GRAVITY
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EARLY
EDITION

The One-Number-to-Watch *Doctrine.*

Every small-business owner is drowning in dashboards. Stop watching all of them. Start watching the ***one number per motion*** that decides — and build the fifteen-minute ritual that runs the rest of your business.

Inside:

The four dashboards owners get wrong · the one-number-per-motion doctrine · the owner-operator NSM library (8 industries) · the fifteen-minute Friday ritual · a 3-day rollout plan

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WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Right now, you are the *integration* between your dashboards.

Most small-business owners are running six tools — Google Ads, Meta, a CRM, an accountant's dashboard, a Yelp panel, and a spreadsheet their nephew built — and doing the reconciliation by hand. That reconciliation quietly eats **90 minutes a day**, according to a 2024 Salesforce study of small-business operators. Ninety minutes a day, of an owner's time, spent pretending to know what's working.

The tools got smarter. The doctrine didn't. And when doctrine goes missing, the tools become the confusion instead of the answer. Here's what actually changes when you install a doctrine that fits Main Street:

- ✓ **You stop staring at aggregates** and start acting on per-motion signal.
- ✓ **Attribution stops being a tool problem** and becomes a decision you already made.
- ✓ **Friday becomes a fifteen-minute meeting**, not a two-hour panic.

THE TRANSFORMATION, IN ONE LINE

Twelve dashboards, six passwords, and a nagging feeling you don't know what's working → one number per motion, one decision per Friday, and the confidence to *pull the right lever* next week.

BEFORE & AFTER

Four owner problems. *One better way.*

What the week actually feels like once the doctrine is running. These are drawn from the operators we run this loop with weekly — a hyperbaric clinic, a general contractor, a restoration shop, and a med-spa.

OLD · SIX-TAB SCROLL

You start Monday flipping through Google Ads, Meta, GA4, HubSpot, Yelp, and a spreadsheet. Twelve minutes in you cannot answer: is the business winning this week?

NEW · ONE NUMBER PER MOTION

Every motion has an attributed weekly number. Two to four motions. Two to four numbers. Two to four decisions.

OLD · ATTRIBUTION AS A TOOL

You keep buying "attribution software" hoping it'll draw the picture for you. iOS 14.5 and GA4's model sunset in Nov 2023 broke the last one you tried.

NEW · ATTRIBUTION AS A DECISION

UTMs on every URL. One conversion event per motion. Source captured at intake. **Defined for 90 days, honored for 90 days.**

OLD · AGGREGATE REVENUE

"Revenue is up 8%." Good news, no lever. Which of your three motions moved? You don't know until you close the books next month.

NEW · WEEKLY-ACTIONABLE NUMBERS

Numbers you can move by Thursday. Booked consults by lane. Bids submitted this week. Second treatment scheduled at first-treatment checkout.

OLD · DASHBOARDS TO STARE AT

You open a dashboard every morning. You feel worse and no closer to a decision. Nothing you saw changes what you do next.

NEW · THE FRIDAY RITUAL

Fifteen minutes, same time every week, just you and the numbers. One decision per motion. Every Friday. Small and consistent beats big and sporadic.

THE LOOP

Three steps. *One compounding system.*

Each step makes the next one stronger — and once all three are running, the system maintains itself. Skip a step and the whole thing rots.

1 Name the motion.

Not "the business." A motion. A channel, a product line, or a team that runs on its own economics. Two to four is normal. If you can't list them on the back of a receipt, you have too many.

- Emergency calls
- Contracts
- Weekday lunch
- Catering
- First-treatment

2 Attribute the outcome.

UTM every URL. One conversion event per motion. Source field mandatory at intake. Define it for ninety days and honor it for ninety days — the doctrine dies the moment definitions drift.

- UTMs
- One event
- Intake source
- 90-day lock

3 Pick the number that decides.

One number per motion. If moving it doesn't change what you do next week, it is the wrong number. Vanity metrics fail this test. Impressions, followers, "leads" without qualification — all disqualified.

- Weekly-actionable
- One per motion
- Fifteen-minute Friday

STEP 1

Name the motion.

Goal: break the business into the two-to-four distinct games you are actually playing. Each one has its own customer, its own economics, its own cadence — and each one deserves its own number.

The four questions that separate a motion from another motion:

Who's the customer?

If two "revenue lines" have different buyers — the homeowner vs. the developer, the walk-in vs. the corporate account — they are different motions.

What's the cadence?

Emergency work is transactional. Contracts are recurring. Events are episodic. Different cadences require different numbers.

What are the unit economics?

Different margin, different CAC, different payback period = different motion. Do not blend a 60% gross-margin service line with a 12% product resale line.

Who sells it?

If one line runs on referral and another runs on paid, they are different motions. The team's daily work is different, so the number should be too.

Rule of thumb: if you list four motions and one of them is "everything else," you actually have a fifth one you haven't named — and it's usually the one bleeding money. Name it. Even if you kill it next week, name it first.

STEP 2

Attribute the outcome.

Goal: stop treating attribution as a piece of software that owes you an answer. Treat it as a decision you make once, then honor for ninety days.

The attribution stack — the minimum viable version. This is a Tuesday afternoon of work, not a quarter.

UTM every URL

`utm_source` · `utm_medium` · `utm_campaign` · `utm_content`. Every ad. Every email link. Every QR code on a mailer. If you can't tell what a URL was for, it can't be attributed.

One conversion event per motion

Not five. One. "Booked consult" or "signed estimate" or "paid deposit." The event that pays the bill. Wired in Meta, Google, and your CRM under the same name.

Source at intake

Every form has a mandatory "how did you hear about us." Every phone call ends with a "did you find us through X?" logged in the CRM. Missing sources are the doctrine's #1 leak.

Ninety-day lock

Definitions do not change mid-quarter. If they do, nothing you learned in the last ninety days is comparable. Discipline beats sophistication.

The privacy reality: Apple's iOS 14.5 changes (2021) compressed off-platform behavior tracking. Google sunset first-click, linear, and time-decay attribution in GA4 in November 2023. The tool answer keeps getting narrower. The doctrine answer — **one honest UTM, one conversion event, one intake question** — keeps working.

STEP 3

Pick the number that *decides.*

A number qualifies as the one-number-to-watch if — and only if — moving it changes what the operator does next week. Impressions don't qualify. Follower counts don't qualify. Aggregate revenue doesn't qualify. What qualifies is ***weekly-actionable, per-motion, attributed.***

The three parts of every one-number-to-watch:

01 · THE METRIC

What you're counting

Named in plain English. "Booked consults." "Signed estimates." "Standing corporate accounts." Never an acronym.

02 · THE WINDOW

Over what period

Weekly is the default. Compare this week to the trailing four-week average. Monthly is too slow to steer, daily is too noisy to trust.

03 · THE DECISION

What it moves

Every number ties to a lever. If the number is up, we do more of X. If flat, we run this test. If down, we stop Y. Written down before the week starts.

The fifteen-minute Friday ritual.

Same time every week. Just you and the numbers, or you and one person who cares as much as you do. Two questions per motion. That's it.

1. Did the number move — up, down, or flat vs. the trailing four-week average?
2. What decides next week — do more of X, run this test, or stop Y?

THE LIBRARY

The owner-operator *NSM library.*

Every top-ranking article on this topic hands owner-operators the Airbnb-and-Facebook canon. Here's what the number actually looks like for eight kinds of business we've run this loop with — and what to swap when yours doesn't fit exactly.

BUSINESS	MOTION	THE ONE NUMBER THAT DECIDES
Plumber	*Emergency calls*	**After-hours call → booked ticket ratio**, weekly. Under 60% means the phone flow is broken; over 85% means we're leaving demand.
Plumber	*Preventative contracts*	**Active contracts at end of month.** Not signed this month — active. Retention drives everything.
Restaurant	*Weekday lunch*	**Covers per open hour**, Tue–Thu, 11–2. The one hour that pays the rent.
Restaurant	*Catering*	**Standing corporate accounts**, not one-off orders. Repeat is the whole game.
Med-spa	*First-treatment funnel*	**Free consult → paid treatment** within 14 days.
Med-spa	*Retention*	**Second treatment booked at first-treatment checkout.** Not next week's marketing problem — today's front-desk problem.
General contractor	*Bid pipeline*	**Bids submitted this week vs. the trailing four-week average.**
Furniture restoration	*Heirloom referrals*	**Free assessments requested that name a referrer.** The referral flywheel is the moat.
Functional-neurology clinic	*Insured consults*	**Consults booked, tagged to a covered condition lane.** No tag, doesn't count.

THE STEEL-MAN

When the number lies.

Every doctrine has a failure mode. Reforge has spent years warning that a badly chosen north star metric ***deceives more than it reveals.*** They're right. Here are the four ways a one-number-to-watch fools an operator — and how to build a second-order check that catches it.

FAILURE 01 · IT MOVED FOR THE WRONG REASON

Insured consults booked doubled this week. But we also ran an on-site event with a free-session giveaway. The number moved. The channel didn't.

FIX · SLICE BY SOURCE

Never report the number without slicing by attributed source. Event vs. paid vs. referral. If a lift is entirely from one non-repeatable slice, it isn't a real lift.

FAILURE 02 · IT MOVED, MARGIN FELL

Bids submitted went up 30%. Great — until you notice we bid every scrap and won the crappy ones. Volume up, dollars per bid down, margin gone.

FIX · PAIR EVERY NUMBER WITH A QUALIFIER

Bids submitted **at or above target margin.** Consults booked **who fit the ICP.** Every one-number gets a quality guardrail.

FAILURE 03 · CADENCE MISMATCH

You're watching a weekly number for a motion with a 90-day sales cycle. Every week looks flat. You get frustrated. You kill the motion right before it worked.

FIX · WATCH THE LEADING INDICATOR

For long-cycle motions, watch **bids submitted**, not deals closed. The one-number should move on the same cadence as the review meeting.

FAILURE 04 · GAMEABLE BY THE TEAM

Your CSR is closing "booked consults" to make the number. Half don't show. The number is real. The revenue isn't.

FIX · MEASURE ONE STAGE DEEPER

If the front-line number can be gamed, measure the stage that follows. Consults booked **and attended.** Deposits collected. The stage the incentive can't shortcut.

ROLLOUT

Your 3-day plan.

DAY 1

Name your motions.

Two to four. Write them on the back of a receipt. If you can't fit them on the back of a receipt, keep cutting until you can. Kill the "everything else" bucket.

DAY 2

Wire attribution.

UTM every marketing URL. Install one conversion event per motion. Add a mandatory "how did you hear about us" to every intake form. Tell your team the definitions are locked for 90 days.

DAY 3

Pick the number. Schedule the Friday.

One number per motion. Write down the lever each one moves. Put fifteen minutes on your calendar for every Friday for the next twelve weeks. That meeting is where the doctrine becomes real. Without it, this is a PDF you read once.

THE END STATE

You open your laptop on Monday to two-to-four numbers you actually understand — and by Friday you've made two-to-four decisions that *compound.* No more twelve-tab scroll. No more staring at aggregates. No more wondering which channel is paying for the building. You know.

Ready to install the doctrine in your business?

Book the 30-min scope →

30 minutes. We pull your stack live. You leave with the exact one-number-to-watch stack for your motions — and you don't pay for it.

Sources · Sean Ellis, "Finding Your North Star Metric" · Amplitude, The North Star Playbook · Reforge, "Don't Let Your North Star Metric Deceive You" · Croll & Yoskovitz, Lean Analytics · Kaplan & Norton, "The Balanced Scorecard" (HBR, 2005) · Google, "Get started with attribution" (GA4) · Meta, "Aggregated Event Measurement" · BLS, 2024 SMB survival rates · Salesforce/Slack, Small Business Productivity Trends 2024. Full linked list at getgravitygrowth.com/insights/one-number-doctrine.