AgencyGod

THE FREE PLAYBOOK

● AGENCY FINANCE · OWNER PAY · RUNWAY

The Agency Cash Flow Playbook

You did **$40K last month** and there is nothing in the bank. Money came in, money went out, and you cannot say where it went or what is yours to keep. This is the one-page money system that pays you first, sets taxes aside on autopilot, and keeps 90+ days of payroll in the account - the same discipline that puts top agencies at 25 to 32% net margin while the average shop keeps 13 cents on the dollar.

- The 5-number agency P&L
- Profit First allocation by revenue band
- The tax set-aside rule
- One-line runway math
- The AR collections cadence + scripts
- The 7-metric money dashboard

A playbook from **AgencyGod**
agencygod.com

$10K GTD

The $10,000 Guarantee
You get the result or you get paid $10,000

YOU ARE NOT BROKE. YOU ARE DISORGANIZED.

"I did $40K last month and there is nothing in the bank."

You are scared to check your balance before payroll runs on the 1st. You had a $60K month and a $9K month back to back, and you genuinely do not know if you can pay yourself this month.

Tax season hits and you scramble to find $30K you should have set aside but spent on payroll. Two clients owe you five figures, they keep saying "next week," and meanwhile you front their work out of your own pocket. You cannot tell if you are actually profitable or just moving money fast enough to stay alive. The problem is almost never that you do not make enough. It is that you run the money on instinct and hope.

THE REAL NUMBER

The average agency keeps just **13 cents of every dollar** as net profit, and billable utilization fell below 70% for the first time in 2025. The top agencies are not charging triple. They run the same revenue through a system that takes profit and taxes **off the top, before a dime gets spent.** That single habit is the gap between a $40K month that disappears and a $40K month that pays you.

You cannot out-earn a money system you do not have. Revenue hides the leak. Cash exposes it.

This playbook is a do-it-this-weekend money operating system. Open four bank accounts, fill in seven numbers, set two transfer dates a month, and run the collections cadence on every late invoice. Every page ends in an action, not a concept. Here is what the discipline is worth.

13¢
Net profit the average agency keeps per dollar of revenue
Industry benchmark, 2025 agency profitability data

25-32%
Net margin the top-tier agencies run on the same revenue
Top-quartile agency margin benchmark, 2025

<70%
Billable utilization fell below 70% for the first time in 2025
2025 agency utilization benchmark

THE 5-NUMBER AGENCY P&L

Your whole P&L is five lines. Most owners cannot name three.

Stop guessing. Every healthy agency P&L reads top to bottom in five numbers, each with a benchmark gate next to it. Here is a filled-in $40K/month example so you see the math, then the gate you have to clear on each line.

The Agency P&L — Worked example · **$40,000/mo** agency

#	Line	Amount	Gate
1	**Revenue** All client cash collected this month	**$40,000**	The top line. **It is not your money** until profit and tax are pulled off it.
2	**Cost of Delivery** People + contractors doing the client work	**-$18,000**	Only the hands on client work. TARGET UNDER 50%
	Delivery Margin Revenue minus cost of delivery = 55%	**$22,000**	**The gate that matters most.** AIM 50%+ (70%+ PER PROJECT)
3	**Overhead** Rent, tools, admin, your own non-billable time	**-$11,000**	Everything not touching client work. KEEP AT OR UNDER 30%
	Net Profit What is actually yours = 27.5% margin	**$11,000**	**Healthy is 15 to 20%.** Top tier runs 25 to 32%.

Delivery margin is the engine

If line 2 eats more than half your revenue, **no amount of sales fixes it.** Price up or trim the cost of delivery first.

Overhead is the silent killer

Tool sprawl and your own admin time live here. **Cap it at 30%** of adjusted gross income or it swallows the margin.

Net is the only score

Not revenue. Not "we're busy." **15 to 20% net is healthy; 25 to 32% is elite.** The average agency limps in at 13%.

> **A $40K month at 13% net pays you $5,200. The exact same month run at 27% pays you $11,000. Same clients. Same work. Twice the take-home.**

Benchmark gates reflect common agency-finance standards: 50%+ delivery margin, overhead at or under 30% of AGI, 15-20% net (healthy) and 25-32% (top tier). The average agency keeps roughly 13% net profit. Figures are targets, not guarantees; your numbers depend on pricing, mix, and cost structure.

THE PROFIT FIRST ALLOCATION

Stop paying yourself last. Take profit off the top, on a schedule.

You are the highest-paid person on paper and the lowest-paid in real life, because you pay everyone before you pay yourself. Flip it. Every dollar that lands gets split by a fixed percentage **the moment it arrives**, by revenue band. Find your row, then steal these splits.

ANNUAL REVENUE BAND	PROFIT	OWNER PAY	TAX	OPEX
Under $250K Solo / first hire ◂ start here	**5%**	50%	15%	30%
$250K - $500K Small team forming	**10%**	35%	15%	40%
$500K - $1M Real team, real overhead	**15%**	20%	15%	50%
$1M - $5M Scaling, hiring ahead	**20%**	10%	15%	55%

Open four bank accounts this weekend (Relay and Mercury both let you spin up sub-accounts free). Money lands in OpEx, then on the **10th and 25th** of every month you move the percentages out into the other three. Profit and Tax never get spent. Owner Pay is your salary, fixed and on a date.

Profit
5%
Untouchable. Pays a quarterly bonus to you.

Owner Pay
50%
Your real salary, on the 10th and 25th.

Tax
15%
Never your money. The IRS is a silent partner.

OpEx
30%
Runs the agency. Everything lands here first.

THE ONE MOVE THAT MAKES IT STICK

Do not jump straight to the target percentage. **Start Profit at 1% and raise it 1 to 2 points a quarter.** You will not feel a 1% pull, but in a year you have a real profit account and the agency adjusted around it without a single panicked month. The percentage is a muscle you train, not force.

Allocation framework adapted from Mike Michalowicz's Profit First. Percentages are starting points to tailor to your cost structure, not tax advice. Named tools are examples, not endorsements.

THE TAX SET-ASIDE RULE

The IRS is a silent partner. Pay them off the top or they take it later.

Tax season should never be a scramble for $30K you already spent on payroll. The rule is one sentence, and it runs automatically out of the Tax account you opened on page 4.

THE RULE

Sweep 25 to 30% of profit into the Tax account every time money lands. Never touch it.

It is not your money. It was never your money. Treat the Tax account like it belongs to someone else, because it does.

Then pay quarterly so the bill never stacks up. Mark these four federal estimated-tax dates and pay from the Tax account on each. The money is already sitting there waiting.

- [ ] **April 15** Q1
  Estimate for Jan through Mar income. Pay from the Tax account, not OpEx.
- [ ] **June 15** Q2
  Apr through May. The short quarter people forget, then overpay to catch up later.
- [ ] **September 15** Q3
  Jun through Aug. Reconcile against a strong summer before you are tempted to spend it.
- [ ] **January 15** Q4
  Sep through Dec of the prior year. Close the year clean, with no April surprise.

WHY THIS ONE HABIT SAVES THE BUSINESS

The owner who scrambles for tax money in April is the owner who spent the government's money on payroll and now has to claw it back. The sweep makes that impossible. **Money you never had in your operating account is money you cannot accidentally spend.** Set the percentage once, let it run, and April becomes a non-event.

Federal estimated-tax dates shift when they fall on a weekend or holiday; confirm the exact deadline each year. The set-aside percentage depends on your entity type, bracket, and state. This is general information, not tax advice. Confirm your number with a qualified accountant.

RUNWAY MATH IN ONE LINE

How many months can you survive if every client canceled tomorrow?

Most owners cannot answer this, which is exactly why a single slow month feels like a crisis. It is one division problem. Run it today, then watch it on the dashboard every month.

THE FORMULA

Runway (months) =

cash on hand ÷ average monthly operating expenses

Cash across all four accounts, divided by what it costs to run the agency for one month. That number is your survival window.

<1 mo

DANGER

One slow invoice from missing payroll. Fix collections and cut OpEx this week.

1 - 3 mo

OKAY

Breathing room, not safety. Build toward three months minimum, then push higher.

3 - 6 mo

SAFE

The target. You can lose a client or make a hire without a panic month.

Worked example. You have $44,000 across your accounts and the agency costs $16,000 a month to run. $44,000 ÷ $16,000 = **2.75 months** of runway. You are in the "okay" band, one good collections month away from "safe." Now you know exactly how hard to push the page-7 cadence.

THE NUMBER THAT PREDICTS SURVIVAL

Only **31% of 7-figure agencies** clear six months of runway, while **73% of 8-figure agencies** do. Runway is the cleanest line between the agencies that ride out a bad quarter and the ones that fold during it. The Profit account on page 4 is what quietly builds this. Every point of profit you set aside is another day you can survive without a single new client.

Runway benchmarks by revenue tier: ~31% of 7-figure and ~73% of 8-figure agencies clear six months. Figures are industry estimates and directional, not guarantees. Your runway depends on cash position, fixed costs, and revenue stability.

THE AR & COLLECTIONS SYSTEM

Two clients owe you five figures. "Next week" is not a payment plan.

You are fronting client work out of your own pocket because money you earned is stuck in someone else's account. Fix the terms first, then run the same cadence on every late invoice. The structure does the chasing so you do not have to feel like a debt collector.

- [ ] **50% deposit upfront** TERMS
  No deposit, no work starts. Half the invoice is collected before you touch the account.
- [ ] **Net 15, not Net 30** TERMS
  Shorter terms get you paid faster with zero downside. Default to 15 days on every invoice.
- [ ] **Auto-charge a card on file** TERMS
  Retainers run on autopay. The best AR system is the invoice that pays itself.

DAY 0

Invoice goes out, terms restated

SAME DAY WORK IS DELIVERED

Send it the moment the work ships. **"Invoice #1042 attached, due Friday the 15th. Card on file will run automatically that morning."**

DAY 3

The soft "did this land?" nudge

FRIENDLY, ASSUMES THE BEST

"Quick one - did invoice #1042 land okay on your end? Just confirming it is queued for this week's run."

DAY 16

The firm reminder (one day late)

DIRECT, NO APOLOGY

"Invoice #1042 was due yesterday and is now past terms. Can you confirm it goes out today? Happy to resend if it slipped."

DAY 25

The pause-work email

CONSEQUENCES, CALMLY STATED

"Heads up - per our agreement, work pauses on accounts past 21 days. I would rather keep the momentum, so can we clear #1042 by Friday?"

DAY 30

The phone call

NOT AN EMAIL. A CALL.

"Hey [name], I do not want this to become a thing between us. Invoice #1042 is 30 days out. What do we need to do to close it today?"

Automated payment reminders collect roughly 12 to 18 days faster than ad-hoc chasing. Put the "work pauses past 21 days" clause in your engagement agreement so it is a contract term. Scripts are templates; adapt the tone to each client.

THE COLLECTIONS SWIPE FILE

The exact words for the awkward "where's my money" conversation. Fill the blanks. Send.

You freeze on the late-invoice email because you do not want to sound desperate or burn the relationship. These three handle the hard cases without either. Copy them, swap the red blanks, hit send.

1 The "I'll pay next week" loop-breaker

When they keep promising and nothing arrives

> "Hey [name], I appreciate you keeping me posted. To get this off both our plates, I am going to run the card on file for invoice [#1042] on [Thursday] unless I hear otherwise. If there is a cash-timing issue on your end, tell me and we will split it into two payments. I would just rather solve it than chase it."

2 The deposit-before-work line

Set it at the start so you never front a job again

> "Before we kick off, here is how billing works on my end: [50%] deposit to lock your start date, balance auto-charged Net [15] from the card on file. Everyone I work with runs on this, it keeps us both clean. Want me to send the deposit invoice now so we can start [Monday]?"

3 The price-increase notice

When you are charging two-year-old rates for triple the work

> "Quick heads up [name]. Starting [next month] your retainer moves from [$2,500] to [$3,200]. The scope has grown a lot since we set the original number, and this keeps the level of attention you are used to. Everything stays exactly as it is on your end. The new rate hits the [1st] invoice."

The owner who states terms plainly gets paid. The one who apologizes for asking gets strung along. **You earned the money. Collect it like you did.**

THE MONTHLY MONEY DASHBOARD

Seven numbers. The 1st of every month. Twenty minutes.

This is the page that replaces the fear of opening your bank account. On the 1st of each month, fill these seven numbers in a single Google Sheet. If all seven are green, you are running a real business. If one is red, you found the leak before it found you.

1 · CASH ON HAND

_$____

Total across all four accounts. The number behind every other decision.

2 · RUNWAY MONTHS

_____

Target 3–6. Cash ÷ monthly OpEx. Under 1 is danger.

3 · DELIVERY MARGIN %

_____%

Target 50%+. Revenue minus the cost of delivery.

4 · NET MARGIN %

_____%

Target 15–20%. The only number that is truly yours.

5 · AR OVER 30 DAYS

_$____

Money owed past 30 days. Run the page-7 cadence on every dollar.

6 · REVENUE / EMPLOYEE

_$____

Target ~$150K at 7 figures. Revenue ÷ headcount.

7 · OWNER PAY TAKEN THIS MONTH

_$____

The number this whole playbook exists to protect. If it is zero, the system is not running yet. Fix that first.

YOUR $0 TOOL STACK

QuickBooks or Xero for the P&L (lines 3 and 4). **Relay or Mercury** for the four Profit First accounts and line 1. **A single Google Sheet** for these seven numbers, reviewed the 1st of every month with your morning coffee. That is the entire system. You do not need an 11th subscription. You need twenty minutes and the discipline to look.

Revenue-per-employee target of ~$150K reflects 7-figure agency benchmarks; smaller shops run lower. Targets are directional, not guarantees. Named tools are common examples for the job, not endorsements or affiliate placements.

THE WEEKEND SETUP CHECKLIST

The whole system, live in one weekend.

A money system you read and never set up is worth nothing. Here is the exact build order. Each step is short. By Sunday night the accounts are open, the percentages are set, and the first transfer is scheduled. Then it runs on rails.

- [ ] **1 · Open four bank accounts** 15 MIN
  Profit, Owner Pay, Tax, OpEx. Relay or Mercury spin up sub-accounts in minutes. **OpEx is your main account where money lands.**

- [ ] **2 · Set your allocation percentages** 5 MIN
  Use your revenue-band row from page 4. **Start Profit at 1%** if the target feels scary. You will raise it next quarter.

- [ ] **3 · Schedule the 10th and 25th transfers** 10 MIN
  Two recurring transfer reminders, or automate the splits if your bank allows. **Money moves on those two dates, no exceptions.**

- [ ] **4 · Turn on the tax sweep** 5 MIN
  25 to 30% of profit into Tax every time cash lands. **Add the four quarterly dates to your calendar** from page 5.

- [ ] **5 · Rewrite your invoice terms** 20 MIN
  50% deposit, Net 15, card on file. **Add the "work pauses past 21 days" clause** to your standard agreement so the page-7 cadence has teeth.

- [ ] **6 · Build the 7-number dashboard sheet** 20 MIN
  One tab, seven rows from page 8, a column per month. **Set a recurring reminder for the 1st.** Fill it in, every month, forever.

TOTAL TIME: UNDER 90 MINUTES

That is the entire build. Ninety minutes this weekend buys you a year of never wondering where the money went, never scrambling for tax money in April, and never being scared to look at your balance before payroll. **The owners who keep 27% net are not smarter than you. They did these six steps. You can do them by Sunday.**

THE FIVE CASH LEAKS

A $40K month with five leaks still ends at zero.

You can run every page in this playbook and still come up empty if these five leaks are open. Each one is invisible on the revenue line and brutal on the cash line. Find yours and plug it this month.

- [ ] **Scope creep nobody bills for** MARGIN LEAK
  "Can you also just add this real quick" turns a profitable project into break-even. **Every change order gets a number before it gets done.** Track scope-change revenue as its own line.

- [ ] **Paying yourself last** THE BIG ONE
  You pay the team, the tools, the contractors, then whatever is left is "yours," which is usually nothing. **Owner Pay is a fixed transfer on a date, not a leftover.**

- [ ] **Tool sprawl in overhead** OVERHEAD LEAK
  Eleven subscriptions and you cannot say what half of them do. **Cancel anything unused for 30 days.** A two-person shop should not have a software bill bigger than rent.

- [ ] **Two-year-old retainer rates** PRICING LEAK
  Charging $2,500 you quoted in 2024 for triple the work today. **Raise prices on renewal using the page-8 script.** The fear of them walking costs you more than the raise.

- [ ] **Cash stuck in AR** COLLECTIONS LEAK
  Five figures sitting in clients' accounts while you front their work. **Run the day 0 to 30 cadence on every invoice** and the cash comes home 12 to 18 days sooner.

THE UNCOMFORTABLE MATH

Each leak alone looks small. Stacked, they are the entire gap between 13% net and 27% net. A $480K/year agency that closes these five does not work harder. It just **keeps an extra $67,000** it was already earning and quietly losing. The money is already in the building. Stop letting it leak out the back.

THE PROOF

This is not bookkeeping. It is the difference between surviving and selling out.

When running the money feels like admin you do not have time for, that is the wrong frame. The data says the money system is the business. Here is what it is worth.

13¢ → 27¢

Net per dollar, average vs disciplined agency

Same revenue, twice the take-home, from running money on a system. 2025 agency benchmark.

73%

Of 8-figure agencies clear 6 months of runway

Versus only 31% of 7-figure agencies. Runway tracks who survives a bad quarter.

12-18

Days faster you collect with an automated AR cadence

A fixed day 0-to-30 sequence pulls cash home weeks sooner. AR automation benchmark.

<70%

Billable utilization fell below 70% for the first time in 2025. Less of your team's time is billable, which means delivery margin is under more pressure than ever. The P&L on page 3 is how you catch it.

2025 agency utilization benchmark

25-32%

net margin is what top-tier agencies run, against a **13% average.** The gap is not talent or pricing. It is taking profit and tax off the top, before a dollar gets spent.

Top-quartile agency margin benchmark, 2025

3-6 mo

runway is the survival band. Under one month, you are one slow invoice from missing payroll. Three to six, you can lose a client and make a hire without a panic month.

Agency runway benchmark by revenue tier

READ IT ONE MORE TIME

You can keep doing $40K months that vanish, scrambling for tax money in April, and bracing yourself before every payroll run. Or you can spend **one weekend** opening four accounts, setting four percentages, and building one seven-number sheet, and never wonder where the money went again. **The revenue is already there. This playbook just makes it stick to you.**

YOUR NEXT MOVE

You can run the money.
We can build the machine that fills the accounts.

A money system protects every dollar that comes in. But it only matters if the dollars keep coming, and right now your pipeline is feast or famine: a $60K month, then a $9K month, because the clients are not predictable. That is the chain we build and run **with you**: booked calls that show, a discovery that closes, retention that keeps the retainers paying, all backed by the $10,000 guarantee.

Every month you run on instinct is a month the leak wins. **Apply to AgencyGod now.** We onboard only a handful of agencies a month, and every spot comes with the $10,000 guarantee.

$10K GTD You get the result or you get paid **$10,000**

Apply to AgencyGod →

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