
How to
MINE
YOUR
TROLLS
Turning a
One-Star Review
into a
Five-Star Reel
Respect my boundaries
CONTENT MINER
Worst experience ever!
Wouldn't recommend!
This is terrible
ASHLING PODMORE

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How to Mine Your Trolls

Turning a One-Star Review into a Five-Star Reel



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1

Introduction - Welcome to the Club

It was gone midnight. I was sitting on my sofa with my phone, going through my comments section for the first time in weeks.

I say weeks. It might have been longer.

I'd been avoiding it.

If you've ever built a business especially online and started getting nasty comments, you'll know exactly what I mean. You get to a point where opening the app feels like walking into a room where someone is definitely going to say something horrible about you. So you stop walking in altogether.

That night was different. I'd just decided I was done being afraid of it. Done hiding.

So I started scrolling. And something weird happened.

Instead of the usual dread I felt when I came across a nasty one,

I felt something else. A little spark. Somewhere in my mind I heard my thoughts: oh, hello. You're going to be very useful.

I started sorting them. The genuine ones here. The educational ones there. And then there were the ones so ridiculous they'd practically written themselves into content. By the end I'd been going for three hours. Three hours. And I'd had the best time.

That night I accidentally discovered something I'd been doing for years without realising it.

I'm going to teach it to you in this book.

I call it mining your trolls. And by the time you've finished reading this, you'll never look at a nasty comment, a bad review or an annoying customer the same way again.

Here's what I need you to understand before we start.

I'm not a therapist. I'm not a social media expert. I don't have a marketing degree.

What I have is several businesses I built from nothing, a comments section with plenty of people who think I'm the problem, and a very particular skill for turning all of that into content, credibility, and community.

This book is for people like me. Business owners. Course creators. Product sellers. Service providers. Anyone who has ever put something out into the world and been on the receiving end of someone who decided that thing was worth attacking.

If that's you, you've probably been given the following advice:

1. Just ignore it.
2. Develop a thicker skin.
3. Don't feed the trolls.
4. Kill them with kindness.

And if you're anything like me, you've tried all of those things and they haven't worked. Not because they're completely wrong. But because they're all asking you to do less. To shrink yourself, your voice and your feelings. Every piece of advice so far wants you to protect yourself by making yourself smaller.

This book is about doing the opposite.

This book is about taking every nasty comment, every one-star review, every 'who do they think they are' and turning it into something that builds your business. Grows your audience. Makes people trust you more. And occasionally produces a piece of content that goes viral while the person who inspired it watches in horror from behind their computer screen.

That last part is optional. But I won't pretend it doesn't happen.

Before I get into the how, let me tell you a bit about why I know this works.

I've had a baby hamper product business, baby and toddler signing classes, and a face to face group tuiton centre. But right

now I'm a domestic abuse advocate. I write children's books about toxic behaviour. I run courses for parents navigating difficult co-parenting situations. My entire online platform is built around naming behaviour patterns most people would prefer stayed untalked about.

So you can imagine the comments I get.

I get people calling me a narcissist. People telling me I broke up families. People telling me to seek professional help, that I'm preying on weak minds, that I should be a writer instead of a video creator. I get men coming into my comments to tell me about the wives who took their children. I get anonymous accounts posting explicit messages in my inbox. I get people writing the same dismissing message across thirty-two of my posts.

Thirty-two. I counted. (But more on her later.)

Here's what I used to do with all of that. I'd see it, feel that horrible heavy anxious feeling in my chest, close the app, and not go back for days. Sometimes weeks. If I received a face to face attack...even worse. I'd take time out of my business to hibernate and recover.

I'd tell myself I was protecting my mental health. And I was, kind of. But I was also leaving the door locked on something I desperately needed to unlock. Keeping distance between myself and my customers was costing me the opportunity to develop real connections with the people who wanted to get to know me, who wanted to understand what my business did and who

wanted to eventually buy from me.

When I realised this, I'd decided a new approach was needed. I started mining instead, and I said goodbye to hiding.

Now, when I see a nasty comment, I feel something I can only call the jackpot moment. That little internal cha-ching when you realise someone has just handed you exactly what you needed.

That transition from dread to jackpot is what this book is about.

Let's go mining.

2

Chapter 1 - The Advice That Doesn't Work

Let me guess. Someone told you to just ignore it.

Maybe your partner said it. Or a business friend. Or that one person in every Facebook group who replies to everything with three words and a thumbs up.

Just ignore it.

And you nodded. And you tried. And it didn't work.

That't not because your weak or that you haven't got the resilience for business. Its because 'just ignore it' is missing something fundamental about how human beings actually work.

Let's go through the four pieces of advice you've probably received. I want to show you exactly why none of them do what they promise.

1. Just ignore it.

Ignoring something doesn't make it stop existing. It makes it exist somewhere in the back of your mind instead of out in the open where you can actually do something with it.

Every time you 'ignore' a nasty comment, you're not ignoring it. You're storing it somewhere else. In a little mental folder labelled evidence that I'm not good enough. You might not be consciously aware of that folder. But it's there. And every ignored comment goes straight into it.

Ignoring also requires energy. Real energy. The energy of not looking. Of scrolling past. Of not letting yourself think about it. It's the emotional equivalent of pushing your body weight against a door to keep it closed. It it is not a reflection of simply shutting a door on something you don't want to acknowledge.

You can only do it for so long before you are too tired to keep pressing that door shut.

2. Develop a thicker skin.

Right. Great. How?

Has anyone who has ever told you to develop a thicker skin actually explained the process? Broken it down into steps? Given you a practical framework for what that looks and feels like?

No. Because they don't know either.

'Develop a thicker skin' is just a fancier way of saying stop letting it bother you. Which is the same as just ignore it. Which we've already established doesn't work.

What people mean, I think, is: get more experience until it hurts less. And that part is true. Time and exposure do help. But it's a passive approach. It leaves you waiting to feel better rather than doing something that makes you feel better.

There's also something a bit odd about the goal of a thicker skin. Sensitivity to feedback is actually useful. It keeps you aware. It keeps you listening. It keeps you caring. The goal isn't to stop feeling it. The goal is to feel differently about it.

3. Don't feed the trolls.

This one has merit. Responding to every nasty comment is not the right move. You don't owe anyone a response. And some people are commenting for the sole purpose of getting one.

But 'don't feed the trolls' can become an excuse to do nothing. To let something sit there on your post, publicly visible, with no response or acknowledgement. Sometimes that's the right call. Sometimes it's not.

And again, it still doesn't solve the internal problem. You're not feeding them. But you're also not feeding yourself. That is the problem.

4. Just respond professionally.

Some people will tell you to kill them with kindness. Write a measured, polished response.

Here's my issue with this. You are handing a significant amount of your time and energy to a person who has given you nothing. A response takes thought, drafting, probably a second draft because the first one was too honest. It takes your nervous system being activated, then calmed, then activated again when they reply.

Sometimes a response is the right call. We'll talk about that later. But as a blanket approach to dealing with negativity, it's expensive and it isn't manageable long term or on a larger scale.

* * *

All four pieces of advice are reactive. They're all about what to do after the comment or negativity arrives. How to manage the damage. How to protect yourself.

None of them treat the comment as something to be used.

That's the gap this book is filling.

The comment isn't the problem. The comment is the raw material.

3

Chapter 2 - The Fourth Option

There's a moment I remember clearly from the early days of my current business.

I'd posted a reel about narcissistic behaviour patterns. It was getting good traction. And then someone commented: 'Obviously you're a narcissist yourself. You were clearly the problem in your relationship.'

I closed the app and didn't open it for two full days.

The comment wasn't even original. It's one of the most common things people say to anyone talking about narcissistic abuse. It's actually a recognised tactic: take the thing being discussed and flip it back onto the person discussing it.

I knew that. I could have made a reel about it that day. Instead I hid.

That was me being fragile. We'll get to what fragile means in

a minute. But first I want to show you what I do now with that exact same type of comment.

I screenshot it. I sit on it for 48 hours. I come back to it and I ask: what's the tactic they're using here? What is this person doing? What is their motivation? What does my audience need to know about this?

Then I film a video about it.

The person who tried to shut me down became a free education session for thousands of people who needed to recognise this type of move in their own life or business.

That's mining.

* * *

Mining is the fourth option. The nobody teaches.

It sits next to ignore it, fight back, and respond professionally. And it does something none of those do.

It turns the negative into an asset.

When you mine a comment, you're not ignoring it. You're not fighting it. You're not even really responding to it. You're extracting the value from it and using that value to grow your business.

The comment becomes content. The one-star review becomes

a reel. The nasty DM becomes an email your loyal list needs to read. The person who told you that you should just quit becomes the opening line of your next talk.

And here's the part that matters: you don't even have to respond to them directly. They don't have to know you've used it. It doesn't have to be a public call-out. You just take what they gave you and you build something with it.

* * *

I want to be clear about something. Not everything is worth mining.

Some comments are from bots. Some are from people in genuine pain who are taking it out on strangers. Some are from competitors trying to rattle you. Some are just noise.

Part of what you'll develop as you get better at this is an eye for the difference. A prospector doesn't pick up every rock. They know what gold looks like. They sift for it.

You're going to learn to sift for the right negative comments.

Mining is the art of finding gold in the dirt someone just threw at you.

4

Chapter 3 - Fragile, Resilient, or Antifragile?

I want to ask you something now. Think about the last nasty comment you received.

What did you do?

Did you close the app and avoid it for a few days? Did you post again anyway, a bit shaky but determined? Or did you screenshot it and immediately start thinking about what you could do with it?

Your answer tells you where you are right now on a spectrum that a writer called Nassim Nicholas Taleb described better than anyone.

He identified three types of responses to adversity.

Fragile things break under pressure. Resilient things survive it. Antifragile things get stronger from it.

A wine glass is fragile. It breaks. A rubber ball is resilient. You can bounce it off the floor and it comes back. But antifragile? Antifragile is a muscle. The more stress you put it under, the stronger it gets.

Most people who are told they need to handle negativity better are being asked to go from fragile to resilient. You're being asked to stop breaking down over a negative experience and instead just survive it. Pick yourself back up and carry on.

This book is asking you to do something different. To open yourself up to antifragility. Not just surviving negative comments. Getting stronger because of them.

* * *

Here's something worth knowing before you judge yourself for being fragile.

Your brain is not on your side for this.

Our brains are not broken, they're just doing exactly what they were designed to do.

There's a concept called negativity bias. Your brain is hardwired to register negative information more strongly than positive. One critical comment hits you much harder than five compliments because, evolutionarily, threats mattered more than praise. Spotting danger kept you alive. Basking in a compliment did not.

So when a troll comes for you and that one comment drowns out the fifty nice ones, that's not weakness. That's biology. Your brain filing the threat where it won't be forgotten.

Understanding this changes something, because the goal stops being about trying not to feel it. The goal becomes more like this: feel it, recognise what it is, and choose what happens next.

There's something else worth naming too. The comment is one sentence. The story you build around it can run for days. Someone writes four words and you spend a week replying to them in your head, imagining what other people think, deciding it proves something you've always feared.

The comment didn't do that. You did. Which sounds harsh. But it's actually the good news.

Because if you built this whole story, and so you can also change it.

That's what this book is teaching you to do. Not to stop feeling how you feel. To take the wheel back and start feeling more in control of what you do with the negativity that will inevitably come your way.

* * *

Fragile looks like this.

You post something. A nasty comment comes into your inbox. You feel it physically in your body, your heart beats fast in your

chest or your stomach is doing flips or feels all tied up in knots. You close the app. You don't post for a few days. Maybe you tell yourself you're taking a break. Really, you're hiding.

The comment has done its job. Which was to make you smaller and quieter.

Fragile isn't a character flaw. It's a starting point. Most of us begin here. I began here. The problem with fragile is that it means the person who left that comment has enormous power over your output. One anonymous keyboard warrior can stop you creating your content and engaging with your audience for a week.

Resilient looks like this.

A nasty comment comes in. You feel it in your body still. It stings a bit. You take a day, maybe two. Then you start posting again and normality resumes.

Resilient is better than fragile. You're not breaking. You're bouncing back. But there's a ceiling to resilience. You survive it and you recover. The comment itself doesn't become anything. It costs you something, just not as much as before.

Antifragile looks like this.

A nasty comment comes in. You feel it. Maybe you even smile a little.

Because you know what it is. You know what it's trying to do.

And you know that you're about to do something with it that the person who wrote it never intended.

That comment is now your raw material. Your free content brief. Your next reel. Your email sequence. Your chapter heading.

The person who tried to silence you just gave you your loudest piece of content.

That's antifragile. And that's where we're heading.

* * *

Here are some practical things that help at each stage of this journey.

If you're in fragile mode right now:

First: go and look at the comments sections of the biggest, most successful businesses in your niche. The ones you aspire to be like. Look at the negative ones. Really look, because they will be there. Every single person in your industry is getting this, in one format or another. Every single one of them.

There is something genuinely helpful about realising that the bigger you get, the more of this there comes. It reframes the nastiness as a sign of growth rather than a sign of failure.

Second: put on some music that is loud and empowering. This sounds ridiculous, but it isn't. Your nervous system is in a state of threat. You need to interrupt it. A three-minute song you

love at full volume can shift you out of a spiral faster than most things can.

I personally have a little bit more than one song, and you can too. But it's not a ten-step mindfulness programme either.

I have four songs and a Rice Krispies reference.

My playlist is called Snap, Crackle, and Pop. Feel free to steal that name. It's just four of my favourite feel-good songs — for me that means Irish music and country, so please pick what works for you and absolutely do not judge my taste. I know I'm a weirdo.

Now I know you're wondering what does Snap, Crackle, and Pop got to do with mining trolls. And no they are not the names I've given to the trolls. Just in case that's what you were thinking.

Snap represents the choice. The moment you decide to interrupt the pattern rather than stay stuck in it. You don't drift out of threat mode. You snap. You pick up your phone, you find the playlist, and you hit play. That decision is the beginning of the shift.

Crackle is the activation. You know those old televisions that used to crackle when you switched them on? That black and white fuzzy picture slowly coming into focus? That's what this feels like. You're not fully through it yet. But something is firing differently. Your nervous system is waking up to a different signal. You can feel it before you can explain it.

Pop is the release. That's the moment the cortisol, your stress hormone, starts to leave your body and the oxytocin, your happy hormone, comes back in. The pressure breaks. You can feel it almost physically. And then you're out the other side.

Three sounds. Four songs. One decision to interrupt the pattern before it interrupts you.

It is, I will admit, the least sophisticated piece of advice in this entire book. It is also the one I use most.

Third: reach out to one other business owner you trust. Tell them what happened. Not to vent endlessly but to hear someone say: yes, me too.

If you're in resilient mode:

Start keeping a screenshot folder. Every negative comment, every bad review, every nasty DM. You're building a resource bank. You don't have to know what you're going to do with it yet. Just collect it.

Start asking yourself: what is this person doing? Not why are they so nasty. But what technique are they using? Getting curious about the mechanics rather than taking it personally is what will help you bridge from resilient to antifragile.

If you're building antifragility:

You already know most of what's in this book instinctively. What you might need is a system. A way of processing what comes

in efficiently, categorising it, and deciding what to do with it without it taking up too much of your time.

We'll build that system in Chapter 11.

You don't need a thicker skin. You need a different relationship with the comment.

5

Chapter 4 - Own Your Crown

Before we go any further, I need to say something that the rest of the book assumes.

You have to believe in yourself.

Not in a way that means nothing negative ever stings. But enough to hear a nasty comment and have something inside you that says: they're wrong. Enough self belief to read a one-star review and feel something other than the desire to totally collapse. Enough self belief to pick up the phone and make the content anyway.

Because here is the honest truth about mining. If you don't have that inner voice — the one that says you can do this, you deserve this, you are the expert in the room — then every negative comment doesn't just land. It confirms something you already feared. That you are not good enough to run your business.

And that's a different problem from not knowing what to do

with a troll.

That's a foundation problem. And we need to fix that first.

* * *

The person who taught me this was my very first business mentor. Kristine Monaghan.

She said something to me that I've never forgotten.

Own your crown. Either you're the best or you're not.

She meant it. And she was clear about what it required.

You need to know you are the expert. You need to know you are the best at what you do. And if you don't feel it yet? Fake it until you make it.

Not forever. Just long enough for the evidence to catch up with you. Long enough to get in stuck into your business, do the work, and prove it to yourself. Because the only way to know you're the expert is to act like one, and then look back at what you built.

She didn't mean you have to be arrogant. She didn't mean you have to be perfect. She meant: don't wait until you feel worthy. Don't wait until someone gives you permission. Put the crown on and own your space as the expert you are. No one knows what you know. No one can do what you do. You are an expert in your own unique way.

* * *

So what does that inner voice actually sound like when it's working?

It sounds like: I know my stuff.

It sounds like: I've earned my place here.

It sounds like: that comment says more about them than it does about me.

It sounds like: they're wrong.

And when it's not working? When it's been battered by a difficult season, by too many nasty comments, by imposter syndrome that just won't shift?

It sounds like: maybe they have a point.

And that's the really dangerous bit. Because when the troll says you shouldn't be doing this and a part deep inside of you has been wondering the same thing, that comment stops being noise. It becomes evidence that you will eventually use to talk yourself into stopping what you love doing. Your business.

That is why this chapter comes before everything else.

* * *

So how do you build the inner voice if it isn't there yet?

From my experience, I know three solid ways. Pick the ones that feel right for you.

Affirmations.

I have them all over my house. Around my bedroom mirror. On the shelves in my dining room. On the back of the bathroom door. Some people think that's a bit much. Those people are welcome to keep scrolling, and keep their opinions to themselves.

I'm not embarrassed about this. The things we say to ourselves, and the things we see every single day, shape what we believe. If the first thing you see in the morning and the last thing you see at night is a reminder that you are capable and worthy and exactly where you're supposed to be, that starts to sink in. Overtime it becomes your self belief.

Write down what you need to hear. Write the counter responses to the doubts you have inside your head. Put them somewhere you can't miss them. Read them even when it feels silly. Especially when it feels silly.

Collect your evidence.

Ask for reviews. Actively seek out reviews, on a regular basis from your customers. Or from your family and friends if you're not feeling confident enough yet. It is important to know that asking for reviews is not just something you do when you launch something. It's what you should be doing all the time. Because the days when a troll comes for you and you need to know what your real audience thinks? You want a folder full of evidence that tells you they're wrong, not an empty inbox that leaves you wallowing in self-doubt.

So when any negativity comes your way, go back and read those good reviews. This is not a vanity exercise but it is a factual

exercise. These are real people telling you what your work did for them. That is real honest data. Use it to grow your self belief.

And here's the bonus: when a bad review comes in, you've now got context. One unpleasant comment sitting next to fifty genuine ones looks very different from one unpleasant comment sitting in a silence you've been too afraid to fill.

Ask for those reviews. Collect them. Keep them. Read them when you need that reminder. And we all have those days when we do.

Act from the crown.

This is Kristine's lesson. And it's the hardest one.

You don't wait until you feel confident. You act confident and let the feeling follow.

This doesn't mean faking it forever. It means choosing which version of yourself you're going to lead with. The one that's terrified of what people think. Or the one that knows what she's doing and gets on with it.

When you're filming a video and the doubt creeps in — act from the crown.

When you're about to post something and your finger hovers over the enter key doubting if its good enough — act from the crown.

When a comment arrives and you feel that wobbly feeling, and that dread that they might be right — act from the crown.

Fake that confidence. No one is going to know. And along the way you will realise you are meant to be wearing that crown.

* * *

One more thing before we move on.

If the inner voice has been very quiet for a very long time, if this isn't about business confidence but something much deeper. Then this chapter isn't going to be enough. And I'm not going to pretend it is.

The tools in this book help enormously. But some foundations need more than affirmations and evidence folders. If that's where you are, please don't just push through. There are people who can help with this properly. Business mentors, strategists or even a close business friend.

This book will still be here when you're ready for it.

* * *

For everyone else: the crown is yours.

You built something. You showed up. You kept going even when it was hard.

That doesn't come from nowhere. That comes from you.

Put your crown on. You are the expert here.

6

Chapter 5 - Is There Gold in This?

Before you do anything with a negative comment, I need you to sit on it for a moment, and ask yourself these three questions.

Question one: Is any part of this true?

I know. This feels like being asked to agree with the person who just said something horrible. Stay with me.

Not all negative comments are wrong. Some of them contain genuine feedback dressed in horrible packaging. The question isn't whether the person was rude. The question is whether the substance of what they said is worth your attention.

Someone leaves a one-star review saying your course was disorganised. Your first instinct is to defend yourself. But when you stop and think about it: was it a bit disorganised? Could the structure be clearer?

If there's truth in it, use it. Not because that person deserves

a reward for being unpleasant. But because your business genuinely gets better when you listen to criticism that has some merit despite it's delivery.

A troll can accidentally be your best quality control.

Question two: Is this a misconception?

Sometimes negative comments come from misunderstanding rather than malice. Someone has misread what you do, misunderstood your positioning, or made an assumption that isn't accurate.

This is actually gold. Because if one person is publicly misunderstanding you like this, there are probably fifty people quietly misunderstanding you the same way and just scrolling past your content.

A comment like 'this is all about making money off vulnerable people' might infuriate you. But it also tells you that something in how you're presenting your work is connecting badly for some of your audience.

The misconception becomes your next piece of content. You address it directly. Your real audience watches you handle it with confidence and trusts you more. Those niggly misconceptions they had are gone now, and they're one step closer to investing in what you have to offer.

Question three: Is this just noise?

Sometimes the answer to both previous questions is no. There's no truth in it, it's not a misconception, it's just someone having a bad day and directing it at you.

That's fine. That's content of a different kind. We'll get to it. But you need to know which category you're dealing with before you decide what to do next.

* * *

Here's the honest truth of what I've learned from my own trolls.

Most of it is noise. A minority of it is misconception. A small fraction of it is genuinely constructive.

But all three categories are useful in different ways.

Noise is content fuel. Misconception is brand-building material. Constructive criticism is your quality control.

Nothing is wasted.

Every negative comment is data. Your job is to decide what it's telling you.

7

Chapter 6 - The Jackpot Moment

There is a key moment that happens to every person who learns to mine their trolls.

It's hard to describe until you've had it. And then it's impossible to forget it.

It's the moment when you see a nasty comment and instead of that familiar drop in your stomach, you feel something that can only be called the jackpot moment.

The internal cha-ching. The little spark of oh, you. You're going to be very useful.

It's the moment your relationship with negativity permanently changes.

* * *

My jackpot moment didn't happen all at once. It slowly crept up

on me.

I started a new video series on my social media page called, Red Flag of the Week, and it started almost by accident. I'd been avoiding my inbox for weeks because the volume of negative comments had become overwhelming. I'd seen a content creator called Brittany Kellogg doing something similar on her platform and thought it wouldn't hurt to give it a try. Brittany is an american country singer (hence how I came across her) and a really quirky content creator, who calls out the negative messages she receives and turns them into weekly content. I loved her energy. But I wanted to do something different.

I didn't just want to call people out. I wanted to decode what they were doing. Show my audience the tactics behind the words so they could recognise those same tactics in their own lives.

So I started filming. And something unexpected happened.

Going through my inbox looking for content stopped feeling like walking into that horrible room. It started feeling like going treasure hunting.

I'd scroll through, see a nasty comment, and instead of that dreaded feeling I had before, I'd feel alright. Straight away I was thinking, right so... what's the tactic here? What can I teach from this? Is this the one worth my attention?

And then one night I came across thirty-two comments from the same person. The same thing comment almost word for word, over and over. That I must be a narcissist. That if you

know the answer to that question, you already are one. Across thirty-two of my posts. One after another. On repeat.

I genuinely do not know what I did to her. But I noticed something. She was checking my page. Following my posts closely enough to comment on every single one. And the algorithm, bless it, clearly thought she was a fan. She kept engaging. It kept showing her my content. It rewarded her for turning up. The algorithm was loving my troll, and I guess as I thought about how this could become content I was too.

What I started to feel wasn't frustration. It was something closer to amusement. If my content was provocative enough, interesting enough, worth showing up for thirty-two times. That says more about the content than the comment.

That was my jackpot moment.

* * *

Here's what I want you to understand about the jackpot moment.

You can't force it. You can't manufacture it by deciding to be fine with negativity. It comes from doing the work in the earlier chapters. It comes from having the truth test become instinctive. From categorising enough comments that you start to see the patterns.

But you can accelerate it.

The fastest way I know is to get curious before you get hurt.

When a nasty comment arrives, before the feeling fully registers, ask the question: what is this person trying to do? Not why are they so horrible. But specifically: what technique is this? What's the goal of this particular wording?

Getting analytical interrupts the emotional hit.

And the more you do it, the more natural it becomes. Until one day you see a comment that six months ago would have sent you offline for a week, and you think: jackpot.

Then you know you've arrived.

The jackpot moment isn't the absence of feeling. It's feeling something different entirely.

8

Chapter 7 - What Are You Going to Do With It?

You've got a negative comment. You've run it through the truth test. You've had your first flicker of a jackpot moment.

Now what?

This is where most people go wrong. They decide to use the comment and then just post about it. Without thinking about what they actually want the content to do.

The same piece of mined content can become six completely different things depending on your intent. And the intent shapes everything: the format, the tone, the platform, the outcome.

So before you create anything, decide what the content is for.

Option one: Email

Email is private. It's between you and your list. It builds deep,

slow trust because it feels like a personal conversation rather than a public broadcast.

Mined content works brilliantly in email as a nurturing tool. You share what happened, what it made you think about, what you want your reader to take away.

Good for: warming up cold subscribers, building connection, addressing misconceptions, showing your humanity.

Option two: Live video

Live video is real-time, unfiltered, and shows you thinking on your feet. People love watching someone handle something in the moment. It feels genuine in a way that edited content can't quite match.

Good for: bigger, more complex comments that deserve a fuller response, topics where your audience wants to see your face and your reaction, building the kind of community that feels like it's in the room with you. Comments that are really well aligned with your business and will be valuable without a doubt to your audience.

Option three: Educational reel

You take the comment, name what's happening in it, explain it in a way your audience can use in their own lives. The content is about the tactic, not the person. You're not publicly humiliating anyone. You're teaching.

Good for: building authority, reaching new audiences, creating content with long-term evergreen value.

Option four: The call-out

There's a version of mining that's more about catharsis than education. The call-out reel. The 'let me show you what landed in my inbox this week' post.

It can work. Some creators have built entire followings on the entertainment value of this. But know what you're doing and why. Call-out content can build community and go viral. It can also look defensive or like you're putting other down, depending on how you handle it. The difference is almost entirely in the energy you bring to it. So proceed with caution.

Option five: The community question

You share the comment and you ask your audience: what would you say back? You don't have to respond. You don't have to defend yourself. You just open the floor. And then your community does the work for you.

This is where the Know, Like, Trust, Defend (KLTD) framework kicks in properly. We'll get to that in Chapter 10.

Option six: The anti-sell

This one is counterintuitive. And it might be the most powerful option on the list.

Use the criticism to put off the wrong people. On purpose.

When you say something like: 'You won't like me, I'm way too outspoken' — the people who love straight talkers immediately feel seen. The people who don't like it self-select out. You haven't lost customers. You've filtered them.

'Yep, I think I should get paid for my work. Call me a money-grabber if you want.' The right people laugh. They get your humour. They trust you more for being honest about it. The wrong people leave and you've saved yourself the headache of their reviews when they later can't see or understand the value of what you do.

Here's the psychology behind it. When you openly admit to something negative, people's natural instinct is to find the good in you. They go looking for your redeeming qualities all on their own. And when they find those things themselves, they believe them far more than if you'd told them directly. You haven't sold yourself to them. They've sold themselves to you.

One thing: tailor this to your audience and your brand. If you run children's messy play sessions, your style looks different from mine. Maybe someone reviewed you saying the messy play was too messy. Maybe your response looks like: 'If you don't want to leave looking like you've rolled through a pigsty, this is not the session for you. We are messy. We are proud of it. If that's your thing, we can't wait to meet you.'

That's not putting people off. That's calling the right people in.

* * *

The Yorkie Effect

You've already met my mentor, Kristine Monaghan. She's also the person who showed me this...

She posted something that said: This course is only for people who want to grow their business. If you're happy with where you are right now, this isn't for you.

I signed up immediately.

Not because my classes were half full and I was desperate. They were actually doing quite alright, not fantastic but it could have been much worse. But I signed up immediately because that post created a club. And it implied I might not be allowed in unless I was a certain kind of person. And something in me sat up and said: I am that kind of person. I do belong here.

She didn't sell me the course. I sold it to myself.

That's the Yorkie Effect. And if you're British and over a certain age, you'll know exactly what I mean.

Yorkie chocolate bars once ran an advert that said: Not for girls. I cannot tell you how many Yorkies I bought when that campaign came out. I am a girl. Yorkies were suddenly for me, all because somebody had told me they weren't.

When someone tells you something isn't for you, your brain

doesn't hear a warning. It hears a challenge. It asks: wait, am I the kind of person this is for? And the moment your customer is asking that question, they're already halfway to deciding the answer is yes.

The genius of the anti-sell isn't that you push people away. It's that you hand the decision back to them. Instead of you explaining why they should buy from you, they're explaining to themselves why they belong.

So the next time you're tempted to write a post explaining all the reasons your product or service is wonderful, try this instead.

Tell them who it isn't for.

Then watch who decides it absolutely is for them.

* * *

A quick note on intent.

The same comment can become any of these six things. What decides which format you choose is what your brand needs right now, not what feels satisfying in the moment.

Just be honest with yourself about which one you're doing and why.

The comment doesn't decide the content. You do.

9

Chapter 8 - Real People, Real Trolls

I don't want to pretend that this is a new idea, or that I in any way created it. As I'm not the only one doing this. Here are a few different ways people have mined their trolls, because the approach looks different depending on your personality, your platform, and what you're building.

Lisa Johnson

Lisa Johnson was one of my first business mentors. Her programme One to Many is built around creating income that works while you sleep rather than trading hours for money. She changed how I thought about business.

She also showed me what mining really looks like when someone gets it completely right.

When she became successful the trolls came for her hard, with personal and vicious words. They called her a gap-toothed Essex fishwife. They said she must have made her money on OnlyFans.

She had their words printed on t-shirts and sold them, giving every penny to an anti-bullying charity. Bullying was a topic close to her heart, after experiencing bullying throughout her life.

The irony of it all though was that the trolls were now essentially working for her... unpaid. Creating her slogans and funding the very cause they were using against her.

What to take from her:

If a troll hits you with something personal, something you genuinely care about, don't bury it. That's how the right people find you and understand what you stand for.

She also lives by a principle I think about a lot: show, don't tell.

Wearing those t-shirts showed everyone who she was. Giving the proceeds to a bullying charity showed what she stood for. She didn't have to write a post explaining her values, she simply showed everyone.

Your response to trolling introduces you to everyone watching you.

* * *

The Perfectionist Principle

During my time running the tuition franchise, I conducted a lot of job interviews. And something I noticed over those years

changed how I think about criticism.

Almost every candidate, when asked about their weaknesses came up with many many examples, and yet found it difficult to name their strengths. Until I came across a really inspirational lady who told me, I'm a bit of a perfectionist, that's my strength and my weakness. And that was that.

For she was absolutely right. A perfectionist takes longer to complete tasks. That's the weakness. The same perfectionist produces work of exceptional quality. That's the strength. Same trait. Two completely different ways of looking at it.

What I've come to understand about trolls is that they operate the same way.

Sometimes, but not always, what they're commenting on is actually true. They've spotted something real about you or your business. They've just decided it's a flaw.

You get to decide if they're right though.

The person who says you're too detailed might be identifying the same quality that makes your clients trust you completely. The person who says you're too opinionated might be identifying the same quality that makes your audience feel like they've finally found someone who says what everyone else is thinking.

They called it a weakness. You get to decide it's a strength.

Anything negative can be flipped. Sometimes the troll is just

holding the mirror at the wrong way up.

* * *

James Blunt

James Blunt is a British singer. His record label put him on Twitter to promote his music. He got there, saw how horrible people were being, not just to him, to everyone, and made a decision.

He was not going to take what people had to say seriously.

Someone tweeted that his song was horrific. He replied: 'Yet so many people bought it, bought it.'

Someone said waking up with his song stuck in their head was the worst thing imaginable. He replied: 'Worse for me as there's nothing else in here.'

His record label tried to make him stop. He kept going.

And here's the thing. His account didn't grow because of the music promotion. It grew because of the responses. People started following James Blunt specifically to see what he'd say next to whoever came for him that day.

What to take from him: you don't need a team, a strategy, or a budget. You need a decision. The decision to be unbothered. And to let people see it.

* * *

Wendy's

Wendy's is a major international fast-food restaurant chain. In 2017 a Twitter user questioned whether Wendy's actually used fresh beef. Instead of using a corporate statement, Wendy's replied: 'Where do you store cold things that aren't frozen? I'll wait.'

That one, pointing out the obvious, reply changed everything.

Wendy's went from a standard fast food account to the most entertaining brand on social media. They responded to trolls with wit. They roasted competitors. They roasted loyal fans who asked for it. And then they made it an annual event — National Roast Day — where people queued up to be gently destroyed by a burger chain.

People talked about it in their millions in a matter of hours. Not because Wendy's paid for advertising. Because people were entertained. They shared it. They showed their mates. They came back the following year.

What to take from them: your tone is your brand. A business that handles negativity with confidence and a bit of personality doesn't just survive the bad comments. It makes the bad comments the reason people show up. This is an excellent example of when choosing to reply publicly can work out in your favour.

* * *

Aldi

Aldi is a major global supermarket chain. In 2021 Marks and Spencer (also a supermarket chain) threatened Aldi with legal action over their caterpillar cake. M&S said Aldi's version, Cuthbert, looked too much like their Colin caterpillar cake.

Aldi's response? They posted on social media: 'Oh no. We've been summoned to court. #FreeCuthbert.'

That's it. They posted updates as if Cuthbert was a real individual in genuine legal trouble. People rallied behind him. The hashtag took off. The whole country was suddenly very invested in a cake.

A legal threat — something that would have made most businesses run straight to their PR team — became the most talked-about thing Aldi had ever done. It wasn't because they fought back, it was because they had fun with it.

What to take from them: it is not the size of the problem that matters. It is what you decide to do with it. Even the worst responses, or the worst experiences can be mined for their gold. It might just be harder to decide what to do with it at first.

* * *

A quick note on privacy. When you share content from your inbox or comments section, you don't need to use their name.

You don't need to show their profile picture. You don't need any identifying detail. It's the behaviour you're highlighting, not the person. Blur it, crop it, or remove it entirely. You're covered. They're protected. And the content is just as powerful without it.

* * *

Me: The Regina George Email

My first real piece of mined content came from my social media, and made its way to my email list.

Someone left a comment pointing out grammatical errors in my Amazon book description. Their exact words: 'The amount of grammatical errors in your Amazon description is quite alarming for somebody who's meant to be a literary expert.'

At first, I was really upset. It was probably one of the first nasty message I'd had, in this business. And like many of you in your businesses, this business was born from passion. I had a deeply personal connection with my business and I took this negativity quick personally...at first. I debated whether to reply. I decided not to.

But I kept thinking: if one person thinks this, maybe lots of people do. I didn't want to leave it unaddressed.

So I wrote an email to my subscribers. I opened it with: 'Who else has ever been personally victimized by Regina George?'

A little Mean Girls tribute, because I still love that film.

And then I wrote the truth.

I don't claim to be a literary expert. I'm not an author — well, people call me that now, but it still surprises me. I didn't go to university to study English literature. My degree is in childhood and youth psychology. These books were written for my children.

So if you're looking for a beautiful book like The Gruffalo with rhymes. Or a Roald Dahl classic. Then don't buy my book. It's not for you.

But if you're looking for a book that will truly help you communicate with your child in really tricky, toxic environments. A book that will make your child feel less alone. Then this book is for you.

Because that's why it was written. To help my own children. And then to share with the world to help other people. Not to be a work of art. Not to win awards for perfect grammar. Just to help.

And that's enough for me.

What to take from this: the email generated more engagement than almost anything I'd posted before. People replied saying how nasty the original comment was. People told me they'd read my books and loved them. People I'd never spoken to before came out of nowhere to put themselves in my corner.

It turned one piece of mined content into a generator. People who had been quietly on my list, watching, not yet fully bought

in, the email nudged them into the Like stage. They didn't just feel sorry for me. They felt connected to me.

They also gave me something I didn't realise I needed. Positive reinforcement from real people confirming that what I believed to be true was, in fact, true. Mining isn't just a content strategy. Sometimes it's the thing that holds you together long enough to keep going.

* * *

Me: The Penguini Story

My first ever one-star review came from a reviewer called Penguini. And this is what they wrote:

'*This is a revenge book and this author should not be allowed to write books. Don't buy this book. This will probably be the last book in the series because, like I said, this author should not write books.*'

I sat on it for a day. Asked myself the 3 questions, and then I made a reel.

I looked straight down the camera and said: 'This book has one star. Lots of people have bought it and said they loved it. But you shouldn't trust them — because Penguini has read this book and feels it is a revenge book. And that this author should not be allowed to write books. So don't buy this book. It tackles the topic so well that people apparently don't like it. So if you don't want a book like that — don't buy it.'

That reel got over one million views. And sold a hundred books in five days.

Penguini, wherever you are: thank you.

Here's what I think happened. That reverse psychology I told you about before? I'd told people not to buy my book, which only made them want it more. I had sparked some curiosity in them, was this really a revenge book? They needed to buy it to see for themselves. That curiosity is just simply human nature.

* * *

Diary of a Cycle Breaker

Steven Bartlett built Diary of a CEO on one idea: tell the real version of event, not the polished one. He set out to document the failures, the rejections, the moments things nearly fell apart alongside all the wins he experienced along the way.

That format, his honest documentation of an actual journey, is part of what inspired me to start Diary of a Cycle Breaker.

And what fuelled the diary, in those early days, was exactly everything I've told you about. Instead of hiding from what people were saying about me, I wrote my own version of events in my diary. Instead of going quiet when someone tried to silence me, I documented it. The diary started because someone told me I should stop as I was being inconsiderate. I decided to be more visible instead.

That is mining. Just applied to my life as well as my business. But as we all know, as business owners, the lines are quite blurred. Most of us would agree that we are our business. So to combine it all into one personal brand of who I was really just made sense.

* * *

The Wrong Way

There is most definitely a wrong way to do this, and it is worth knowing before you start.

Responding in the heat of the moment. When something first arrives and it hurts, close the app. Create nothing. The content you make from a place of fresh hurt will look like hurt. Your audience will feel it. Come back in 48 hours.

Punching down. You have a platform. Some of the people who comment don't have one. Using yours to bring your audience's attention to a single private individual is not mining. It is something else, that can sometimes look close to bullying. The Goliath attacking David. And people will notice this.

Making it personal. The moment your motives change from calling out behaviour to making comments about someone's life, appearance, or family — you have crossed a line that damages you far more than it damages them.

Turning your audience into a mob. When you share something and your followers pile on the person rather than the point, you have lost control of it. That was never mining. That was a fire

you started by accident. If you name people, be prepared to manage the situation that could unfold from that.

The rule is this: if it empowers you, it is mining. If it punishes them, it is something else. Keep that as your compass and you will always know which side of the line you are on.

Because here is what all of these business in this chapter have in common. James Blunt. Wendy's. Aldi. Lisa Johnson. Me. None of us needed to be cruel to make our point.

You can be visible, powerful, and honest and still remain kind. You can. And you should.

10

Chapter 9 - Mining by Business Type

The way you mine depends a lot on what you're selling. Because the negative comments a product business gets look different from the ones a service provider gets, which look different again from the ones a content creator gets.

Let's go through each.

If you have a product business

Before I was in this business niche, I ran a product business with my sister. Baby hampers. The business was called Showers and Sprinkles — baby shower, sprinkles of joy, you get the idea.

The concept was simple. I wanted to make the most practical baby gift on the market. Instead of a box that would go straight to the recycling bin, or worse the normal rubbish bin, everything was delivered in a nappy caddy — something the new mum would actually use every day. Instead of six beautiful tiny outfits the baby would outgrow before wearing them, or shoes for a

human who cannot yet walk, we packed things people genuinely needed.

It was a good idea. And people loved it.

And then came the reviews.

'*I thought the rattle would be bigger.*'

For a baby? I thought. The rattle was for a baby.

'*The packaging isn't very environmentally friendly.*'

So here's what we did. We rewrote the product description.

On the rattle: 'This rattle was designed for a baby, not a giant. It is, as rattles for babies tend to be, baby-sized. If you'd like to check the dimensions before purchasing, they're in the listing. We promise it's the right size.'

On the environmental point: 'If you're looking for an eco-friendly gifting option, that isn't us just yet. While we care deeply about the environment, our current focus is making sure new parents have the most practical things they need at the most overwhelming transition of their lives. We'll get there.'

Did we lose some customers with that copy? Maybe. Did the right customers immediately understand exactly who we were? Absolutely.

The reviews gave us our voice.

* * *

Your main battleground as a product business is probably reviews. Amazon. Etsy. Google. Trustpilot.

First, the hard truth: some of those reviews are going to be legitimate complaints. Packaging that arrived damaged. A product that didn't match the description. A wait time that was too long. These aren't trolls. These are customers with valid feedback. Apply the truth test. If there's something to fix, fix it. Then respond professionally and briefly.

But the ones that are clearly just noise? Mine them.

The best use of a bonkers review is the community question. Post it. Ask: has anyone else had this? Watch your loyal customers defend you and laugh alongside you. New customers seeing it understand immediately who you are, what you do and who you are for.

If you're a service provider

When I ran my children's tuition franchise, the complaint I heard most was one I'd directly addressed in the initial consultation, in the welcome pack, and in the first-week review.

'*The work feels too easy.*'

Every time. Despite the explanation about foundation-building. Despite the evidence that stronger foundations lead to faster progress. Despite three separate explanations of exactly this.

I could have kept explaining individually. Instead I made content.

Because here's what I understood: the parents sending those messages weren't problem clients. This was more than likely a positioning problem. Somewhere in how I was presenting what I did, the wrong message was coming across. Some customers were just more verbal about feeling confused. And if they didn't understand it, probably lots of other potential parents didn't either.

So I wrote this social media post:

I think sometimes it's easy to assume people know what we do differently.That they understand how we help.

But I've realised... if you don't say it, people don't know.

So here goes.

We don't believe in parents simply handing over their child's education to us. Because progress doesn't just happen in class. It starts with you understanding what's going on too.

What's the point in having a tutor for one hour a week... who keeps all the knowledge to themselves, and can only help your child when they're sat in front of them?

How much more powerful is it if:
You understand what your child is doing.
You know how to support them at home.

You're part of the plan.
You know what's coming next.

That's why we do things differently.

At every class, we give face-to-face feedback. So you're never left wondering how things are going.

Twice a year, we provide in-depth video reports. Not just on academic progress, but on study skills, independence, and attitude towards learning too.

And it all starts from day one. Your free assessment. Where I talk you through exactly what I'm seeing in your child's work, why it matters, and what will help. No jargon. Nothing unnecessary. Just clear, relevant information so you feel confident supporting your child — alongside me.

A word of warning though: at this tuition centre we always start with an easy starting point. This is very intentional. It has been successful in supporting hundred of thousands of students to develop all the neccessary skills to work ahead of expectations.

Joining me for tuition is a partnership. I will trust you and listen to your knowledge and experiences of your child. After all, you know them best. In return I ask that you trust and listen to me. After all I know our tuition plan best. When I explain the work I set for your child, it is based on ability, observations and my shared goals with you, for them to achieve their full potential.

What I was really doing was mining. The frustration of explain-

ing the same thing over and over became the clearest statement I ever wrote about what made my business different.

The parents who read it and nodded — those were my parents. The ones it didn't resonate with? Not my parents. And that filter happened before they ever walked through the door.

Service providers often get hit hardest by negativity because the service is personal. But a negative experience becomes your clearest positioning statement. What you don't offer, said clearly and warmly, is just as valuable as what you do.

If you're a content creator

You're probably most similar to me, right now. Your comments section is the battleground. Your DMs are where the real stuff lives.

For content creators, the mining is most natural because content is already your currency. You're already making things. You just need to start making things from different raw material.

The key opportunity for content creators is the misconception comment. Someone who has misunderstood what you do, misread your positioning, assumed something about you that isn't true. These are brilliant because every time you address a misconception clearly and publicly, you're doing your best brand-building work.

And how you handle negativity tells new visitors more about you than the comment ever could. Your response to a one-star

review is part of your brand. Handle it with confidence and a bit of warmth, and the people watching will decide they want to be in your world.

How you handle the one-star review is what your five-star customers are watching.

11

Chapter 10 - Know, Like, Trust...Defend?

Welcome to the Know Like Trust Defend Framework (KLTD). You've heard of Know, Like, Trust. It's the classic framework for building an audience that buys from you.

People need to know you exist. Then they need to like what you do. Then they need to trust you enough to spend money with you.

It's a solid model. But it's missing a stage.

The fourth stage is Defend.

And when your audience reaches it, everything changes.

* * *

Know.

Someone finds your content. A reel, a post, a recommendation

from a friend. They've never heard of you before. They scroll past or they stop. If they stop, they've moved to Like.

Like.

They follow. They watch more. They recognise your voice. They start feeling like they understand what you do and why. They're not buying yet, but they're paying attention.

Trust.

They buy something. Or they've been in your world long enough that when they're ready to buy, you're the obvious choice. Trust is built slowly through consistency. Through showing up even when it's hard.

Defend.

This is the stage nobody talks about. But it's the stage that tells you you've built something real. Someone leaves a nasty comment on your post. And before you've even seen it, three of your followers have responded to it. Not aggressively, but firmly and clearly, in your defence.

You don't have to say a word. They've got it.

That's the fourth stage. And it doesn't happen by accident. It happens when people feel genuinely invested in what you're building. When your mission has become a little bit their mission too.

* * *

The mining approach accelerates this.

When you take a negative comment and turn it into content your audience finds valuable, you're doing two things at once.

First, you're showing them how you handle pressure. You're not collapsing. You're not fighting. You're being thoughtful and purposeful and maybe a little bit funny about it. And they respect that.

Second, you're giving them a shared experience. The comment is now a story you've both been part of. They were there when you addressed it. They nodded along. They shared it. It became something that belonged to both of you.

That shared experience is the fastest route to Defend that exists.

* * *

And here's the part that makes this genuinely exciting from a business perspective.

When your audience is at the Defend stage, they're commenting on your posts. They're arguing with the trolls. They're explaining your work to people who've misunderstood it. They're recommending you to friends. They are now your raving fan!

Every single one of those comments and responses is engagement. The platform doesn't care whether the comments are

positive or negative. It just sees activity. It sees people spending time on your content. And it rewards you with more reach.

The person who came to hurt you has accidentally handed you a boost.

The people who came to defend you have given you social proof, community, and reach all in one comment thread.

That's the cycle. Mine the troll, create content, audience defends you, platform rewards you, more people find you, more to mine and more community to build. It compounds.

And when your audience is defending you, you no longer need to defend yourself. You can use that energy to create. To build. To mine the next one.

When they defend you, you stop having to defend yourself. That's when you know it's working.

12

Chapter 11 - Your Mining System

Here is the practical part. The bit you can actually use this week.

Because mining is a mindset shift, yes. But it's also a system. And like any system, the more you use it the faster and more natural it becomes.

Step one: The 48-hour rule.

Never create from a place of fresh hurt.

This is the rule I wish someone had given me in my first year of business. When a negative comment arrives and you feel it in your chest and your stomach, that is not the moment to film a response. That is the moment to screenshot it, file it in the right place for later and put your phone down.

Not because you need to suppress how you feel, but because the content you create from a place of hurt lands differently than the content you create from a place of calm confidence. You can

feel the difference. Your audience can too.

Screenshot it. Sit on it. Come back in 48 hours.

Step two: Categorise.

When you come back to it, put it in one of four buckets.

1. Constructive: there's something genuine here I can learn from.
2. Misconception: this is someone who has misunderstood me and probably isn't alone.
3. Content fuel: this is noise or nastiness but it's usable content.
4. Delete: this serves no purpose and doesn't belong on my platform.

Most things will be content fuel. Some will be constructive. A few will be misconceptions. Delete the bots, the explicit content, and anything that crosses a legal line.

What if you know the person?

One question I get asked a lot: what if you know who sent the message?

Trust your gut.

If using it is going to create more problems than it solves, if the fallout isn't worth the content, leave it alone. Not every piece of mined material needs to be used. That is a judgement call only you

can make.

But here is what I want you to know: it is absolutely okay to continue even if you know the person. The behaviour doesn't become less of a red flag because you recognise the name behind it. The tactic is the same. The impact on your audience is the same.

Just be more careful with privacy than ever. No names. No details that identify them. No context that points to who it is. Strip everything and keep the focus entirely on the behaviour. That protects you. It protects them. And the content lands just as powerfully.

Step three: Decide the format.

Go back to Chapter 7. What does your brand need right now? Trust building? Community? Education? Entertainment? Anti-sell? Pick your format based on that, not based on what would feel most satisfying to say. Really think about your audience here. After all your business is here to serve them. Create content that they want. What will they find really valuable? Beneath the frustration you feel for this troll... what message do you want to send out into the world?

Step four: Create with distance.

The 48-hour rule has given you perspective. Now use it. Create the content as if you're a professional analyst looking at an interesting case study, not a business owner who got hurt. Put on your PR hat (not another hat you're saying, I already have to wear enough of those as it is!). But please put on your PR hat and

think carefully, what is the most connecting, engaging angle I have got here. How can you weave in your knowledge? Your personality? Your credibility factor?

This isn't about hiding your feelings. It's about leading with your expertise rather than your wound.

Step five: Post and move on.

Don't watch the comments obsessively after you post. Post it, set it going, and do something else. The content will find its people. It doesn't need you hovering over it.

Check back once, address anything that needs addressing, and leave your community to do what your community does. Who knows someone might throw you some more dirt, and the mining cycle starts again...

* * *

Before you have a platform: start with a notebook.

One thing worth saying: mining doesn't have to be for an audience. Not at first.

Before I had a following. Before I had a platform. Before anyone was watching — I started writing. Remember the diary I told you about? Before I wrote for content. I wrote just for myself.

Someone connected to me personally sent me a message telling me I was being inconsiderate. That I should think about other

people more. It hurt me exactly the way it was probably intended to.

I could have gone quiet. That's what I would have done before.

Instead I opened a notes app and started writing. That was the beginning of what became Diary of a Cycle Breaker.

At the time I didn't know it would become content. I was just trying not to let the feeling eat me. But what I found was that getting it out of my head and onto a screen (or often paper), changed what it did to me. It went from something happening to me to something I was observing. And once you're observing, you're one step away from analysing. And once you're analysing, you're one step away from content.

The person who tried to silence me accidentally started my entire content brand.

The other thing I discovered: record in real time if you can. Voice note yourself right after something happens, while it's still fresh. Even if it's just for you. Even if you never post it. The rawness of real-time is impossible to recreate in hindsight. When you try to recall it later, it comes out polished and slightly less true. The version you recorded five minutes after it happened sounds like you. The version you construct three weeks later sounds like you trying to remember you.

Raw written material becomes captions. Raw video becomes reels. But only if you capture it when it happens.

* * *

One more thing. And it matters.

You can mine the content. And you can still protect your space.

They are not in conflict.

Taking someone's comment and turning it into your best reel does not mean you owe them access to your page. Your social media is your space. You decide who is welcome in it. Once you've taken what you need, you are absolutely within your rights to remove them, block them, and move on.

The same goes for your business.

If someone has left a bad review, caused issues, or behaved badly, and then wants to buy from you again, you are allowed to decline. A quiet refund with a note that you are unfortunately unable to fulfil this order due to previous circumstances is a perfectly professional response.

No explanation needed. No argument. No drama.

You mined the comment. You used it. You grew from it. And then you protected your peace. That is the full cycle. That is the system working exactly as it should.

* * *

To AI or not to AI?

If you've got this far and you're thinking: I don't know what to write. I don't know how to connect. I don't know how to start.

Here is the answer.

The best vibe for this kind of content is raw, honest, in your own words, with your own personality and your own tone of voice.

That's it. The content that builds real connection is never the polished version. It's the version that sounds like you just sat down and said it. Do not get AI to write it. This wont work. People will see through the bot language, and the authenticity will be lost.

The one and only place I would suggest considering AI is for the hook. Not the content. Not the message. Never the story, unless you really feel you need an outline. Then you could potentially ask for some bullet points to guide you. But only say it if it feels like you and what you want to tell your audience. In an ideal world though, just use it for the first few seconds or the opening line.

How to do this? Its simple. Tell AI your idea exactly as you'd say it. I find dictating to it verbally the quickest and easiest way to do this. Then tell it: don't change anything else. Just make the hook stronger.

Because that hook is the difference between five people watching and five hundred. And five hundred people watching means five hundred opportunities to build the know, like, trust, and defend relationship that turns strangers into raving fans.

If you're not a fan of AI, don't use it. Create your own hook. Or deliver it exactly as it came to you. The right people will still find you. That I promise.

* * *

Be consistent.

One more thing on this. Consistency is everything.

The more regularly you create this kind of content, the more your audience will start to look out for it. To expect it. To engage with it because they know it's coming.

But here is what I need you to hear when you're just starting out.

This content will not perform like your established content. Not at first. It won't get the same views. The same clicks. The same bookings. And that is completely normal. Your audience needs time to learn what this is, to understand it, and to trust it.

Don't stop because the numbers are small. Because here is what I know to be true: nurturing one loyal, ready-to-buy customer will always be worth more than ten followers and a hundred viewers who never will be.

One person who gets it, trusts you, and comes back is worth the whole crowd who didn't.

Keep going.

* * *

Before we finish this chapter, let me answer the questions I know you will have.

What if I don't have a big following?

You don't need one. One person watching who needs to hear what you're saying is worth more than a thousand people scrolling past. And honestly, having a smaller audience when you're learning this is an advantage. Lower stakes. More room to find your voice. The volume will come. Get good first.

What if I don't have very many messages?

Good. Start with one. Run it through the system. See how it feels. The skill you're building here is a muscle and you're at the very beginning of the training. The messages will come. And when they do, you'll know exactly what to do with them.

What if it makes people hate me?

Some people will not like what you're doing. That is not a sign you're doing it wrong. That is a sign you have a point of view. The people it antagonises were never going to buy from you, hire you, or champion you. And the ones who watch you handle it with confidence? They're deciding right now whether you're their person.

What if I get it wrong?

You might. The 48-hour rule exists for exactly this reason. Done with care, with names removed, with a focus on the behaviour rather than the person, the risk is small. If something doesn't land the way you intended, own it briefly and move on. That's mining too.

* * *

Building the habit.

The first time you do this it will feel deliberate and a bit strange. The second time it will feel slightly more natural. By the thirtieth time it will be instinct and feel like you were born to create this kind of content.

What you're training is the gap between the stimulus and the response. The stimulus is the comment. The response is the content. You're building a habit of running everything through the system before you react.

Over time, the sitting on it part gets shorter. The categorising becomes automatic. The creating gets faster. You spend less time analysing, because as you read it you know exactly which angle you will be using for it. This will often come over time from watching your audiences response to previous content.

And one day you'll realise you opened your inbox looking forward to what's in it rather than dreading it.

That's when you know the system has done its job.

My last word of advice. Be unafraid. It may feel scary to give it a go, but everything that is knew and unknown feels scary!

Mine enough trolls and eventually you stop dreading your inbox. You start looking forward to it.

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Conclusion - When They Stop Trolling You, Start Worrying

Here is the thing about building a business people care about.

People who care about something are not neutral. They have strong feelings. Some of those feelings are love. Some of them are something that looks very much like its opposite.

The people who want to silence you, dismiss you, minimise what you do, accuse you of things you've never done? They found you for a reason. Something you said or did, hit a nerve. That's not your fault and it's also not a failure in terms of your communication. That's evidence your work is finding people who need it.

The day the negative comments stop entirely is not the day you've won. It's the day you've become so safe and so middle-of-the-road that nobody has a strong reaction to anything you do or say.

That's not where you want to be. If you are trying to be for everyone, you eventually find that you are for no one.

Your work will not be for everyone. The more clearly you understand who it is for, the more powerfully it will find them.

* * *

I want to leave you with what I actually believe about this.

Mining your trolls is not about being ruthless. It's not about not having feelings. It's not about pretending you're some kind of invincible business machine who laughs at everything.

It's about refusing to let someone else's worst moment define your best work.

Every time you turn a negative comment into something that helps your audience, you're doing something quietly defiant. You're saying: you tried to make me smaller with that. And instead I made something bigger.

That's antifragility in action.

* * *

Go back through your inbox this week. Look at everything that ever made you flinch. Your old one-star reviews. The DM you read and then avoided thinking about. The comment you saw on a good day and it still managed to make you hurt, hide and shy away from your business.

Run them all through the truth test. Categorise them. Find the ones with gold in them.

And the next time a negative review, comment or complaint comes in that makes your stomach drop a little, pause before you close the app.

It might just be a jackpot.

Go mining for your gold.

Ash x

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About the Author

Ashling Podmore is an entrepreneur, bestselling author and online course creator who built a following of 55,000 people within three months of launching her business, and had her first viral reel hit 3.2 million views within four months of picking up a camera.

Her background spans product businesses, KDP and Amazon publishing, children's books, memoir writing, children's activity provision and a successful tuition franchise, giving her a genuinely multi-sector understanding of what it means to build something from nothing.

She speaks and teaches on building a personal brand, managing trolls, scaling a business fast, passive income, PR, time management, and the unglamorous brilliant reality of creating your own business.

Ashling was introduced to the world of online business through the community of business strategist Kristine Monaghan.

You can find her at: www.childrensactivitybusinessclub.com/strategists/

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Find Me

If this book resonated with you, come and find me.

I share content on building your brand, scaling your business, and yes, mining your trolls, every week.

Instagram and Facebook:
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I also offer one-to-one business strategy and support sessions. If you'd like to explore working together, reach out any time.

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