



A FREE PACK FROM LAB89

The Founder Decode

Run your own brand diagnostic with Claude or ChatGPT. Five prompts, one form, and a Gap Map at the end that tells you where your brand is losing its meaning.

Time

About three hours

You need

Claude or ChatGPT

Cost

Nothing

Most brand problems are not vision problems. They are translation problems. The founder knows what the brand means, the brand says something slightly different, and the market hears something different again.



What this is, and why it is free

This is the same diagnostic sequence we run with paying clients. Not a teaser version of it. The questions, the order they go in, the sheet they feed and how to read the result.

The questions were never the valuable part. Anyone can ask them. The value is in knowing which answer to bet on, and that is a judgment you make with something at stake. If you run this yourself and it works, good. If you get stuck at the diagnosis, that is the part worth paying someone for.

What you end up with

- A **Vision File** - what you actually mean, in your own words, written down for the first time
- A **Signal Audit** - what your brand actually says, quoted rather than remembered
- A **Gap Map** - the distance between those two, and what the market hears as a result
- Three to five **testable hypotheses**, with metrics and dates attached

What is in the pack

FILE	WHAT IT DOES
01_prompt_setup	Six questions, so the rest can be tailored to your brand
02_prompt_build_my_form	Generates your Decode form, adapted to your brand's stage
03_prompt_decipher	Turns your filled-in answers into a Vision File
04_prompt_signal_audit	Reads your site and social, quotes what it finds
05_prompt_gap_map	Builds the Gap Map and names the gap
Founder_Decode_Form_STANDARD	The generic form, if you would rather work on paper

One instruction above all others. Answer the form in Step 3 before you look at any analytics, any competitor, or your own website. Once you have seen the numbers you start explaining your brand in terms of what the numbers seem to want, and the version worth capturing is the one that exists before the dashboard gets a vote.

THE SEQUENCE

How it runs

Paste each prompt into Claude or ChatGPT in order. Steps 1 and 2 are one sitting. Step 3 is yours alone. Steps 4 and 5 are another sitting.

PROMPT 1 • SETUP

The AI asks you six questions and returns a Decode Profile.
Five minutes. No advice given yet, on purpose.



PROMPT 2 • BUILD MY FORM

It writes your Decode form, tailored to your brand's stage.
A five-year-old brand gets different questions to a pre-launch one.



STEP 3 • YOU, ALONE

You fill in the form. No AI, no analytics, no competitors open.
Then paste your answers into Prompt 3 and it returns your Vision File.



PROMPT 4 • SIGNAL AUDIT

You give it your website and socials. It quotes what is actually there.
Quoted, not remembered. Paraphrase is how a problem gets fixed in the retelling.



PROMPT 5 • THE GAP MAP

Three columns, the gap named, and hypotheses you can actually test.

Five steps, and what each one is for

1

Setup

Six questions about your brand, its age, whether it has pivoted, and what data you have. It returns a Decode Profile. Copy that block – the next prompt needs it. It will refuse to give you brand advice at this stage, which is deliberate.

2

Build my form

It writes your Decode form. Everyone gets the same seven core questions and the same Golden Question, but the stage block differs. A pre-launch brand is asked what evidence exists that anyone wants this. An established or pivoted brand is asked what still survives from the era it has outgrown, which is usually where the drift is hiding.

3

Fill it in, then decipher

This part is yours. Close everything and answer in your own words, badly, at length. Answer out loud into a voice recorder if you can – people write in marketing language and speak in their own.

Then paste your answers into Prompt 3. It returns a Vision File that preserves your language rather than tidying it, because the useful material is the odd phrase that does not fit the category.

4

Signal audit

Give it your website, your socials, any marketplace listing. It captures what is actually there, word for word, and then answers the question that matters: what do you clearly believe that appears on *no* touchpoint anywhere?

If your AI cannot browse, it will ask you to paste the copy instead. Let it. An audit built on what a model half-remembers about your brand is worse than no audit.

5

The Gap Map

Three columns – what you mean, what the brand says, what the market hears – across seven dimensions. Then the gap named as one of three types, a diagnosis, and three to five hypotheses with metrics and windows attached.

Where the AI is genuinely useful, and where it is not. Use it for Steps 1, 2, 4 and 5, and especially for grouping hundreds of reviews into themes – that used to be a day's work.

Do not use it for Step 3. A model asks the average discovery question and reflects your answers back in category language, which is the exact thing this exercise exists to escape.

What good looks like

Check your output against these before you act on it.

- Your Decode form contains at least one sentence you would not want a competitor to copy.
- Your Golden Question answer is written as actual speech, not as a positioning statement.
- Column three of the Gap Map is mostly quotes from real customers, not marked [inferred].
- You can say your primary gap out loud in one sentence, and point at the rows that prove it.
- Every hypothesis has a metric and a date on it.

The limit of doing this alone

We normally run Step 3 as an interview, and an interviewer does something you cannot do for yourself: they notice when your voice changes. The moment you get animated about a detail that is not on any slide, or defensive about a decision nobody questioned, is usually the moment the real brand shows up. Self-interviewing loses that.

Two things help. Record yourself rather than typing. And get one person who knows the business to read your answers and mark the three lines that surprised them.

If the Gap Map will not resolve

If you get through the form and the audit but the diagnosis stays murky, that is normal, and it is the hard part. It is also where an outside reader earns their fee, because they can see your answers without already knowing what you meant.

Companion asset. Once your vision is settled, the Brand Voice File template turns it into constraints your team and your AI tools can actually follow – a glossary, a register, verified claims and a banned list. Three of its four sections are restrictions, and the restrictions are what keep your copy off the category average.

LAST THING

If you want to collaborate

Use this freely, including with your own clients. We are not precious about it.

If you ran it and found something, we would like to hear what it was. If you got stuck at the diagnosis, send us the Gap Map and we will tell you what we see in it, no charge and no pitch attached. And if you are a founder, a freelancer or an agency who wants to work on something together, that is the address too.

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Tell us what the brand is and what the gap turned out to be. That is enough to start a conversation.



We bridge the gap between what founders mean
and what customers hear.

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