

50 LITTLE GEMS

| To Grow your Business
in 2026

Practical, No-Nonsense Strategies

for UK SME Owners in 2026

Pricing & Profit

Marketing & Visibility

Sales & Conversion

Digital & Technology

Client Retention

Strategy & Mindset



I A N D I C K S O N

50 LITTLE GEMS TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

Practical, No-Nonsense Strategies for UK SME Owners in 2026

Let me be straight with you from the start.

This isn't a list of ideas that sound clever in a boardroom and then gather dust in a drawer. Every one of these 50 gems is something I've seen work, in real businesses, run by real people, many of them SME owners just like you, juggling the day-to-day while trying to build something worth having.

Growing a business in 2026 isn't about one big idea or a single piece of magic. It's about the compounding effect of small, consistent improvements across every area of your operation, your pricing, your marketing, your people, your systems, your mindset.

You don't need to do all 50 this week. Pick three. Implement them properly. Then come back for the next three. That's how momentum builds.

The businesses that grow aren't necessarily the ones with the biggest budgets or the cleverest ideas. They're the ones that actually do the things they know they should be doing.

So, my advice right now is.... Get started today!



MONEY, PRICING & PROFIT

1. Audit Your Prices, Right Now

Most SME owners haven't reviewed their pricing in over a year. In 2026, with costs still elevated, a 5–10% increase is often absorbed without a single complaint. You won't know until you try. Start there.

2. Introduce Tiered Pricing

Good, Better, Best. Give people a choice and most will pick the middle option, which you've priced for exactly that. It lifts your average transaction value without a single extra conversation.

3. Know Your Numbers by Heart

Your breakeven figure, your cost per lead, your average order value. Not roughly... precisely. If you don't know them, you're flying blind. Fifteen minutes a week fixes this.

4. Offer Flexible Payment Terms

Buy Now Pay Later, monthly instalments, staged payments. Removing the upfront financial hurdle unlocks buyers who want what you sell but hesitate at the price. It costs you nothing to offer it.

5. Cancel Your 'Vampire' Subscriptions

Log into your business bank account today and look for software you haven't opened in 90 days. Cancel it. Most business owners waste £200–£500 a month on forgotten tools.

6. Prioritise Customer Lifetime Value Over One-Off Sales

It costs roughly seven times more to win a new client than to keep one. Do you have a retention strategy? A check-in process? A reason for clients to stay? If not, build one before chasing new leads.

7. Set Up Upsells at the Point of Purchase

When someone says yes, they're already in buying mode. That's the best moment to offer the upgrade, the add-on, or the premium version. Most businesses miss this completely.



MARKETING & VISIBILITY

8. Be Video-First in Your Marketing

Short-form video isn't a trend; it's the primary way people consume content in 2026. You don't need a studio or a camera crew. A phone, decent light, and something genuinely useful to say. That's it.

9. Update Your Google Business Profile

If your hours, photos, or services are out of date, you're losing warm leads to a competitor who bothered to keep theirs current. Twenty minutes. Do it this week.

10. Build a Proper LinkedIn Presence

LinkedIn is still the number one B2B platform in the UK. Posting once a week about something you genuinely know about builds more trust than any paid ad. Start there.

11. Create a Lead Magnet That's Actually Useful

Give something away, a checklist, a guide, a short video series, in exchange for an email address. Not fluffy content, something people genuinely want. ***This document is a good example of exactly that.***

12. Repurpose Everything

One blog post becomes five LinkedIn posts, a short video, an email, a podcast clip. You're not creating new content; you're getting more mileage from what you've already built. Work smarter.

13. Run Retargeting Ads

If someone visits your website but doesn't enquire, they're not gone, they're just not ready yet. Retargeting ads keep your name in front of warm prospects for pennies. Low cost, high return.

14. Use QR Codes on All Print Materials

Every leaflet, business card, and poster should link directly to a relevant landing page. If someone picks up your printed material, make it effortless for them to take the next step.

15. Prepare Your Marketing Calendar in Advance

Reactive marketing is expensive and stressful. Know your seasonal peaks, plan your campaigns two months out, and stop scrambling at the last minute. Consistency beats bursts every time.

16. Highlight Your Social Responsibility

Sustainability, community involvement, charitable giving, UK consumers, especially under 45, actively favour brands that stand for something. If you do it, talk about it.



SALES & CONVERSION

17. Master the Follow-Up

Research consistently shows that 80% of sales happen after the fifth contact. Most SMEs give up after two. Build a follow-up sequence and stick to it. The money is in the follow-through.

18. Analyse Why You're Losing Deals

Track your win/loss ratio and ask the uncomfortable question: why are people saying no? Is it price? Trust? Timing? You can't fix a leak you haven't found.

19. Shorten Your Sales Cycle

Every unnecessary step between enquiry and purchase costs you conversions. Map your sales process end-to-end and cut anything that doesn't move the prospect forward. Friction kills deals.

20. Request Video Testimonials

Written reviews are fine. Video testimonials are powerful. A thirty-second clip of a happy client saying what changed for them is worth more than a page of copy. Ask for them — most clients are happy to oblige.

21. Segment Your Email Marketing

Sending the same email to everyone on your list is like using the same prescription for every patient. Segment by interest, behaviour, or buying stage and watch your open rates climb.

22. A/B Test Your Landing Pages

Change one headline. See which version converts better. Then test another element. Small, systematic improvements compound over time into significant revenue gains. It's science, not guesswork.

23. Use 'Silent' Selling

Your email signature, your out-of-office message, your social media bio, each one is a free advertising slot. Keep them updated with your current offer or a link to book a call.

24. Set Up Abandoned Enquiry Automations

Someone fills in half your contact form and leaves. Someone clicks 'add to basket' and disappears. An automated follow-up email sent within the hour recovers a meaningful percentage of that lost revenue.

25. Leverage User-Generated Content

Ask your clients to share their wins. A photo, a post, a quick message about what improved. This is social proof in the most credible format possible, from the people who've actually used you.



DIGITAL & TECHNOLOGY

26. Use AI for Customer Service and Admin

AI-powered chat tools can handle FAQs, booking, and routine enquiries around the clock. This frees your team to do the work that actually requires a human being. Rather than thinking of AI as an enemy here, use it as a tool to free you up for more important tasks.

27. Improve Your Website Speed

A one-second delay in page load time drops conversions by around 7%. Run a free speed test today on Google PageSpeed Insights. Fix what it finds. Your website is your best salesperson, keep it sharp.

28. Make Your Mobile Experience Non-Negotiable

Over 80% of your website traffic is on a smartphone. If your site is clunky on mobile, you're losing leads every single day. Test it yourself. What do you find?

29. Optimise for Voice Search

People ask questions out loud differently to how they type them. Write content that answers real questions naturally. 'What's the best business coach near me?' needs to find you.

30. Invest in Cyber Security

A cyber breach doesn't just cost money, it costs client trust, and that's harder to recover. Two-factor authentication, regular software updates, and a basic security audit are not optional in 2026.

31. Refresh Your Website Design

A dated website tells prospects you're behind the times before they've read a word. Clean, modern, fast, and clear. If yours was built before 2022 and hasn't been touched, it's time.

32. Automate Your Social Media Posting

Consistency matters more than brilliance on social media. Schedule a week's content in one sitting using a scheduling tool. You stay present without being glued to your phone.

CLIENTS & RETENTION

33. Identify Your Top 20% of Clients

Pareto's Law applies in almost every business, 20% of your clients generate around 80% of your revenue. Know exactly who they are. Understand what they have in common. Then go find ten more just like them.

34. Run a Customer Survey

Ask your clients what they actually want, what they value most, and what they'd love you to improve. Most won't tell you unless you ask. The answers are pure gold for your strategy.

35. Create an FAQ Page That Actually Earns Its Keep

The best FAQ pages reduce support volume and convert uncertain prospects. List the real objections and answer them honestly. Done well, this page pays for itself every single month.

36. Host a Client Appreciation Webinar

Give your existing clients something valuable, an exclusive session, early access, inside knowledge. Loyalty is built through attention. Show them you remember they exist outside of invoice time.

37. Implement a Referral Reward Programme

Your happiest clients know other people just like them. Give them a genuine reason to make an introduction. A referral from a trusted source is worth ten cold leads. Build the system.

38. Run a Flash Offer for Lapsed Clients

Anyone who bought from you over six months ago and hasn't been back is a warm prospect, not a cold one. A targeted, time-limited offer gets a significant number of them back. Don't leave them sitting idle.

39. Promote Newsletter Sign-Ups Consistently

Your email list is an asset you own, unlike social media followers. Use a sticky bar or pop-up on your site to capture email addresses before visitors leave. Build the list every single day.



STRATEGY, LEADERSHIP & MINDSET

40. Revisit Your 'Why'

Not in a fluffy sense, in a practical one. Do your 2026 business goals still connect to why you started? If you've drifted, the decisions you make will feel harder and less certain than they should.

41. Do a Yearly Competitor Deep-Dive

Not to copy them, to find your edge. What are they doing well? What gap are they leaving? Competitive awareness sharpens your own positioning. Don't skip it.

42. Focus on Employee Retention, Not Just Recruitment

Hiring is expensive. Training takes time. Keeping the right people engaged, developed, and fairly rewarded is almost always a better investment than replacing them. Check in. Listen. Act.

43. Gamify Your Team KPIs

Targets on a spreadsheet are forgettable. Leaderboards, small incentives, team challenges, these make the numbers feel real and create a culture of forward momentum. Engagement drives performance.

44. Master Your 90-Day Cash Flow Forecast

Not once a year, quarterly, with real-time data. Knowing what's coming in the next 90 days gives you the confidence to invest or the warning to protect. This one habit changes everything.

45. Invest in Professional Photography

Your personal brand matters. In 2026, people buy from people. A set of high-quality photos of you and your team, your workspace, your product, these lift every piece of marketing you produce.

46. Review Your Brand Voice

Is your messaging consistent across your website, your social posts, your emails, your proposals? Inconsistency erodes trust. Pick a tone, define it, and stick to it. Clarity builds credibility.

47. Offer Value With a Local Networking Event

Host something. Be the connector in your community. The person who brings people together is always remembered. Events don't need to be big, they need to be useful.

48. Simplify Your Onboarding Process

Every unnecessary step between 'yes' and 'we're up and running' introduces doubt and friction. Map your client onboarding. Cut what doesn't serve the client. A smooth start sets the tone for everything.

49. Collaborate With Non-Competing Businesses

Find two or three businesses who serve the same client as you but don't compete. Build genuine referral relationships. Some of the best client introductions come from this kind of trusted partnership.

50. Get a Business Coach

You're reading this guide because you want to grow. A coach gives you something that no PDF can, honest challenge, external perspective, and someone in your corner who isn't on your payroll. The ROI is consistently the best investment a business owner makes. (Yes, maybe biased in my opinion, and after 23+ years I feel OK about that.)

READY TO PUT THESE INTO ACTION?

Reading this was the easy part. Implementing it is where the magic happens.

If you want someone in your corner who'll tell you the truth, help you cut through the noise, and actually hold you accountable, then let's have a conversation.

This is a free 30-minute Business Clarity Call. No pitch. No pressure. Just a straight conversation about what's actually going on in your business, and what you can do about it.

BOOK YOUR FREE CLARITY CALL

www.ian dickson.co.uk/contact





YOU'VE READ THE GEMS

Now let's put them to work in **your** business.

About Ian Dickson

Ian is one of the UK's most trusted business advisors, with over 23 years of hands-on experience helping SME owners get clear, get moving, and build businesses that actually work for them.

He works with business owners across the UK and internationally, delivering 1:2:1 coaching, group programmes, and leadership training that produces real, measurable results.



"You can't help but leave your session recharged and motivated. Ian always finds a way to help you find a solution."

— **Jane Rudd, Business Owner**

23 + Years Experience
100's SME's Helped
UK & Global Reach

No pitch. No pressure. No templates. Just a straight conversation about what's actually going on in your business, and what to do about it.

✓ **Identify your biggest growth lever right now**

✓ **Get clarity on your priorities — cut through the noise**

✓ **Leave with 2–3 actions you can take immediately**

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