How to Land AI Workflow Clients (Without Posting Content)

This guide covers three proven methods for landing AI automation clients without creating content, plus a four-step framework to put it all into action.

By: Nate Herk

The Truth About Content vs. Other Channels

Content helps, when someone watches your videos before reaching out, trust is already built and they're practically sold by the time they book a call. But content is not the only path.

The agency Nate founded and exited scaled past $100K/month. While the majority of leads came from YouTube, the **best clients**, the ones who paid well, stuck around, and were a dream to work with, came from two things: **referrals and partnerships**.

You don't need a YouTube channel, a LinkedIn presence, or 12 months of patience. The three methods below work without posting a single piece of content.

Method 1: Cold Outreach

Get Proof First

Cold outreach is brutal with zero proof. The first question any prospect will ask is *"Who have you done this for?"* Before sending a single message, get some proof, even if it's small, free, or for your cousin's salon. The project doesn't need to match what you eventually want to sell. What matters is you can say: *"I helped X business get Y result."* That alone separates you from everyone who's purely theoretical.

The Four Components of Cold Outreach

1. Platforms

For B2B outreach, focus on: LinkedIn, Facebook groups, email, Skool communities, YouTube channels, Instagram, and Reddit.

Key stats to keep in mind: cold email has an average response rate of 1–5%, but personalized emails see up to 17% higher rates. LinkedIn InMail/DMs have a 10–25% response rate but require more time per message.

Pick one or two platforms to start. Don't spread yourself thin, each platform has different methods that work best.

2. Finding Leads

Places to look: communities in your niche, followers of relevant pages or creators, business owners complaining about wasting time or making mistakes, job boards and comment sections (if someone's hiring for a role you could automate, that's a signal), and local businesses in your area.

Pro tip: Before jumping into Apollo or LinkedIn Sales Navigator, spend 10 minutes asking ChatGPT or Perplexity where industry-specific directories exist. Architects have the American Institute of Architects. Coaches have coaching directories. Every industry has something, and these databases have already filtered leads for you.

3. Reaching Out

Keep it simple. Focus on the problem and the outcome, not the tech. Nobody cares that you built an 18-node automation with n8n, Slack, and Notion. They care about results: more leads, less manual work, fewer errors, faster turnaround.

Short, value-focused messages work better than long pitches. Your goal isn't to close them in one message, it's to start a conversation and get them curious. The subject line is critical; if they're not curious, they won't even open the email.

Key principles for your outreach messages:

- **Be honest about where you're at.** Saying "I'm just getting started" creates a pattern interrupt and builds trust. Prospects think "this is a real person" instead of seeing another faceless pitch.
- **Remove all risk from your offer.** No payment until results. No contract. The only thing you ask for is permission to use them as a case study if it works. Make it a no-brainer to say yes.
- **Don't ask for 30 minutes on their calendar.** Instead, ask if you can send them a 2-minute Loom video explaining the offer. Let the video do the heavy lifting before they ever get on a call.

4. Volume

As Alex Hormozi says: *"Volume negates luck."*

You should be sending at least **100 messages a day**. A small percentage of replies is actually a good metric, if you're getting 2–5% responses, you're doing well. Above 5%, you're crushing it. That means 5 responses out of 100 emails is a solid result.

Track everything: reply rate, positive responses, meetings booked, deals closed. Each metric tells you where to focus. Track negative responses too, they tell you what direction not to go. When you get positive replies, write down the company size, industry, job title, and anything relevant, then build your future lead lists around those patterns. This is how you systematically improve instead of guessing.

Two Common Cold Outreach Mistakes

Don't build before you sell. If you're spending weeks perfecting an automation before you've talked to a single customer, you don't have a business, you have a hobby. Use cold outreach as market research. Create an offer around something you could build, send messages, and see if anyone bites. If they do, then build it.

Start small and reinvest. You don't need massive infrastructure. A few email domains sending about 30 messages per inbox per day is enough to generate real data. Once you close your first deal, reinvest into scaling.

People will ignore you. People will tell you to screw off. That's normal. Most people quit because of the emotional weight. If you can push through, you're already ahead.

Method 2: Referrals

Why Referrals Work So Well

Business owners trust recommendations far more than strangers. If a friend tells you about a great restaurant, you're way more likely to go than if you saw an ad. **92% of B2B buyers trust referrals from people they know.** In the AI space, this is especially powerful because it's new and many business owners don't even know where to find a vendor.

The Golden Question

When Nate first started freelancing, he made it a priority to **overdeliver** for every client, adding a simple dashboard they didn't ask for, creating full documentation so they could understand and maintain everything. Then, once he knew they were happy, he'd ask:

> *"Hey, do you have any friends or know any other business owners who might need AI automation or might be interested in talking about this kind of stuff?"*

No fancy script. No formal incentive program. Just a simple question after you've earned the right to ask it.

Timing Matters

You can't ask for referrals until the client is happy and truly believes you provided value. Typically, wait about **one to two months** after the solution has been live in production. Ideally, tie the ask to a moment where you can show results, like a month-one performance review:

"Hey, when we started, these were the KPIs and metrics we documented. After one month in production, we've hit all of these targets and your business has grown by X. The project's been a success."

Once they see the data, the referral ask feels natural and earned, not awkward or salesy.

Common Referral Mistakes

Asking too early, before you've actually proven yourself. **Not asking at all**, leaving money on the table because it feels awkward. According to Dale Carnegie research, only **11% of salespeople ask for referrals**, yet **91% of customers say they'd gladly give one if asked**. Make sure you're asking.

Method 3: The Trojan Horse Method

This is the method Nate would go all-in on if starting from zero today.

The Big Idea

Instead of building trust from scratch with cold prospects, you **borrow someone else's trust, authority, and existing client relationships**. Partner-sourced deals close **46% faster** than other deal types.

Marketing agencies, consultants, coaches, and law firms already have clients who trust them. Right now, many of those clients are thinking *"I need AI"* and the agencies themselves are thinking *"I need to offer AI services to stay competitive."* Instead of competing for attention, you partner with people who already have it.

The Pitch

> *"Hey, I help businesses implement AI automation. I'd love to offer free AI discovery calls to your clients, no cost to you, no cost to them. You get to look like a hero*

> *because you brought in an AI expert and gave them free value. If any of them end up wanting to work with me, I'll give you 20% of the project revenue."*

There's zero risk for them. They're not paying you. You're not asking for anything upfront. You're just saying *"let me make you look good to your clients."*

Why It Works

When an agency owner tells their client *"I'm bringing in an AI expert to give you a free audit"*, you instantly have authority. You're being called in like a consultant, the specialist they're introducing. Compare that to cold outreach where you're a stranger in an inbox trying to prove yourself. With the Trojan Horse method, you walk in with **borrowed credibility from day one** and get access to clients who already trust, already pay, and are already warm to spending money on services.

Running the Discovery Call

Keep it simple: learn about their business, understand their processes, and tell them where AI could help. If a client says *"I need AI but have no clue where to start"*, help them identify their constraints by asking:

> *"If tomorrow you got 300 people that wanted your services, what process would break first?"*

Then dive into that process.

The Win-Win-Win

Even if a discovery call doesn't convert to a paid project, everyone still wins: you got experience doing discovery calls, the business owner got free AI insights, and the agency looked like a hero. Some percentage of those calls will turn into paid projects, it's a numbers game, so do 10x more than you think you need.

Finding Partners

Same process as cold outreach. Build a lead list of agencies, consultants, and service providers in niches you want to work with. Reach out with the offer above, it's designed to have zero downside for them, so most agency owners will at least hear you out.

The Four-Step Framework

The Critical Mindset Shift

Most people get this completely backwards, spending weeks or months building elaborate systems, perfecting every detail, then trying to sell. By that point, they've invested all this time into something with no market validation. **Flip the order.** Create an offer around something you know you could build, then send outreach to see if anyone's interested. If people respond, build it. If nobody bites, pivot and test again. The only thing you've lost is the time it took to write some messages.

Cold outreach gives you direct market feedback before you commit to building anything. That signal is worth more than any amount of guessing.

Step 1: Offer First

Pick a niche. Pick a problem. Craft an offer around an outcome you're confident you could deliver. Building simple POCs and demos is fine (for Loom videos or calls), but don't pour weeks into building something if you don't know the market wants it.

Step 2: Validate With Volume

Test your offer with outreach. Aim to get **5 clients** so you can start generating referrals and case studies. For manual DMs on LinkedIn or Instagram, aim for at least **100 messages per day**. For cold email, invest in some domains and scale up to **500 emails per day**.

Monitor your data every single day, open rate, reply rate, positive response rate. If something isn't working, figure out why and adjust. Winners and losers both fail; the difference is that winners understand why they failed and change something. Losers keep throwing time at a broken system.

If nobody responds to your offer, pivot and test a new one. That's not failure, that's market research.

Step 3: Deliver and Document

Once you land a client, your job is to overdeliver and track everything. Before you start, get their **baseline metrics**: how long does the process take, what's the error rate, what are the current KPIs? After your system is live, measure those same numbers again and show them the before and after. This proves ROI (so they know it was a good investment) and gives you a rock-solid case study for future clients.

Once they see the results, ask for the referral and a testimonial.

Step 4: Scale With Borrowed Authority

Once you have results under your belt, start using the Trojan Horse method. Reach out to agencies, consultants, and service providers. Offer free audits for their clients. Make them look like the hero. Take 20% rev-share on deals that close. This gets you in front of warm leads without building your own audience, and because you're introduced by someone they already trust, you have instant credibility.

Quick Recap

Offer First → Validate With Volume → Deliver and Document → Scale With Borrowed Authority

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