OPERATOR PLAYBOOK · 28 PAGES

The Wholesaler's Marketing Machine.

Seven lead-gen channels ranked by cost, speed, and quality — plus the exact unit economics and 90-day ramp plan to fill your pipeline without wasting a dollar.

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WHY THIS PLAYBOOK EXISTS

You don't need every channel. You need one that works.

The single biggest mistake new wholesalers make with marketing is **trying too many channels at once**. They start driving-for-dollars on Monday, launch a Google Ads campaign on Tuesday, buy a $2,000 direct-mail postcard run on Wednesday, and by Friday they're burned out, broke, and confused about why nothing's working.

The wholesalers who close deals consistently — the ones still standing 5 years in — do the opposite: they **pick ONE channel, run it for 90 days, measure everything, then optimize before adding a second**. That's the whole secret. This playbook shows you how.

Inside you'll find the seven realistic lead-gen channels for wholesalers, ranked by cost-per-lead and time-to-first-deal, plus the unit economics (real numbers, not guru math) and a 90-day ramp plan you can start Monday morning.

Read the whole thing. Then pick one channel and commit to it. That's the assignment.

— Tracy

WHAT'S INSIDE

11 chapters. 28 pages. One clear answer.

All numbers in this playbook are from real wholesalers running these channels in real markets — not agency case studies, not aspirational math.

CHAPTER 01

The marketing reality no one tells you

Every YouTube guru will tell you their channel is the answer. Direct mail guy says direct mail. PPC guy says PPC. SMS bro says SMS. They're all right and all wrong.

The real answer

The best channel isn't the one with the lowest cost-per-lead. It's the one **you'll actually run consistently for 90 days**. Consistency > optimization, always, in your first year.

Why beginners fail here

Because marketing is emotionally uncomfortable. Making cold calls feels awful. Watching direct-mail money disappear with no response feels worse. Driving neighborhoods for 4 hours and getting 3 skip-traceable properties feels slow. So beginners quit and switch channels — and end up having tried everything for 2 weeks and mastered nothing.

The mindset shift

Marketing isn't about finding the perfect channel. It's about building the **discipline to feed a channel data for 60–90 days** so you can tell if it works. Very few channels fail. Most of them get quit on prematurely.

Rule of thumb: if you can't commit to 60 days of consistent action on a channel, don't start it. Pick a smaller channel you can actually run.

What this playbook won't do

It won't tell you which channel is "best." That answer depends on your budget, your risk tolerance, your market, and your temperament. What it **will** do is give you the real economics of each channel so you can make an adult decision.

CHAPTER 02

The 7 channels, ranked

Here they are — every realistic lead-gen channel for a US wholesaler, with honest numbers. Cost-per-lead ranges assume you're in a mid-size market; expensive markets (LA, NYC, Miami) run 30–50% higher.

Channel	Cost/Lead	Time-to-Deal	Quality
1. Driving for Dollars	$0–$0.30	60–90 days	Highest — pre-vetted
2. Direct Mail	$3–$8	45–90 days	High — self-selected
3. Cold Calling	$0.50–$1.50	30–60 days	Medium — volume game
4. SMS Marketing	$0.10–$0.40	30–60 days	Medium — high risk
5. Google Ads / PPC	$40–$150	10–30 days	Very high — hot intent
6. Referral Networks	$0	6–18 months to build	Highest long-term
7. Bandit Signs	$100–$500/wk	30–90 days	Medium — legal risk

How to read this table

Cost per lead = what it costs to get ONE qualified phone number connected to a potentially motivated seller. **Time to deal** = realistic time from channel launch to first closed assignment. **Quality** = how likely each lead is to actually convert.

Notice: there's an inverse relationship between cost and quality. Cheap channels take longer. Expensive channels close faster. Neither is "better" — they solve different problems.

CHAPTER 03

Driving for dollars — the free channel

You physically drive neighborhoods looking for distressed properties. Photograph them. Skip-trace the owner. Reach out. It's slow. It's boring. It also produces the highest-quality leads in the entire lead-gen playbook because **you've physically confirmed the property is a candidate**.

What makes a property a "dollars" lead

Any of these signals: tall grass, boarded windows, code-violation stickers, roof damage visible from street, peeling paint, mail piled up, cars on blocks, a For-Sale-By-Owner sign that's been up for 60+ days, obvious fire damage.

The routing math

Average distressed properties per hour	3–8
Skip-trace hit rate	60–75%
Skip-trace cost per lookup	\$0.10–\$0.30
Reach-out response rate	8–15%
Conversation-to-offer rate	20–35%
Offer-to-signed-contract rate	5–10%

Rough math on a 4-hour route

Drive 4 hours → identify 20 candidates → skip-trace 20 → get contact info for 13 → reach out → 1–2 real conversations → 1 offer submitted. **One offer per 4-hour route. One signed deal per 10–15 offers.** That's the real math.

Apps to accelerate

DealMachine, PropStream, Batchdriven — all \$50–\$150/mo. They add auto-skip-trace and one-tap mailing. Worth the cost once you're running 3+ routes per week.

Best fit for: New wholesalers with time but limited cash. Also excellent for building a hyper-local knowledge of your target ZIP codes.

CHAPTER 04

Direct mail — postcards & letters

Direct mail is the oldest lead-gen channel in real estate. It still works because homeowners **read** mail more attentively than they read email or texts. But it requires budget and patience — most first-time senders quit after one round because the response rate is deceptively low.

The response rates that actually happen

Postcard, cold list	0.4% – 1.2%
Postcard, targeted list (absentee, tax-delinquent)	1.5% – 3.5%
Yellow-letter, targeted list	2.5% – 5.0%
Follow-up mailer to non-responders (touch 3+)	3.0% – 8.0%

The cost math

Assume \$0.60/piece (postcard, bulk printing + postage). Send 2,000 pieces = \$1,200. At 1.5% response rate → 30 phone calls. At 20% real-conversation rate → 6 real conversations. At 15% offer rate → 1 signed contract. **Cost per deal: ~\$1,200**. Assignment fee \$10K. ROI: 8.3×.

The mistake beginners make

Sending ONE mail campaign and giving up. Direct mail is a **touch business**. Response rates on touch 1 are 0.5%. On touch 3, they're 3–5%. Send the same list 3 times over 90 days.

List sources

Absentee owners (landlords) — best all-around list.
Tax-delinquent — highly motivated.
Pre-foreclosure — time-sensitive.
Probate — sensitive, use letters not postcards.
Vacant properties — highest ROI, hardest to source.

Copy that converts

Short. Personal. Handwritten-font postcards outperform corporate-looking ones. Include a specific dollar-amount offer range ("\$140K–\$165K cash for houses in [ZIP]"). One clear CTA — a phone number to call. That's it.

Best fit for: Wholesalers with \$1K–\$3K/mo marketing budget and 90-day patience.

Cold calling & skip-trace — the volume game

Cold calling gets a bad reputation because most beginners do it badly. Done right, it's one of the fastest paths to your first deal because **you're having real conversations in week one, not week twelve**.

The two flavors

Manual dialing: One number at a time, dialing yourself. Legal in every state (if you follow TCPA). Slow — maybe 80 calls in a 3-hour block.

Predictive/parallel dialing (Mojo, Batch Dialer, CallRail, or iSpeedToClose's dialer): Software dials 3–4 numbers at once, connects you to whoever answers. Same 3 hours = 300+ dials, 40+ conversations. Requires strict TCPA compliance.

The math on manual dialing

Dials per hour	25–35
Connect rate (answers)	12–18%
Conversation rate (past 30 seconds)	40–50%
Qualified lead rate (motivated + timeline)	8–15%
Cost per qualified lead	$0.50–$1.50

TCPA compliance — non-negotiable

Every number must be scrubbed against the National DNC Registry before you dial. Every state has additional restrictions. iSpeedToClose does this automatically on every outbound call. Read *The Wholesaler's TCPA Survival Guide* before you dial number one.

The 3-part script framework

See Chapter 5 of *Wholesaling 101* for the full 3-part seller-call script. Applies identically to cold calling.

Best fit for: Wholesalers with time and comfort with rejection. First 100 calls will feel terrible. Push through — the confidence compounds fast.

CHAPTER 06

SMS marketing — the compliant playbook

SMS is the highest-volume, lowest-cost, highest-legal-risk channel in wholesaling. Done right, it prints leads. Done wrong, it prints lawsuits — $500–$1,500 per unsolicited message under TCPA.

The rules that actually apply

You need prior express written consent OR an active business relationship OR the number must not be on the National DNC Registry (roughly 1 in 3 numbers are). Wholesalers who send blast SMS to cold skip-trace lists without screening are gambling with 6-figure lawsuit risk.

The compliant approach

1. Scrub every list against the DNC registry BEFORE you send. iSpeedToClose auto-scrubs.
2. Include opt-out language in every first message ("Reply STOP to opt out").
3. Honor opt-outs immediately and log them permanently.
4. Never use auto-dialer or spoofed numbers.
5. Send from a 10DLC-registered number, not a personal cell.

Message templates that work

Short. Personal-sounding. Property-specific. No emojis. No links (they trigger carrier filters).

Sample opening message

"Hi [First Name], I noticed your property at [Street Address]. If you'd ever consider selling for cash on your timeline, I'd love to make you an offer. Reply STOP to opt out."

The response math

Delivery rate (after carrier filtering)	82–92%
Reply rate	3–8%
Non-hostile reply rate	40–60% of replies
Qualified conversation rate	15–25% of non-hostile
Cost per qualified lead	$4–$12

Best fit for: Wholesalers with dialed-in compliance workflows and appetite for volume. NOT recommended for beginners — the compliance overhead is easy to get wrong.

CHAPTER 07

Google Ads & PPC — the paid-intent channel

Google Ads is the most expensive channel in this playbook, and the fastest to first-deal for anyone with a real budget. Why? Because these leads are searching for you **right now**. "Sell my house fast [city]" is not a curious click — it's a motivated seller.

The cost reality

Cost per click (CPC)	$8–$25 typical, $50+ in hot markets
Conversion rate (click → phone call)	5–12%
Cost per lead	$40–$150
Lead-to-deal rate	8–15%
Cost per deal	$400–$1,500

Minimum viable budget

$1,500–$3,000/month. Below that, you don't have enough clicks to know if your ads or landing page are the problem. Above $5,000/month, you should hire an agency or an in-house paid-ads person.

Keywords that convert

"sell my house fast [city]", "we buy houses [city]", "cash for houses", "how to sell a house without a realtor [city]", "probate house sale [city]", "inherited house sale [city]". Add [city] to every keyword. Localize.

The landing page anatomy

1) Hero: "Get a Cash Offer for Your House in 24 Hours" + phone-first CTA (click-to-call button).
2) 3 bullets: no repairs, no realtor, close in 14 days.
3) Address input form (single field).
4) 1 short testimonial.
5) Repeat phone-first CTA.
That's the whole page. Anything else hurts conversion.

Best fit for: Wholesalers with $2K+/mo budget who want deals fast and are willing to lose money for 60 days while they optimize.

CHAPTER 08

Referral networks — the highest-ROI channel

Referral networks are the wholesale marketing channel with the highest ROI, the highest lead quality, and the longest time-to-payoff. It takes 6–18 months to build. It pays dividends for 10+ years. Start on day one.

Who refers deals to wholesalers

Real estate agents whose listings expired unsold, or who have ugly-house sellers they can't help.
Estate attorneys handling probate and divorce.
Contractors called out to homes with owners who can't afford the repair.
Insurance adjusters after fire or flood claims.
Other wholesalers whose deal fell out of contract, or who work outside your ZIP codes.
Property managers firing tired landlord clients.
Bankruptcy trustees handling estate liquidations.

How to actually build the network

1. Show up to every real-estate meetup in your city. Introduce yourself in one sentence: *"I buy houses for cash in [ZIP codes], usually distressed or vacant, and I pay $500 for a referred deal that closes."*
2. Send handwritten thank-you notes to referrers monthly. Yes, physical mail.
3. Pay referral fees fast (within 3 days of closing). Reputation compounds.
4. Track everyone. Follow up quarterly with people who haven't sent you a deal yet.

The math

One good agent referrer sends 4–8 deals per year at your best profit margin (because the seller is pre-warm). Ten good referrers = 40–80 deals/year of the highest-quality leads you'll ever get. That's a full pipeline for one wholesaler.

Best fit for: Every wholesaler who plans to be in this business more than 12 months. Start today. Compounds quietly.

CHAPTER 09

The unit economics — CPL, conversion, ROI

Every channel in this playbook can be modeled with 4 numbers. Learn to track these 4 and you can compare apples-to-apples across channels.

The 4 numbers

CPL (Cost per Lead)	Total spend ÷ qualified leads
Conversion Rate (Lead → Deal)	Deals closed ÷ qualified leads
CPD (Cost per Deal)	Total spend ÷ deals closed
ROI Multiple	Average assignment fee ÷ CPD

A worked example — direct mail channel

You send $1,200 of postcards → get 20 qualified leads → close 1 deal for a $10K assignment fee.

CPL	$1,200 ÷ 20 = $60/lead
Conversion (lead → deal)	1 ÷ 20 = 5%
CPD (cost per deal)	$1,200 per deal
ROI multiple	$10,000 ÷ $1,200 = 8.3×

Benchmark targets — what's healthy

ROI multiple < 3× — the channel isn't working. Kill it or fix conversion.
ROI multiple 3× – 7× — the channel works but has room. Scale slowly, keep optimizing.
ROI multiple > 7× — the channel is a winner. Aggressively pour more budget in.

The trap: vanity metrics

"Number of leads" and "response rate" are the vanity metrics wholesalers use to feel good. They don't pay bills. **CPD and ROI multiple** are the only two numbers that matter. Track them monthly.

iSpeedToClose's Marketing dashboard tracks CPL, conversion, CPD, and ROI multiple automatically per channel. You'll see winners and losers within 60 days.

CHAPTER 10

Your marketing stack blueprint

Which 2–3 channels should YOU run? Depends on two things: how much cash you have to spend, and how much time you have to invest. Here are the four honest playbooks.

Playbook A — Zero budget, full-time available

Channels: Driving for Dollars + Referral Networks.
Time: 20+ hours/week driving, plus 2 hours/week on referral relationships.
Realistic timeline to first deal: 90–150 days.
Cost: $50–$150/mo for skip-trace and gas.

Playbook B — Small budget ($500–$1,500/mo)

Channels: Cold Calling (with skip-traced list) + Referral Networks.
Time: 15 hours/week dialing, 2 hours/week on referral outreach.
Realistic timeline to first deal: 45–90 days.
Cost: $200/mo skip-trace + $250/mo dialer + $200 buffer.

Playbook C — Medium budget ($1,500–$5,000/mo)

Channels: Direct Mail + Google Ads + Referral Networks.
Time: 10 hours/week managing campaigns, 3 hours/week on referrals.
Realistic timeline to first deal: 30–60 days.
Cost: $1,000 mail + $2,000 ads + $500 tools.

Playbook D — Full budget ($5,000+/mo)

Channels: Google Ads + SMS (with dialed-in compliance) + Direct Mail + Referral Networks + hire a VA.
Time: Reduces to 15 hours/week — you're managing, not doing.
Realistic timeline to first deal: 14–45 days.
Cost: Scale each channel until CPD stays under $2K.

Pick ONE playbook. Run it for 90 days without adding channels. Then add the next one. This is the whole game.

CHAPTER 11

The 90-day marketing ramp plan

You have this playbook. Here's exactly what to do with it over the next 90 days.

Week 1 — Pick

Read this playbook cover to cover twice. Pick ONE playbook from Chapter 10 based on your budget/time. Commit to it for 90 days in writing (yes, actually write it down).

Weeks 2–4 — Launch

Set up your first channel end-to-end. Skip-trace your first list, or drop your first mail, or launch your first ads campaign. Ship imperfect. Data beats perfection.

Weeks 5–8 — Volume

Run the channel **every scheduled day without exception**. Track CPL, response rate, and conversion. Do not switch channels. Do not optimize yet.

Weeks 9–10 — First review

Calculate your first CPD (cost per deal). If you don't have a deal yet, calculate cost per qualified lead. Ask: am I on-pace for a healthy CPD (<$2K per deal)?

Weeks 11–12 — Optimize OR pivot

If the channel is working (ROI > 3×) → scale. Add budget/hours. Do NOT add a second channel yet.
If the channel is failing (ROI < 2× at week 12) → look at conversion first. Is it your ads/mail (funnel top) or your follow-up (funnel bottom)? Fix ONE thing at a time.

Day 90 — Add channel #2

If channel #1 is producing at least 1 deal/month at healthy CPD, and only then, layer in channel #2 from your chosen playbook. Now you have a real marketing machine.

Realistic 90-day outcome: 0–2 closed deals, but a channel that predictably generates leads. That's the win. Everything after month 4 is scaling what already works.

ONE LAST THING

Consistency beats optimization. Always.

Every wholesaler you'll ever compete with has read the same YouTube videos, listened to the same podcasts, and bought the same courses. What separates the ones closing deals from the ones talking about closing deals is **consistency in one channel for long enough that the channel starts working**.

That's it. That's the whole competitive edge. The market doesn't reward the smartest marketer — it rewards the most patient one.

When you close your first channel-driven deal, send the numbers to **hello@ispeedtoclose.com**. I read every one and I'll send you a case-study analysis back.

— Tracy Perrin

Founder, iSpeedToClose

iSpeedToClose has every tool referenced in this playbook built in: DNC-compliant SMS + voice, a predictive dialer, skip-trace integrations, direct-mail queue, PPC landing pages, Apex 2.0 (AI voice agent for inbound), and a channel-by-channel ROI dashboard that tracks CPL and CPD in real time.

*Start a 14-day free trial at **ispeedtoclose.com** — no credit card required. Pick your marketing playbook during onboarding and we'll pre-configure the channels for you.*

KEEP READING

Your next reads

You just finished a piece of the playbook. Here are the next three books in the Library — each one hand-picked to build on what you just learned.

01

The Cold Call Script Book

40 seller-call scripts by lead source, plus voicemails.

40 pages · Read at https://ispeedtoclose.com/cold-call-scripts

02

The Cash Buyer Black Book

Build, vet, rank, and retain 30–50 verified cash buyers.

21 pages · Read at https://ispeedtoclose.com/blackbook

03

Wholesaling 101

From day one to your first check — the real playbook.

30 pages · Read at https://ispeedtoclose.com/wholesaling-101

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