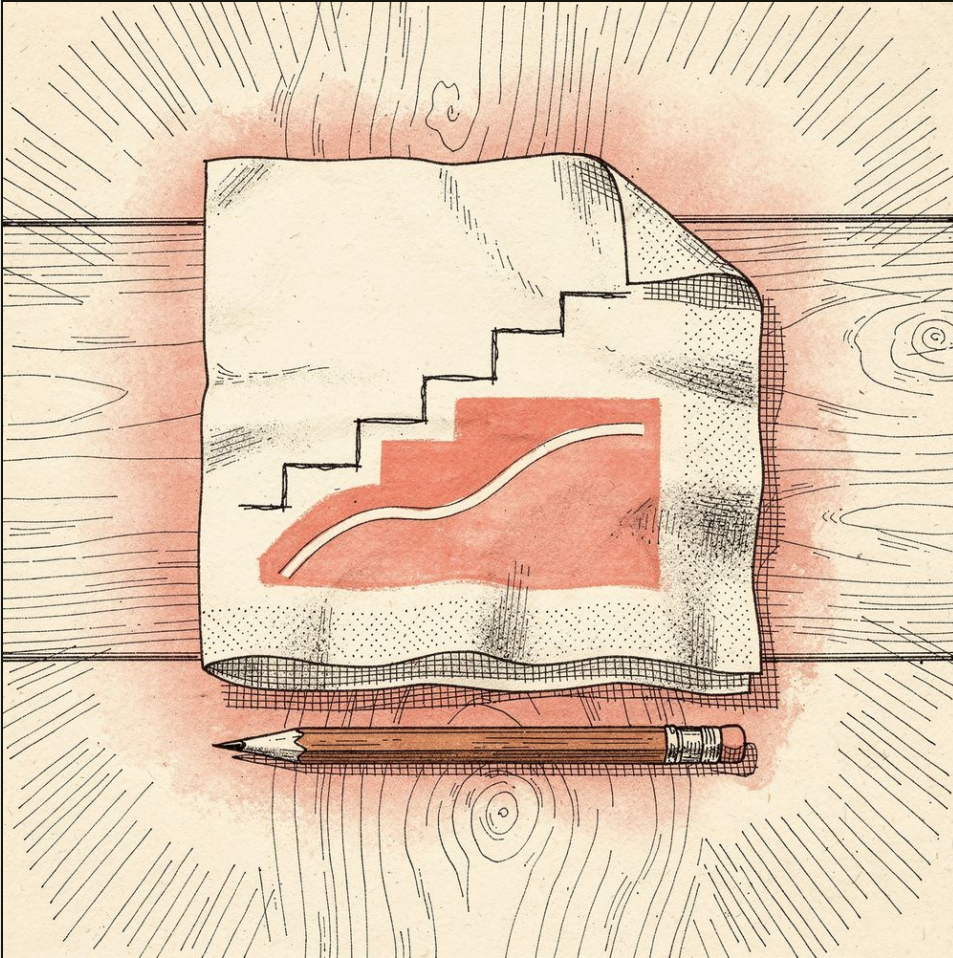




FRAMEWORK

Napkin Math

An iterative approach to making things

THE PROBLEM

A big idea disappears into eight weeks, and nothing reaches anyone until it's done.

The first real signal about whether people wanted it arrives after the money is spent.

What does **good enough** actually mean?

And how do we stop over-polishing the things that turn out not to work?

A REAL ONE

Benchmark report. Eight weeks of work.

- 01 Projected at 47 MQLs a week once it's fully live
- 02 Built the usual way, it goes live in week nine
- 03 Twelve-week quarter. Four weeks of value.

188

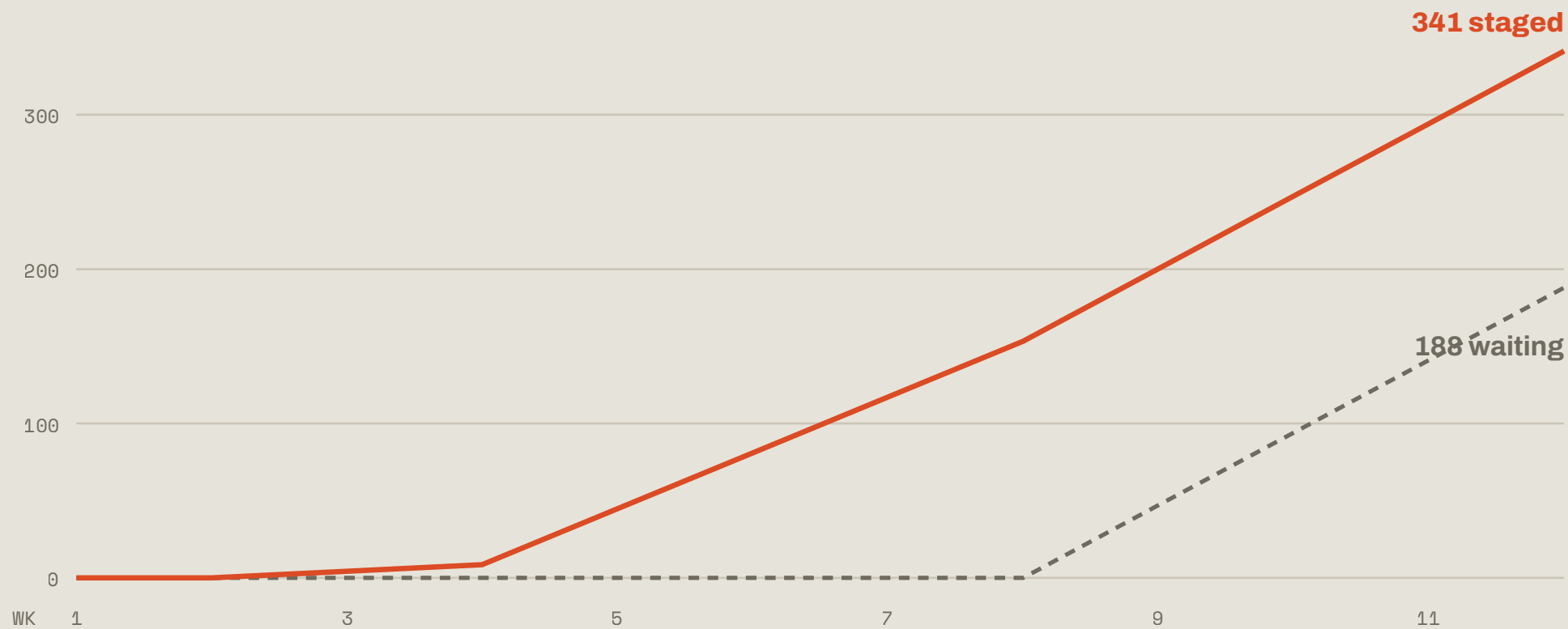
MQLs, waiting for full execution

OR SHIP IT THREE TIMES

Same eight weeks. Three releases.

- W3** Blog teaser with a download form. Maybe a quarter of the effect.
- W5** PDF behind a basic form. Around 60%, and good enough to run paid against.
- W9** Interactive page. Full strength, same date as before.

CUMULATIVE MQLS, ONE QUARTER



+153

MQLs, same work, same finish date

Bought entirely by shipping earlier at lower fidelity.

The precision is fake. The shape is real.

Nobody can forecast that a teaser blog runs at 25%. I made that up, and so will you. But a staircase always encloses more area than a cliff, so the estimates can all be wrong and the conclusion still holds.

Part 01

The lifecycle

THREE MOVES, RUN CONTINUOUSLY

Create, test, iterate.

- 01 Create: the smallest version of the idea that can exist
- 02 Test: on owned channels, before design or web are involved
- 03 Iterate: heighten it, or kill it and take the week back

Your owned channels are a **proving ground**, not a distribution channel.

The blog and the social accounts are the only places you can ship on Tuesday without asking permission. That's where an idea earns the right to consume somebody else's bandwidth.

IT RUNS BOTH DIRECTIONS

Scale down to get funded. Scale up when it works.

Down

A campaign nobody will fund becomes the version you ship this week to prove it's worth funding.

Up

Comic panels perform on social, become a carousel, get shared, become a printed comic at trade shows. Nobody approves that in week one. The data buys it.

Part 02

What you front-load

Iterating fast only works if iterating is cheap

THE MOVE THAT PAYS FOR ITSELF

Write the argument once, at every length it will ever need.

- L** Long: post copy, landing pages, scripts
- S** Short: headlines, carousel cards
- C** Compressed: search and small display, where one line survives alone

Eight fragments: tension, claim, turn, hero proof, supporting proof, stake, position, ask.

Adjust the recipe. **Never the fragment.**

Rewrite at the placement thirteen times and you have thirteen slightly different arguments, none approved, and no way to tell whether a result was about the message or the rewrite.

Nobody opens with **the tight set.**

A comedian goes up with note cards, half-formed, watching the room.
Something gets a small laugh. Something dies. They cut, tighten, and go up
again tomorrow.

YOUR FIRST PLACEMENTS ARE NOTE CARDS

You're not looking for a standing ovation. You're looking for the small laugh.

01 The click-through that's a little higher than the others

02 The line somebody quotes back to you

03 The message that gets a reply

After enough nights there's a set. It sounds like it was written that way. It was found.

The comedian hears the laugh. You get a number three days later.

Mixed with noise, arriving after you've already formed an opinion. That gap is why the decision rule gets written before launch. It's the substitute for hearing the room.

Part 03

How you read the result

ONE RULE

Two things in a test are identical except the one thing you're testing.

Offer, audience, landing page, budget and dates all held. If two things changed, you learned nothing.

WIDE VARIABLES FIRST

Test in order, or the result is unreadable.

- 01 Campaign: where should the money go?
- 02 Offer: what should we make more of?
- 03 Format: how should we build it?
- 04 Creative: what should it look and sound like?
- 05 CTA: what should the button say?

If you can't write the decision rule, **don't run the test.**

What happens if A wins, if B wins, if it's flat, all written before launch.
Otherwise you're running it for the feeling of rigor.

Part 04

Where the time goes

DELIBERATELY LOPSIDED

70 / 20 / 10 of the results. 20 / 50 / 30 of the time.

70% Proven: already ranks and converts. Costs 20% of the time.

20% Promising: early signs, worth refining. Costs 50%.

10% Experimental: unproven. Costs 30%.

Proven work carries the number on a fifth of the effort. That efficiency is what funds the bottom row.

WHAT GETS MADE AT ALL

Score it, so priority stops being whoever argued hardest.

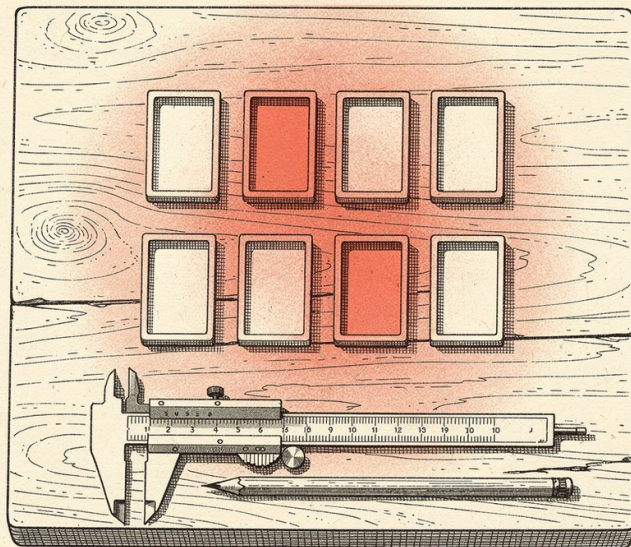
(Audience Value + Business Utility) × Impact Potential

It moves the conversation from “I think” to “this scores twelve, and we agreed twelve waits.”

THE HONEST COSTS

This isn't free.

- 01 The first cycle is slower. It pays back on campaign three.
- 02 Rough work goes out under your name.
- 03 Killing things has to be normal, not a failure someone explains.
- 04 The experimental 30% comes from automating what doesn't need judgment.



FROM THE SHELF

Design for function, not aesthetics.

KARL BLANKS & BEN JESSON

MAKING WEBSITES WIN

Founders of Conversion Rate Experts. Their case for frequent incremental change over full redesigns is the same argument, applied to pages instead of creative.

Ship the smallest version that can **teach you something.**

Let evidence decide what earns polish.