

The Niche Account Growth Playbook

The three-step Claude Code research system I run before I write a single post for a niche service account.

Why most niche accounts stall at zero

Most accounts that never break past a few hundred followers skip the research step entirely. They pick a niche, open the camera, and start posting whatever comes to mind. The basic way fails because it treats content as a guessing game instead of a system.

Here's the one-line promise: before you post anything for a niche service account, you can know exactly who you're talking to, what already works in that space, and what makes your account different, all in under an hour, using Claude Code to do the legwork.

This is the exact three-step process I run for every niche account I build, whether it's mine or a client's. It works the same way for a bookkeeping service, a wedding photographer, or a local landscaping company.

01

How it actually works

1. Study the customer avatar first. Run a focused interview prompt that pulls out what the customer buys, how old they are, and the exact objection that stops them from buying.
2. Build a competitor list on Instagram of accounts already winning with that same audience, then study only their top-performing posts, not their whole feed, to find the topic buckets and formats that repeat.
3. Build a positioning angle that carves out a lane those competitors aren't already sitting in, by narrowing your topic, your format, or your avatar further than anyone else in the list.

02

The one thing almost everyone gets wrong

The mistake is skipping straight to the competitor's whole feed instead of filtering for their top posts.

WATCH OUT

If you study a competitor's entire feed, you'll copy the posts that flopped right alongside the ones that worked. Sort by engagement first and only pull topic buckets from the posts sitting at the top. That's the difference between a content calendar built on proof and one built on noise.

The prompts I actually use

STEP 1: AVATAR INTERVIEW

Act as a customer research strategist. I run a [type of service business] targeting [describe the general market]. Ask me six focused questions, one at a time, to build a customer avatar: what they buy, their age range, their income level, their biggest objection to buying, where they already spend time online, and the exact words they use to describe their problem. After I answer all six, summarize the avatar in a short profile I can reference before I write any content.

STEP 2: COMPETITOR RESEARCH

I'm building a niche Instagram account for [niche/service]. Here are 5–10 competitor account handles already serving this audience: [list handles]. For each account, identify their top 5 posts by engagement, not their most recent posts. For each top post, extract the topic bucket (what the post is actually about) and the format (carousel, talking-head, meme, before/after, etc). Summarize the repeating topic buckets and formats across all accounts into a table.

STEP 3: POSITIONING ANGLE

Here is my customer avatar: [paste avatar summary]. Here are the repeating topic buckets and formats from my competitor research: [paste table]. Suggest 3 positioning angles for my account that carve out a lane none of these competitors are fully occupying, by narrowing topic selection, format, or avatar specificity. For each angle, explain exactly what makes it distinct from the competitor list.

Set it up in Claude Code or Codex

1. Open Claude Code (or Codex) in a project folder for this account, or just a new empty folder if you don't have one yet.
2. Paste the Step 1 avatar interview prompt directly into the chat and fill in your service business and market before sending it.
3. Answer the six questions the model asks back. Save the resulting avatar summary somewhere you'll actually reopen, a plain text file in the project folder works fine.
4. Paste the Step 2 competitor research prompt, filling in 5 to 10 real competitor handles from your niche. Let it build the topic bucket and format table.
5. Paste the Step 3 positioning prompt with your avatar summary and competitor table pasted in. Pick the angle that feels most specific and least like everyone else in your space.
6. Write your first 10 posts against that positioning angle before you second-guess it. Consistency for 30 days is what actually tells you if the angle is working.

QUICK TIPS

- Keep the avatar summary and competitor table in the same project folder. You'll want to re-run Step 3 every few months as your competitor list shifts.

The commands I actually run

WEEKLY COMPETITOR REFRESH

Using my saved competitor list [paste handles], pull this week's top 3 posts per account by engagement. Flag any new topic bucket or format that wasn't in my original research.

CONTENT IDEA FROM A TOPIC BUCKET

Take this topic bucket: [BUCKET NAME]. Write 5 post ideas for my account using my avatar [paste avatar summary] and my positioning angle [paste angle]. Each idea should be a one-line hook plus a one-sentence description of the content.

OBJECTION-BUSTING POST

My avatar's biggest objection is [OBJECTION]. Write 3 short-form video scripts, under 60 seconds each, that directly address this objection without sounding defensive or salesy.

When it breaks

ERROR	FIX
The avatar summary feels too generic to be useful	Go back through the six questions and push for a specific example instead of a general answer. "They're worried about price" is generic; "they compare us to a \$200/month competitor before they'll book a call" is usable.
Competitor research keeps surfacing the same 2-3 topic buckets everyone already uses	Widen the competitor list to include accounts one level outside your exact niche, then look for topic buckets that are common there but rare in your direct niche.
Every positioning angle the model suggests sounds like a tagline, not a real content direction	Ask it to restate each angle as "the topics I will and won't post about" instead of a slogan. That forces a concrete answer.
You picked an angle but engagement isn't moving after a few weeks	Don't switch the angle yet. Check whether you're actually posting the topic buckets and formats it implies, or drifting back to whatever's easiest to film.
The competitor handles you picked don't actually serve the same audience	Re-check each handle against your avatar summary before including it. An account with a big following in an adjacent niche can still skew your topic bucket data.

Ready to go deeper?

This playbook is the short version. Inside the hub you get the full build walkthroughs, the prompt library, and the systems I use to ship this in a weekend.

Join the Build →

<https://hub.digicuratoragency.com/join>