



APPWT WEB & AI SOLUTIONS

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The AppWT Restaurant Marketing Tech Stack Manual

Restaurant Marketing

Written by Anthony “Tony” Paris

AppWT Web & AI Solutions (AppWT LLC, a family company)



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A NOTE ON SPELLING

This manual is read in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. Where a word is spelled differently in different countries, both spellings appear the first time the word is used, like color/colour. After that, one spelling is used so the page stays easy to read.

HOW TO USE THE TECHNICAL NOTES

Smaller italic notes marked *For your tech person* hold the deeper detail: exact settings, file names and commands. You can skip every one of them and the manual still makes complete sense. Hand them to whoever looks after your website.

IMPORTANT

This manual describes security practices that AppWT uses and recommends. It is written as general guidance for business owners. It is not legal advice, and it is not a guarantee that any system cannot be attacked. Security reduces risk. No honest provider will promise to remove risk entirely.

Every incident described in this manual comes from work AppWT actually performed. Client identities are deliberately withheld, because a client's security incident is not ours to publish. Where the business involved is AppWT itself, we name ourselves.

A Note From Tony

This book started with a card statement slid across a table. The owner of a 58-seat restaurant had asked me to look at her website. Ten minutes in she pulled out three months of statements instead, pointed at eleven small charges, and said she could name what four of them did. The website was not her problem.

I have been building and fixing websites for business owners since 1997, and restaurants have been part of that work for most of it. The same conversation keeps repeating. Somebody arrives with a marketing question, and underneath it sits a stack of tools nobody has ever written down in one place. A better home page will not rescue a menu that a phone cannot read, and no advertising budget survives a phone that rings out at seven on a Friday.

Restaurants needed their own manual for a reason. The guest decides in about ninety seconds, standing outside, on a weak signal, while hungry. Most of the buying happens through surfaces you do not own. The margin is thin enough that a commission on an order matters, and the working day leaves no room for a system that depends on somebody remembering. Nobody hands a new owner an inventory sheet, a fact sheet and a review routine on the day the doors open. So this book does.

Here is what I promise. Fourteen chapters sit in three parts, and every one of them ends with something written down. An inventory of every tool you pay for. A fact sheet that is the single source of record. A surface list. A question tally taken from your own phone. A monthly scoreboard of five numbers. A ninety-day plan with dates. Work them in order and the last chapter assembles the lot into one document.

Here is what I will not do. I will not quote you an industry average, because a restaurant in a university town, one in a suburb and one in a tourist district have almost nothing in common, and a number averaged across the three describes none of them. I will not quote a vendor's price, because prices change and a printed figure goes stale before the ink dries. Every figure inside a worked example belongs to that example and comes from that operator's own reports. No real business is named anywhere in this book, and no case study here is a client story dressed up with numbers I could not show you.

Two boundaries run through the whole book. The first is legal. Messaging consent, allergen wording, advertised prices, fee disclosure, accessibility duties and recording rules all differ by country, by state or province, and sometimes by city, and several of them have moved more than once since 2024. This book is business information. It is not legal advice. Chapters nine, ten, eleven and thirteen each stop at the same place and send you to a licensed attorney in your own market.

The second boundary is about food safety. Nothing in here should ever be used to write a sentence promising that a dish is safe for a guest with an allergy. A shared kitchen cannot make that promise and a website is the worst possible place to try. Chapter thirteen gives you the wording pattern and the routing rule, and it exists because a marketing sentence can put somebody in an ambulance.

Work Part One first, in order, before you buy anything. Three months of statements, one fact sheet, and six things checked on your own phone. Owners want to skip it, because it looks like admin instead of marketing. Skip it and every later decision gets made on a feeling. Do it and you will know what you are paying for, what a guest actually sees, and which two things to fix this month. After Part One you can read out of order and go straight at whatever is in front of you.

This edition describes the market as it stands in 2026. Some advice that was sound five years ago is not sound now. A QR code pointing at a vendor's short address was fine until the subscription lapsed and every table tent in the room stopped working. A recorded video library sold once and forever has been retired as a standalone plan in most small businesses. Where something is still moving, such as how AI answer tools weigh a page, I say it is emerging rather than pretending the answer is settled.

Some of this will not be comfortable. Your favorite/favourite tool may finish last on your own inventory page. Your first-party order share may be half what you assumed. A page you paid a designer for may be the reason a guest could not read your menu. Those are ordinary outcomes and this book treats them that way. What matters is that you decided with your own numbers in front of you and a date written beside the decision.

One last thing. Your domain name, your map profile, your guest list and your menu data belong to you, whatever tools you happen to run this year. Vendors change, platforms change their rules, and a good restaurant outlasts both. Every page here is written so you can do the work yourself, or organize/organise it into a short list for somebody who helps you, and still check the result.

Anthony “Tony” Paris

Founder, AppWT Web & AI Solutions · Livonia, Michigan

How to Use This Manual

This manual is built to be worked with a pen in your hand. Keep one folder, on paper or on screen, and put every output in it as you go. Fourteen chapters produce eight documents, and the last chapter turns them into a single plan with dates on it.

The parts

Part One settles what you already pay for. Chapter 1 builds an inventory from three months of statements, with the exit question answered on every row. Chapter 2 names seven categories of tool that get bought too early and states the condition each one should wait for. Chapter 3 gives the six things that have to work before anything else, tested on your own phone. Chapter 4 writes the fact sheet that every later chapter copies from. Nothing new gets purchased in this part, and that is on purpose.

Part Two builds the machine that takes the order. Chapter 5 covers speed, hosting and the four ownership questions. Chapter 6 gives the structured data a restaurant needs, with the one rule that keeps you out of trouble. Chapter 7 turns two weeks of real guest questions into a page plan. Chapter 8 makes printed codes yours forever. Chapter 9 sets the review habit and the lines you must not cross. Chapter 10 builds the guest list and the catering form. Chapter 11 covers the phone that rings during service, automated answering, bookings and no-shows.

Part Three makes it accountable. Chapter 12 gives five numbers, where each figure comes from, and the popular numbers to stop reading. Chapter 13 covers accessibility, allergen wording, advertised prices, consent and privacy in plain words, and marks exactly where a licensed attorney takes over. Chapter 14 divides the work into what a machine may do and what a person must sign, then hands you a twelve-week plan.

The boxes, and what each one means

DO THIS TODAY

A gold box is one action you can finish now. If you only ever act on the gold boxes, you will still be far safer than when you started.

FROM OUR FILES

A dark box is a real incident from AppWT work. Nothing in these boxes is invented. Where a detail was never verified, we say so rather than fill the gap.

FOR YOUR TECH PERSON

A smaller italic note like this one carries the professional detail: exact file names, headers, settings and commands. Skip every one and the manual still reads completely. Forward them to your web person.

The sheets, the tables and the code blocks

There is very little code in this book. Two blocks show structured data you can hand to whoever manages your site. The rest are column headings for sheets you build yourself: the tool inventory, the fact sheet, the consent record, the tagged link convention, the monthly scoreboard, the accessibility self-check and the folder layout. Type them into any spreadsheet or document you already use. The technical notes are short and practical, covering things like image sizing, redirects, form routing and validators. Skipping one never breaks a chapter. Hand it to your technical person, then check the result yourself.

What this book does not promise

No revenue figure is promised and no traffic figure is promised, because both depend on a market I have not seen. Nothing here is legal, tax or accessibility-law advice, and four chapters stop and say so. This is not a kitchen manual, a hiring manual or a menu-costing manual. Payment gateway setup, general email marketing, map profile method, local search territory, website speed tuning and detailed SMS compliance each belong to separate AppWT titles, and this book points at them rather than repeating them badly.

If you only have one afternoon

Do four things, in this order. Publish your menu as real text on your own site, one page per menu period, with prices as text. Check your hours on the map profile, every ordering app and every listing against the roster on the wall, and enter this year's holiday closures while you are there. Ask your phone provider for three months of unanswered calls grouped by hour. Then add the ordering link to every profile field that will take one. All four are cheap, all four are quick, and between them they close the leaks that cost independent restaurants the most. Come back for the inventory in chapter 1 when you have a longer stretch.

Where to keep the outputs

Keep one folder and treat it as part of the business, in an account the business owns rather than a personal one. The inventory, the fact sheet, the surface list, the question tally, the scoreboard, the consent records, the reply templates and the approved wording all live in it, each carrying the date it was last reviewed. Put every renewal on one calendar rather than several, because hosting, the domain name, insurance, licensing and every subscription come due across the same year. Keep last year's versions too, because last year's sheet is what tells you whether this year's decision worked.

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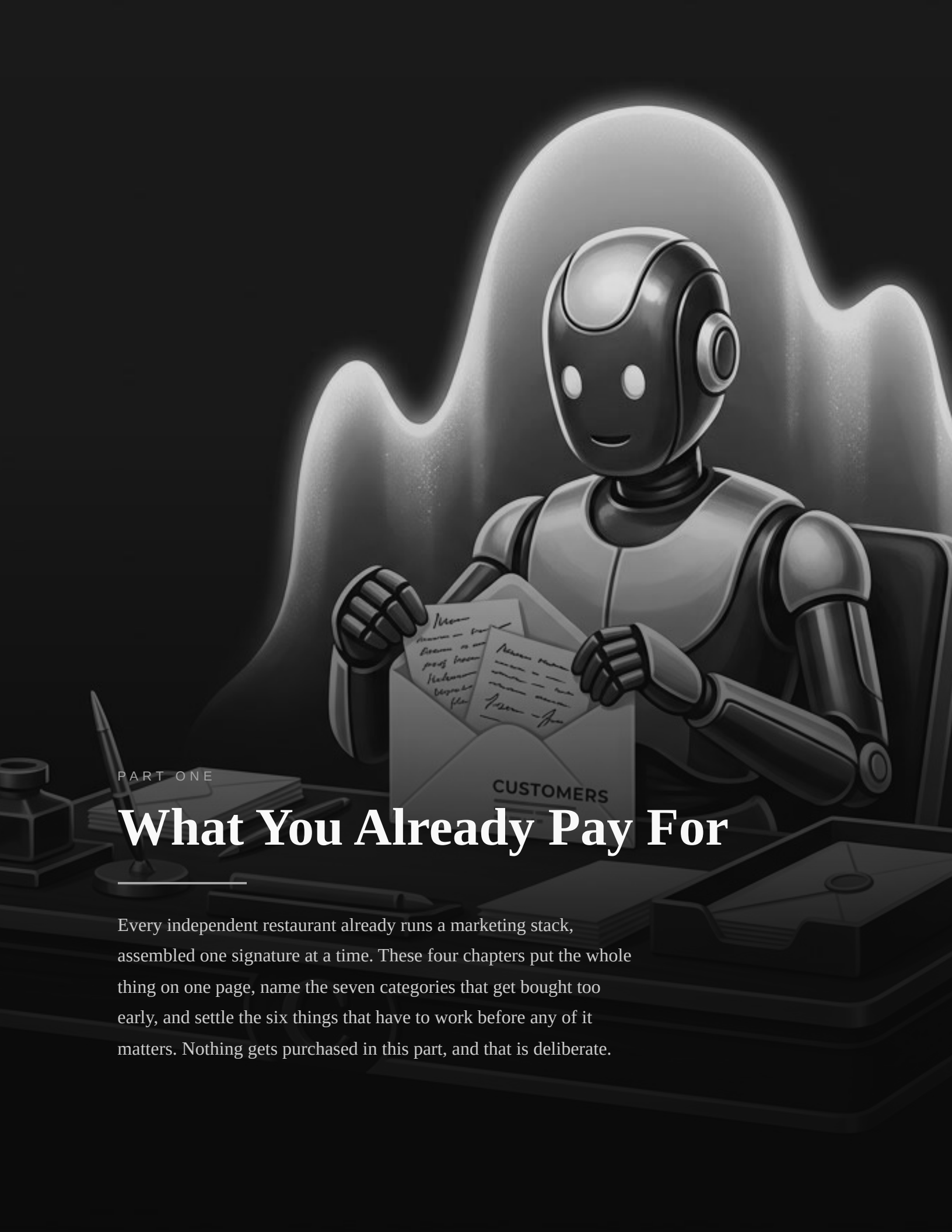
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PART ONE

What You Already Pay For

Every independent restaurant already runs a marketing stack, assembled one signature at a time. These four chapters put the whole thing on one page, name the seven categories that get bought too early, and settle the six things that have to work before any of it matters. Nothing gets purchased in this part, and that is deliberate.



Eleven Subscriptions and Nobody Knows What They Do

Chapter 1. Writing down the stack you already run, and what each part costs you

Every independent restaurant already runs a marketing technology stack, assembled one signature at a time. This chapter puts the whole thing on one page: what each tool does, what it costs, who holds the login, and what breaks if it stops. You finish with every line marked keep, cut or replace, with a date beside each decision.

The card statement is where this book starts. A restaurant owner sits down in February to work out why the monthly charges are higher than last year. She finds a dozen small amounts. Some she recognizes/recognises. Some she does not. One is a menu tool a former manager set up. One is a social scheduling account nobody has opened in more than a year. One came free with a website rebuild and started billing when the free year ended. Nothing here was a mistake at the time. Each one was signed up for a reason that made sense that week. Nobody ever put the whole list on one page.

That is the normal condition for an independent restaurant, and it is not a failure of management. A restaurant runs on a thin margin and a full day, and technology gets bought between a delivery and a lunch rush. This chapter puts the result on paper. By the end you will hold one page listing every tool that touches a guest, what each costs every month, who owns the login, and what you would lose if the vendor closed tomorrow. Every figure comes from your own statements. Nothing in this book is offered as an industry average, and no vendor price is quoted anywhere in it.

What Changed by 2026, and What Did Not

The way a guest finds a place to eat has moved, and the moves are worth naming before you spend anything. A search results page is no longer the only front door. A guest standing on a sidewalk asks a phone a spoken question and gets a short answer instead of ten links. A map profile decides whether you appear in that answer at all. A short video sends people who never typed your name. A delivery marketplace holds the guest, the payment and the order history, and pays you what is left after its commission.

- Discovery now happens inside maps, ordering apps, video feeds and AI assistants, not only on a search results page.
- Machines read your hours, menu and address and repeat them to a guest who never opens your website.
- Ordering and paying moved onto the guest's phone, so a slow checkout loses the order at the last tap.
- Third-party marketplaces hold the guest relationship unless you deliberately build one of your own.
- Calls arrive during service when nobody can pick up, and an unanswered phone is usually a lost table.
- Reviews are read on the same screen as the menu, so an unanswered complaint sits next to tonight's decision.

What did not change is more useful than what did. A guest wants to know five things. What do you serve. When are you open. Where is it and where do I park. What does it cost. Did other people like it. Every tool in this book exists to answer one of those five faster than a hungry person loses patience. That sentence is your buying test for the rest of the book. If a tool does not answer one of the five questions, or make an existing answer arrive faster, then it is a cost with a story attached.

| A tool you cannot cancel and cannot export from is a tool that sets its own price.

The Audit: One Page, One Sitting

Start with the money, because the money is the only complete record. Pull three months of business card and bank statements. Then check the app store account and the email inbox, because some tools bill through a platform rather than the card. List every recurring charge that touches a guest in any way. Include the free ones too. A free map profile holds more of your reputation than most paid tools, and a bundled tool still holds your data.

1. Pull three months of statements and highlight every recurring charge, including annual plans billed once.
2. Add every free account that touches a guest, such as map profiles, social accounts and review pages.
3. Write one row per tool using the columns in the table below, and do not skip the boring ones.
4. Name one person as the owner of each login, and record where the credentials are actually kept.
5. Answer the exit question on every row: if this vendor closed tomorrow, what would you lose and how would you rebuild it.
6. Mark each row keep, cut or replace, and write a date beside every cut and every replacement.
7. Cancel in writing, keep the confirmation, then check next month's statement to prove the charge stopped.

COLUMN ON YOUR INVENTORY PAGE	WHAT GOES IN IT	WHY THE COLUMN EXISTS
Tool	The account name exactly as it appears on the statement	Statement names and brand names often differ, which is how a charge stays unidentified for a year
What it does for a guest	One short sentence in plain words, written by you	A tool nobody in the building can describe is a tool nobody is using
Real monthly cost	The true figure, with any annual plan divided by twelve	Annual billing hides the monthly cost and makes four small tools look like one
Login owner	One named person, never a job title or a shared mailbox	Shared logins leave the building when the person does
Data it holds	Guest names, phone numbers, order history, photos, reviews, menu	This is what decides whether leaving is easy or impossible
Export path	Yes with the method written down, or no	A tool you cannot leave will never have to compete for your money again

COLUMN ON YOUR INVENTORY PAGE	WHAT GOES IN IT	WHY THE COLUMN EXISTS
Verdict and date	Keep, cut or replace, with the date you will act	A list without a decision is a list you will read again next February

ASK THE EXIT QUESTION ON EVERY SINGLE ROW

For each tool, write the answer to one question: if this vendor closed tomorrow, what would I lose and how would I get it back. Guest phone numbers, photographs, review history and menu data are the four that hurt. If you would lose something you cannot rebuild, that tool needs an export scheduled this month, whether you keep it or not. A vendor closing rarely gives notice, and a support queue is not a backup plan.

FOUR TOOLS, ONE JOB, AND A STATEMENT NOBODY HAD READ

A 58-seat family restaurant ran the audit over a single Tuesday morning. Eleven charges came up. Two were menu tools publishing the same PDF from the same file. One was a social scheduling account with no posts since the previous spring. One was a plugin bundle left over from a website rebuild four years earlier. On that restaurant's own statements those four came to \$214 a month, which is \$2,568 a year. The owner canceled/cancelled three in writing and kept the cheapest of the two menu tools until the new menu page was live, then canceled that one as well. She also found that the domain name was registered to a former web contractor, which was the most expensive item on the page and cost nothing at all to fix. Those are her figures. The method is the part that transfers.

FOR YOUR TECH PERSON

Ask whoever manages the site to list every third-party script loading on the home page and the menu page. Most guest-facing tools add one. A script left behind after the account was canceled still runs on every visit, still slows the page, and no longer does anything at all.

Two rules come out of the audit and hold for the rest of the book. First, one named person owns each login, and the credentials live in a password manager the business controls. Second, the business owns the domain name and the map profile directly, in an account registered to a business email address. Vendors change and contractors move on. Those two assets are cheap to hold and expensive to recover.

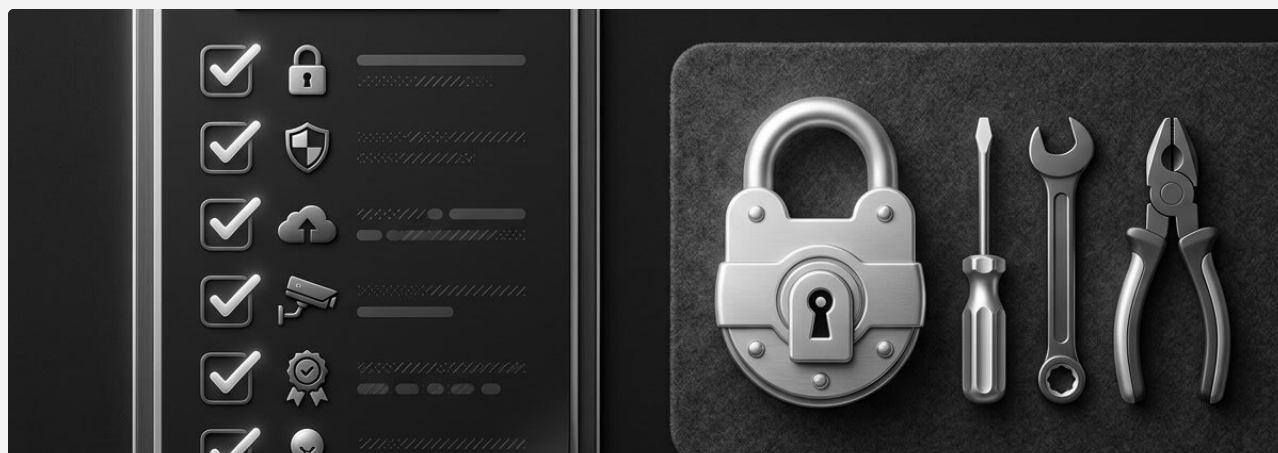
FOR YOUR TECH PERSON

Set up a password manager with a shared vault owned by the business, then move each login into it as you work down the inventory. Give a second person access. A vault that only one person can open carries the same risk as a note in a phone.

Keep the inventory page. Every later chapter adds a decision to it, and chapter fourteen turns it into a dated plan. Do not buy anything yet. The next chapter names seven categories of tool that restaurants buy too early, and the condition each one should wait for.

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- You already run a marketing stack, and the first job is to see it written on one page.
- Three months of statements plus your free accounts give you the complete list, and nothing else does.
- Judge every tool against the five questions a guest asks: what, when, where, how much, and did people like it.
- Ask the exit question on every row, then export your guest data and photos before you ever need to.
- One named person owns each login, and the business itself owns the domain name and the map profile.
- Mark every line keep, cut or replace with a date, then confirm on next month's statement that the cut happened.



Seven Tools You Can Skip, and What Each One Should Wait For

Chapter 2. The seven categories independent restaurants buy too early, and the condition that makes each one worth it

Nothing in this chapter is a bad product. Every one of these seven categories works somewhere, for somebody, once something else is already true. This chapter names the seven, states the condition each one should wait for, and gives you a test you can apply to any tool a salesperson brings you next month.

A restaurant marketing budget is small and it is real money. Spending it in the wrong order is the most common expensive mistake independent operators make, and it rarely looks like a mistake at the time. Each of the seven categories below solves a genuine problem. Each one is sold honestly by people who believe in it. The trouble is sequence. A tool that amplifies your restaurant will amplify a broken menu page just as happily as a good one, and you will pay monthly for the privilege.

So this chapter is not a list of bad products. It is a list of preconditions. For each category you get the promise, the thing that has to be true before the promise can land, and a plain test you can run in an afternoon. Apply the same three questions to anything a salesperson brings you next quarter, including tools that did not exist when this was written.

The Seven, in the Order They Usually Get Sold

1. A second website on somebody else's domain. Ordering platforms, listing services and marketplace partners often include a page of their own with your name on it. It competes with your site for your own name, carries a menu that will drift out of date, and disappears the day you leave. Wait until you have one site you control, then point everything at it.
2. Paid review generation. Services that promise a flow of new reviews sit close to rules that every major platform and consumer regulator takes seriously. Asking guests for honest reviews is fine and is covered in chapter nine. Paying for reviews, filtering who gets asked based on how happy they seem, or writing reviews on a guest's behalf are different acts with real consequences.
3. A menu app that produces a picture. Any tool whose output is a PDF or an image is publishing a menu that phones handle badly, screen readers cannot read aloud, and machines cannot quote. Chapter three explains why the menu must be real text on your own page. A picture of a menu blocks the most guests for the smallest reason of anything in this book.
4. A branded loyalty app the guest has to download. Downloading an app is a large ask for a place somebody eats twice a month. Loyalty works, and it works first through a list you already own and a card or phone number the guest already carries. Revisit the app when you have a list and a repeat rate worth building on.
5. Social scheduling and follower growth, before there is anything to schedule. A scheduling tool multiplies your output. If the output is one photograph a month taken in poor light, the tool multiplies that. Get the content habit working by hand for eight weeks, then buy the tool that saves you time.
6. Broad paid advertising outside your real trade radius. Most independent restaurants draw from a small area, and money spent outside it buys attention that cannot become a table. Before any paid campaign, know your radius from your own delivery and reservation records, then advertise inside it.
7. A chat widget that cannot see your hours, your menu or your booking system. A chat box that answers every question with a request for an email address adds a step and gives nothing back. Wait until it can read live hours and menu data, or until a real person is on the other end during trading hours.

CATEGORY	WHAT IT PROMISES	WHAT HAS TO BE TRUE FIRST	THE TEST TO RUN
Vendor-hosted second site	A ready-made page with your name on it	You own one site and one domain that everything points to	Search your own restaurant name and count how many pages claiming to be you appear