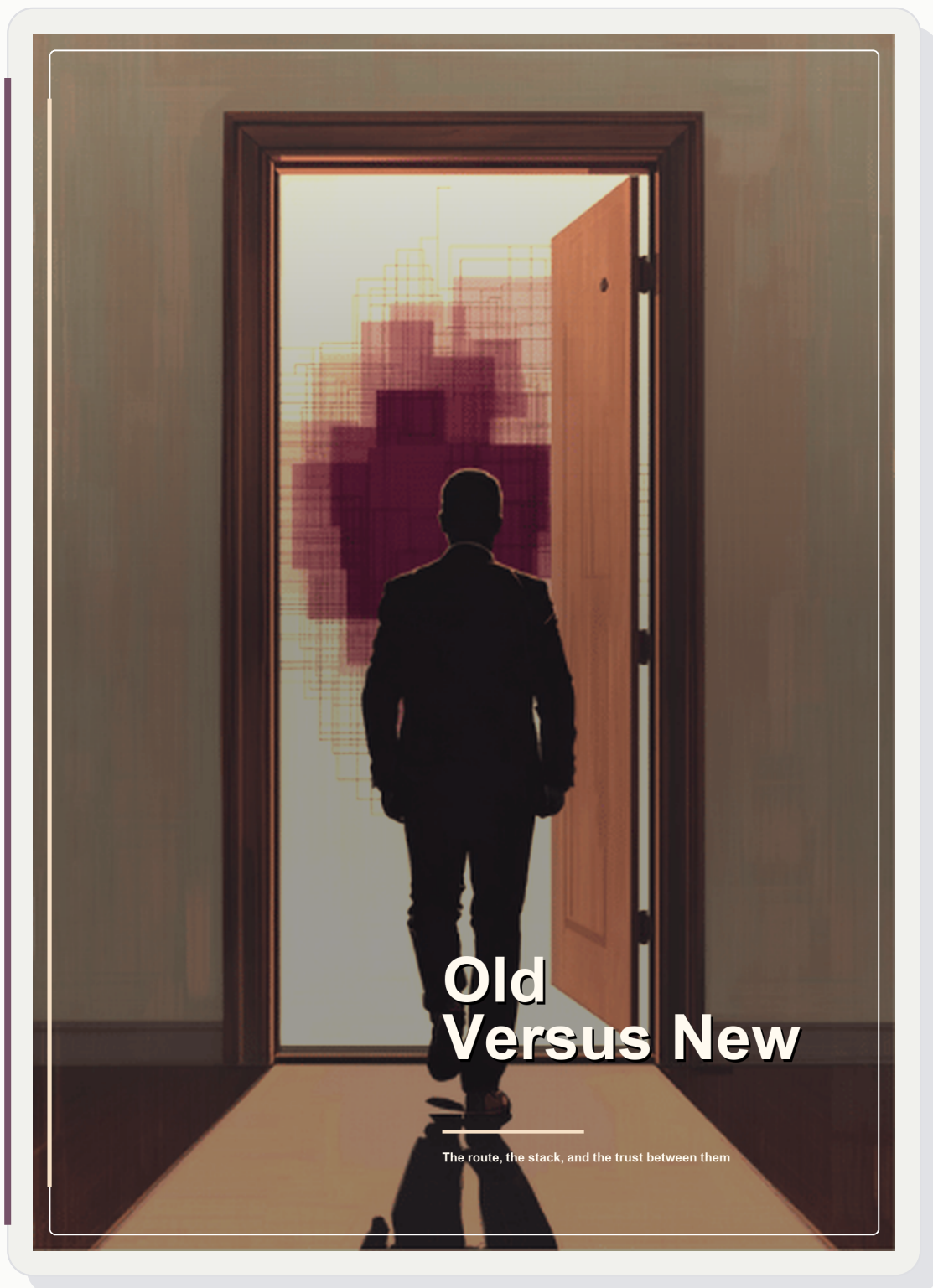




Old Versus New

The route, the stack, and the trust between them

A short book about what gets in the way of a useful product.

I kept thinking about the older route: one person, one product, one door at a time. The door-to-door salesman didn't have dashboards, sales funnels, ad networks, tracking systems, automated email, or consultants warming up his inbox. What he had was a route.

THE QUESTION UNDERNEATH

**If the product didn't work, the route died.
There was nowhere to hide.**

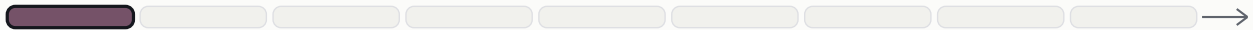
INSIDE THIS EDITION

01	The old route
02	The clean loop
03	The modern stack
04	More layers arrive
05	The AI layer
06	The invisible costs
07	The idea spreads
08	What Circle does differently
09	The simple idea



01

ROAD MAP



MORE AHEAD

NOW: THE OLD ROUTE

NEXT: THE CLEAN LOOP

The old route

He built it the slow way. Street by street. House by house. He knew when people were home. He knew who reordered. He knew what families actually used, and he knew something that mattered more than any modern dashboard: **If the product didn't work, the route died.** There was nowhere to hide.

If the cleaning product didn't clean, if the household tool didn't help, if the thing he sold didn't actually make life easier, people stopped buying. That was the end of the story. But if the product worked, something simple and powerful happened. He came back. They reordered. Trust accumulated.



The route was visible. The relationship was local. The test was simple: did the thing work when it arrived at the door?

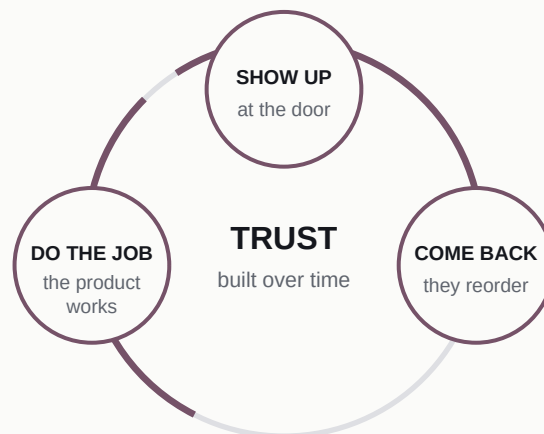
THE CLEAN LOOP

**Show up. Deliver something useful.
Come back when they need more.**



The clean loop

It was a clean loop: show up, deliver something useful, come back when they need more. No tricks. No hidden system taking something from the relationship. Just usefulness, reliability, and repetition.



The old route wasn't perfect. It was harder to grow, harder to measure, and limited to the places he could reach. But its feedback was close to the work. A product either earned its way back into the house or it didn't.

That closeness matters. It keeps the question alive: are we helping, or are we simply getting better at keeping the machinery running?



03

ROAD MAP

MORE AHEAD

NOW: THE MODERN STACK

NEXT: MORE LAYERS ARRIVE

The modern stack

Now fast-forward to today. Someone builds a new tool. They think they're building a product. What they often don't realize is that the moment the tool exists, a whole business grows up around it.

First come the funding conversations. Raise money. Build the pitch. Tell the story. Meet the firms. Start thinking not only about whether the product works, but whether it grows fast enough for everyone who now has a stake in it.

Then come the specialists: app-store optimization firms, search firms, customer databases, sales funnels, onboarding experts, retention consultants, email tools, attribution platforms, analytics dashboards, and optimization teams.

THE NEXT FAD

Every year, the industry gives the next fad a new set of buzzwords. Those words are built to sound urgent, make founders feel behind, and convince them that the next tool, service, or idea is the thing they need to buy. Then the year changes, the words change, and the pressure starts again. It's often the same business underneath.

PRODUCT

what the founder meant to build

FUNDING

the story investors are told

SPECIALISTS

search, email, sales, funnels

AUTOMATION

messages and return visits

MEASUREMENT

tracking and reports

DEPENDENCY

the business around the tool

By this point, the founder isn't only building the tool. They're maintaining the machinery around it: the funding story, the specialists, the messages, the dashboards, and the dependencies.

THE SEPARATION

The product is one thing. The business around it becomes another.



04

ROAD MAP

MORE AHEAD

NOW: MORE LAYERS ARRIVE

NEXT: THE AI LAYER

More layers arrive

And then the email marketers arrive. They promise a clean list. A fresh list. A list that hasn't already been used, sold, and hammered by every other startup trying to get into the same inbox.

They tell you they can make your emails look trustworthy to inbox providers, improve your sending reputation, set up your campaigns, improve your subject lines, recover abandoned signups, and bring cold leads back into the funnel.

Every layer promises to make the founder go faster. Every layer needs money. Every layer needs access to some part of the product, the user, the way it's presented, the plan, or the data.

THE BOX

Once the founder is inside the system, surrounded by experts, subscriptions, agencies, retainers, and service providers, it becomes harder to step back and realize how much of this could have been done more directly, more honestly, and more independently.

ALL HOPE IS LOST

I wasn't building the product anymore. I was feeding the stack. The work had become keeping all the other work alive.

Branding companies. Website builders charging astronomical amounts. Business plan writers selling legitimacy. Positioning consultants. Launch strategists. Message architects. Agencies that pull you into a maze of process, polish, decks, workshops, and new stories about the market.



05

ROAD MAP

MORE AHEAD

NOW: THE AI LAYER

NEXT: THE INVISIBLE COSTS

The AI layer

And now there is another layer: AI tools. A seemingly endless stream of writing tools, planning tools, automation tools, analytics tools, and growth tools, all asking for another monthly payment and more information about the product, the customer, and the business.

Some of them are useful. Many of them are simply more places to get distracted. More things to manage. More things to pay for. More things to feed with information about the product, the customer, the business, and the plan.

So the stack grows. The founder spends more. And the product starts to disappear behind the machinery built around it.

USEFUL

Tools that reduce the work between a person and the help they need.

DISTRACTING

Tools that add another app, subscription, or dashboard to maintain.

THE TEST

Does the product get clearer, or does the machine simply get bigger?

THE RISK

The founder feeds the stack until the stack becomes the work.



The invisible costs

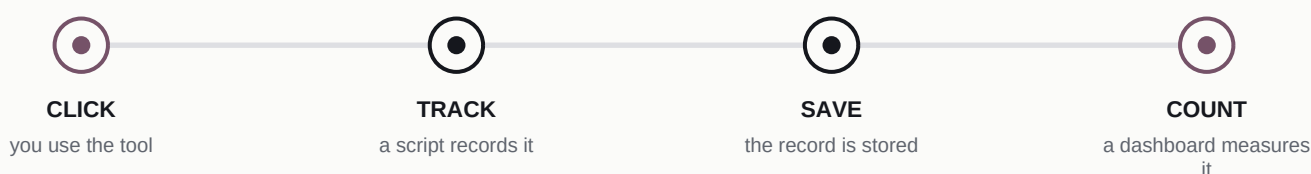
This is the part most people never see. Tracking software is installed. Tracking scripts are added. Links follow people across the web. Customer databases record behavior. Email tools watch opens and clicks. Automated systems test which message brings a user back. Dashboards measure how long people stay. Reports measure whether they engage. Everything becomes a number.

THE ANCHOR POINT

Every interaction becomes something to capture. Every user becomes a record.

Most of this remains invisible to the person actually using the product. They see the interface. What they don't see is the hidden machinery underneath it: the scripts, the integrations, the monitoring, the third parties, the pipes quietly carrying information away from the surface of the tool.

WHAT THE USER SEES / WHAT THE BUSINESS RECORDS



THE HIDDEN LAYER

The product starts to disappear behind the machinery built around it.



The idea spreads

If you ever believed your idea was completely safe simply because you built it first, the modern stack quickly shows how thin that protection is.

Every agency you hire. Every consultant. Every branding firm. Every growth team. Every marketing company. Every optimization specialist. They all see the same thing: the product, the idea, the way it's presented, and the plan for selling it.

By the time a tool has passed through five or six different marketing companies, customer databases, list builders, optimization teams, branding groups, and advisers, that unique idea has often traveled farther than the founder realizes.

WHAT SPREADS

Your idea may still be yours. But it's no longer invisible. It's no longer safely contained. It has now been spread across the stack.

The point isn't that every specialist is dishonest or every tool is useless. The point is that each layer changes the relationship. More people and systems can see and measure the product. More people now have reasons to steer it in their own direction.



What Circle does differently

Circle the People was built from a different starting point. We believe the older model got something important right. If the tool works, people come back. If the product respects the user, trust accumulates. If the deal is fair, the software can stay simple.

FOCUSED TOOLS	Each Circle tool is built for one real moment, not a bloated platform. Open the right tool, handle the thing in front of you, and get back to life.
DIRECT ACCESS	Circle tools can install from the web, so the product page can be the front door.
A CLEAN DEAL	When payment is needed, we use Stripe. It's safe and secure. It's your account. You manage it. We don't touch it.
NO LEAD MAZE	No fake urgency. No watching people just to look like we're growing. No giant pile of middlemen trying to justify themselves after the fact.

That matters because the way a product makes money changes the product. If success depends on confusion, pressure, lock-in, or a user forgetting what they're paying for, the software eventually starts serving that machine.

If success depends on people getting real help from small, focused tools, the product has to stay honest.

The stack doesn't vanish. We still have to explain the product, answer questions, make a living, and keep the lights on. The difference is that the work has a job: bring the product closer to a person, not make the machinery look busy.



The simple idea

The simple idea is this: make something useful, let people decide if it deserves to stick around, and don't build so much machinery around it that the machinery becomes the point.

THE TEST

Just software that does its job. And if it works, people use it again.

The old route had a clear test. The new system has dashboards, measurements, and people paid to explain them. We want to keep the useful part of the old test alive: make the thing work, make the path understandable, and give the person enough room to decide.

That is what Circle the People is trying to protect. Not nostalgia. Not a claim that the old world was perfect. A choice to keep the product close to the person, the value visible, and the machinery in its proper place.

I don't need the next fad to tell me what the product is worth. I need the product to earn its way back into someone's life.

THE TEST

Does the app work, do people use it, and do they come back?

Circle the People

Useful tools. Honest products. More agency.

The happy ending isn't a bigger stack. It's a useful product that earns trust the old way: one person at a time.

WHAT REMAINS

And then I realize something: being brainwashed into the next fad - the thing I need to buy, the thing I need to support, or the people I need to add so I can raise the price of the app - is still just a fad. It goes away. What matters is simple: does the app work, do people use it, and do they come back?