



ADVOCATA

A WORKING GUIDE FOR FOUNDERS

Faith in the Marketplace

Staying grounded as a Catholic entrepreneur
in a secular world

Most business advice was not written for you.

It assumes urgency is a virtue, and that hustle is a personality trait worth being proud of. It assumes self-promotion is just marketing, that exaggeration is just persuasion, that your worth as a founder is whatever your last quarter produced. It assumes Sunday is a day like any other, available for whatever didn't get finished during the week.

You already know none of that fits. You didn't start a business to set your faith aside for forty, fifty, sixty hours a week and pick it back up on the weekend. But knowing that and actually building a business that reflects something different are two separate problems. The first is a conviction. The second is a set of decisions, made repeatedly, usually under pressure, usually without anyone else around who's making the same ones.

This guide is not trying to inspire you. It's trying to be useful — six practices, each with something concrete to actually do, and a checklist at the end so you can be honest with yourself about where things stand today, not where you intend for them to be someday.

None of this requires you to run your business less well. Some of it will make you run it better — a founder who isn't quietly at war with himself tends to make clearer decisions than one who is.

Treat the business itself as the vocation

The most common way faith and work get separated isn't dramatic. It's not a single moment of compromise. It's just two boxes, drawn early and never questioned: faith is what happens on Sunday and in private, work is just work, and the two aren't expected to inform each other much.

Catholic teaching on work doesn't support that division. Work is described as a form of continued participation in creation itself, not merely a means of earning a living. St. Josemaría Escrivá pushed this further than most — sanctifying ordinary work isn't a lofty calling reserved for priests, religious, or a spiritually elite few. It's the actual mission given to every layperson, and it's meant to be lived out in exactly the ordinary, unglamorous work most people do all week: invoices, difficult clients, hiring decisions, spreadsheets.

If that's true, the business isn't a neutral container that faith gets poured into on the margins. The business is one of the places the vocation is actually lived out. Not the marketing copy about the business. Not the mission statement. The actual decisions — who you hire, how you price, what you promise, how you treat someone who's upset with you, what you do when no one would notice if you cut a corner.

PRACTICALLY

Most founders default to a single question before a decision: *does this convert, does this close, does this grow the number*. That's not a bad question — it's incomplete on its own. Add a second question before it, not instead of it: *does this reflect who I actually am*. If the answer to the second is no, the first doesn't get to override it, even when the first answer is a clear yes.

WHERE THIS SHOWS UP CONCRETELY

- A pricing decision that would technically maximize revenue, but that you'd be uncomfortable explaining honestly to the client's face.
 - A hire who's clearly capable, but whose values — once you're honest about it — would slowly reshape the culture in a direction you don't want.
 - A marketing claim that's defensible on a technicality, but designed to create an impression you know isn't quite true.
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None of these are big moments. That's the point. The vocation is lived out in dozens of small decisions nobody but you will ever know about.

Protect a fixed anchor before the calendar fills in

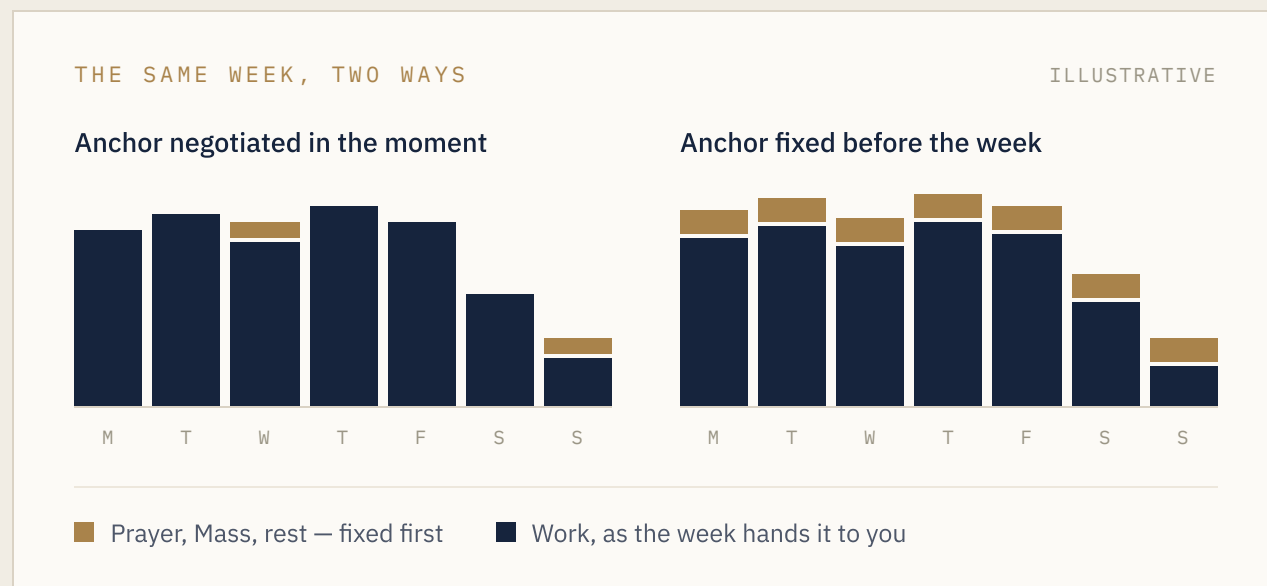
"Make time for God" is true, sincere, and almost completely useless as practical advice, for a simple structural reason: it doesn't compete against anything specific. A calendar fills up with whatever has a deadline attached to it. A client call has a deadline. An invoice has a deadline. Prayer, unless you've made a specific decision about it, doesn't — and things without deadlines lose to things with deadlines nearly every time, regardless of how much you value them in principle.

This isn't a willpower problem. It's a scheduling problem, and scheduling problems need scheduling solutions, not more sincerity.

Rest itself isn't a spiritual nice-to-have layered on top of "real" observance. It's built into the structure of creation. Even God is described as resting on the seventh day — not because rest was needed in a literal sense, but because it establishes rest as part of the pattern of a well-ordered life. If rest is foundational rather than optional, it deserves the same category of scheduling as anything else that actually matters: fixed, specific, decided in advance, not negotiated in the moment it's supposed to happen.

What "fixed" actually means in practice

- Prayer happens *before* email opens, not whenever there's a gap. If it depends on there being a gap, there won't be one.
- Mass sits on the calendar as a fixed appointment, the same way a client call would — not as something that happens if the week cooperates.
- A specific stopping time on Sunday is decided before the week starts — in writing if that's what it takes — not weighed against whatever's outstanding once Sunday arrives.



The founders who protect this aren't unusually disciplined. They moved the decision earlier — out of the moment when they're tired and behind, and into a calmer one where it's easier to make honestly.

Let the business preach before you do

You don't need to explain your faith for people to notice something consistent about how you operate. Explaining it too early, before anyone's asked, tends to land as a pitch rather than a conviction — and people are quick to discount pitches.

What people actually notice, over time and without being told to look for it: how you price things, and whether the price reflects real value or is just whatever the market will bear that week. Whether you're honest when honesty costs you something specific, not just when it's free. Whether you deliver what you said you would, on the timeline you said, without needing to be chased for it. Whether you treat a client who's leaving with the same respect as one who just signed.

None of that requires a single word about faith. It's integrity, sustained, in the unglamorous parts of running a business that nobody's watching closely. But it's exactly the kind of consistency people notice, remember, and eventually ask about — on their own timeline rather than yours.

THE SHIFT IS SEQUENCE, NOT CONTENT

Lead with how you operate, and let the operating be the evidence. If someone asks why — because they've noticed something worth asking about — that's the moment to answer honestly and briefly.

Answering a question nobody asked yet usually reads as marketing even when it's completely sincere, because the audience has no way to tell the difference between sincerity and positioning until they've seen the behavior first.

This is also a more durable form of differentiation than anything you could put in a tagline. A tagline about values is cheap to write and cheap to copy. A track record of doing what you said, at cost to yourself when it mattered, is not something a competitor can replicate by adjusting their marketing copy.

Let people ask you why, rather than opening with an answer nobody requested.

Name the moments where the market pulls against you

Most of the time, "what's honest" and "what converts" aren't in tension. They point the same direction and there's no decision to make. The problem is the recurring minority of moments where they don't — because those are the moments that determine what kind of business you're actually running, regardless of what the mission statement says.

Cross what's honest against what converts, and most of what's genuinely tempting clusters in one specific place, not everywhere.



Manufactured urgency — a countdown, a "spots are limited" claim, a deadline that isn't real. It converts. It's also not honest, and most founders know exactly which version of this they've been tempted to use.

Exaggerated claims — stretching a result, a timeline, or a capability slightly past what's true, in language vague enough to have some deniability. The most common one, precisely because it's rarely a flat lie. It's a shading.

Guilt-based pitches — framing a decision not to buy as a decision to stay stuck, overloaded, or falling behind. Effective, and manipulative; most people can feel it even when they can't name it.

A corner cut a client won't notice — the gap between what was promised and what was delivered, small enough that it probably won't surface, at least not right away.

None of the four require dishonesty in the dramatic sense. They're small shadings, each individually defensible, each easy to rationalize in the moment. That's exactly why they're the actual pressure points.

The founders who hold the line here aren't the ones with more willpower in the moment. They named the specific pressure point in advance, on a calm day, before it showed up disguised as an ordinary business decision. By the time it arrives, it isn't a live decision — it's one they already made.

DO THIS CONCRETELY

Write down the one or two places in your own sales or marketing process where you've felt this pull before. Not hypothetically — the actual place. Naming it in writing, before you're in the moment again, is most of the work.

Don't hold the tension alone

Running a business is isolating by default, even for founders who aren't thinking about any of this. You're making decisions all week that nobody else fully sees the reasoning behind, and most of your professional relationships, understandably, aren't set up for the kind of honesty this requires.

Running one while also trying to keep faith and work genuinely integrated, without anyone nearby doing the same thing, adds a second layer of isolation on top of the first. It's not just that nobody sees the business decisions — it's that even if they did, most people around you aren't measuring those decisions against the same standard, so there's no one to check your thinking against.

Worth naming plainly: carrying this alone for long periods tends to produce one of two outcomes, neither good. Either the standard quietly erodes, because nothing reinforces it and pressure is constant, or it turns rigid and joyless, because conviction without outside perspective calcifies into scrupulosity rather than staying grounded and workable.

THE FIX IS SMALLER THAN IT SOUNDS

It doesn't require a formal mastermind or a large community. Two or three other Catholic founders you can be specific with about where the tension shows up in a given week — not a networking group performing values at each other — is usually enough.

The value isn't inspiration. It's having somewhere to say the actual specific thing, out loud, to someone who'll understand it without you having to first explain why it matters.

If that group doesn't already exist for you, treat "find or build it" as its own priority — not something to get to eventually, once the business is more settled. The business rarely gets more settled on its own timeline, and waiting for a calmer moment to go looking usually means it never happens.

Not a networking group. A small, honest one.

Make rest a business discipline, not a personal intention

"I'll rest once things calm down" isn't a plan. It's a hope, and like most hopes that depend on circumstances improving on their own, it rarely arrives on schedule — there's always a next thing urgent enough to justify pushing rest one more week.

The commandment isn't a suggestion here. Keeping the Sabbath holy is stated as an obligation, not a preference offered to people with room in their schedule. That's a meaningfully different category than most modern advice about rest, which frames it as self-care: nice if you can manage it, dispensable if the week doesn't cooperate.

If Sunday isn't protected structurally, on a specific and repeated schedule, it gets absorbed into the week the same way anything else without a firm boundary does. Not through a single dramatic decision to abandon it, but through a long series of small, reasonable-sounding exceptions: just this one week, just this one client emergency, just until this project ships.

NOT "TRY TO LOG OFF"

A specific hour, decided in advance, before the week starts rather than negotiated once you're already inside it and tired and behind. Treat it with the same firmness as a signed client commitment — functionally, that's what it is: a commitment the in-the-moment version of you doesn't get to unilaterally renegotiate.

This is also good business logic, not only spiritual discipline. A founder who never actually stops doesn't produce better judgment by working through the stopping point. Fatigue degrades decision quality, and a founder running a values-driven business on depleted judgment is more likely to end up back in Practice 04's pressure points, not less.

Decide in advance what stops — a specific hour, a specific commitment, set before the week starts.

Is your business actually reflecting your faith?

Seven honest checks. Mark only what's true today, not what you intend to get to. The value of this depends entirely on answering it honestly rather than aspirationally.

- ☐ **A fixed prayer or spiritual practice happens before my workday starts** — not whenever there's a gap in the schedule, because there usually isn't one.
- ☐ **I could explain a recent business decision in faith terms and it would hold up** — not a decision I'd retroactively justify, one I could walk someone through honestly.
- ☐ **I know the one place in my marketing or sales I've been tempted to exaggerate** — naming it is the first step; most people who fail here haven't named it to themselves.
- ☐ **I have a specific, protected stopping point each week that I actually keep** — not one I intend to keep; one with a real track record over the last month.
- ☐ **I know at least one other Catholic founder I could call about a real tension** — not a networking contact; someone who'd understand the specific thing without a long preamble.
- ☐ **If a client watched how I operate for a month, they'd see something consistent** — this is the integrity test, and it's the hardest one to fake.
- ☐ **One decision in the last quarter cost me something because of what I believe** — time, money, or a client; conviction that has never cost anything hasn't been tested.

Where the boxes you checked actually leave you

0 CHECKED

7 CHECKED



0–3 checked • where the actual work is

This isn't a failure — most founders start here. Pick one practice from this guide and work on it deliberately for a month before revisiting the rest.

4–5 checked • real, but not yet structural

The conviction is showing up in places. It still depends on you remembering to apply it, rather than the business being built around it by default.

6–7 checked • built in

Worth noticing what specifically got you here — that's the part to protect as the business grows and the pressures change shape.

None of this gets easier by accident.

It gets easier when the business is built to support it structurally, rather than fought for freshly every week, from scratch, on willpower alone.

If any part of this landed — or if you're somewhere in the 0–3 range and not sure where to start — I'd like to hear which one. Comment or send a message. Happy to talk through where you're actually at, not where the guide assumes you should be.

Some of these practices are decisions only you can make. But Practice 02's fixed prayer time and Practice 06's protected Sunday don't hold if your inbox and calendar are still running the week instead of you. That's the specific gap an Executive Partner closes — someone managing the scheduling, the follow-ups, and the administrative load that quietly eats the hours these practices ask you to protect, so the anchor stays fixed instead of getting negotiated away by whatever's urgent that day.

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