

Marketing for SaaS — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a running SaaS marketing operation built on your own numbers. You will calculate your real metrics, pick and design a trial model, define an activation moment and the onboarding that drives it, build a content and review moat, and stand up retention and expansion campaigns. Work through one section per course module, then use the action plan and the editable templates to keep your funnel measurable and your churn under control.

The SaaS Metrics That Decide Where You Spend

Calculate your core recurring-revenue metrics so every later acquisition, activation and retention decision rests on real unit economics.

Exercise: Calculate your unit economics from scratch

Pull the last full quarter of data and work out your true numbers by hand. Use fully loaded costs for CAC (salaries, tools, agency, content, not just ad spend) and put monthly churn in the denominator for LTV. Do not pre-fill the answers, the point is to compute them.

- What is your current MRR, broken into new, expansion, contraction and churned for the period?

- What is your fully loaded CAC (total sales-and-marketing spend divided by new customers won)?

- What is your LTV using average revenue per account times gross margin, divided by monthly churn rate?

- What is your LTV-to-CAC ratio, and is it below 1, around 2-3, or above 5, and what does that imply you should do?

Worksheet: SaaS metrics scorecard

Record your headline metrics and the inputs behind them so anyone can see how each was derived. Fill the input cells; leave the derived ratios for you to compute.

Monetisation shape (self-serve / sales-assisted / enterprise)

Current MRR and ARR (MRR x 12)

Average revenue per account per month

Gross margin %

Monthly logo churn % and monthly revenue churn %

Fully loaded CAC and what costs are included

LTV (computed) and LTV:CAC ratio (computed)

CAC payback period in months (computed)

Net revenue retention % over the last 12 months (computed)

Checklist: Metrics readiness check

- CAC includes salaries, tools, agency and content, not only ad spend
- MRR is split into new, expansion, contraction and churned movements
- LTV uses monthly churn in the denominator, not a guessed lifespan
- LTV-to-CAC ratio is known and judged against the ~3:1 benchmark
- CAC payback period is known and compared to the 12-month SMB benchmark
- Net revenue retention is calculated and known to be above or below 100%
- Logo churn and revenue churn are tracked separately

Acquisition: Free Trials, Freemium and the Top of the Funnel

Choose the trial model your time-to-value can support, pick channels your price point can afford, and reduce friction at signup.

Exercise: Choose your model and map time-to-value

Be honest about how long a brand-new user takes to experience real value, then choose the model that fits. Decide the credit-card question deliberately based on whether you optimise for conversion efficiency or top-of-funnel reach.

- How many minutes, hours or days does it realistically take a new user to reach first value (your time-to-value)?
- Given that, which model fits: free trial (what length?), freemium (what limits?), or reverse trial?
- Will you require a credit card to start, and what is the trade-off you are accepting (efficiency vs reach)?
- Which one or two acquisition channels will you focus on first, and can your average revenue per customer afford their CAC?

Worksheet: Acquisition model and channel plan

Document the model and channel decisions so they can be revisited as the funnel matures. Complete each field for your product.

Chosen model (free trial / freemium / reverse trial) and why it fits your time-to-value

Trial length or free-tier limits (seats / usage / features)

Credit card required at signup? (Y/N) and the reasoning

Primary channel #1 and why it suits your price point

Primary channel #2 and why it suits your price point

Where product-led virality could be designed in (shared artifacts, invites, badge)

Estimated or target CAC for each channel vs the CAC ceiling your ARPA allows

Worksheet: Trial signup landing-page spec

Specify the page and form that turns a visitor into a trial user. Keep the form to the minimum fields needed to create the account.

Headline: what the product does and who it is for

Product visual used (screenshot / demo video / interactive tour)

Social proof shown (logos / G2 or Capterra rating / user count)

Primary CTA text and how many times it repeats on the page

Signup fields requested (list each) and whether SSO is offered

Qualifying questions deferred to in-app onboarding (list them)

Reassurance shown beside the button (no card / free for N days)

Checklist: Acquisition launch checklist

- The trial model matches the product's real time-to-value
- Channels chosen are affordable given average revenue per customer
- Effort is focused on one or two channels, not spread across many
- A product-led virality mechanism has been considered or designed in
- The landing page leads with a plain-language value headline and shows the product
- The signup form asks only for fields needed to create the account, with SSO offered
- Qualifying questions are deferred to in-app onboarding, not the signup gate

Activation: Onboarding That Turns Trials Into Paying Customers

Define a measurable activation moment, build in-app onboarding that drives users to it, and pace the trial with behaviour-based email.

Exercise: Define your activation moment from your own data

Compare retained, paying customers against churned trials and find the early action that separates them. Write it as a measurable event and confirm it is instrumented in your analytics.

- What early action did your retained customers take that churned trial users did not?

- Written as a measurable event, what is your activation definition (e.g. connected an integration AND created one item in the first session)?

- What is your current activation rate (share of signups who reach that event), and is it instrumented in your product analytics?

- What is the single biggest step or delay between signup and activation you could remove to shorten time-to-value?

Worksheet: In-app onboarding flow design

Design the in-product path from blank screen to activation. Specify each element so it can be built in a tool like Appcues, Pendo or Userpilot.

Goal question asked at start (what is the user here to do)

Setup checklist steps to first value (in order)

Empty-state solution (templates / sample data / single next action)

Tooltips or product-tour moments and where they appear

Personalised paths by user type or goal (list them)

The exact activation event onboarding is driving toward

What is intentionally hidden until later (progressive disclosure)

Worksheet: Trial lifecycle email sequence

Map the behaviour-based trial emails. Branch the sequence on whether the user has activated, not just on the trial day.

Day 0 welcome: the single first action it points to

Activation nudge (not-yet-activated path): the one step it drives

Mid-trial value email (activated path): the feature or use case shown

Re-engagement trigger: what inactivity fires it and the message

Trial-ending email (2-3 days before): value recap + upgrade path

Post-expiry win-back: extension / demo / downgrade offered

Tool sending these triggered emails (Customer.io / Intercom / HubSpot / Braze)

Checklist: Activation and onboarding checklist

- Activation is defined as a specific, measurable event tied to retention
- Activation rate is instrumented and visible in product analytics
- Onboarding includes a setup checklist that drives toward activation
- Empty states offer templates or sample data, never a blank screen
- Onboarding is personalised by a goal question asked at signup
- Trial emails branch on activated vs not-yet-activated, not only on the day

[] A trial-ending email and an in-app upgrade prompt both fire near expiry

The Moat: Content, Reviews and Retention

Build compounding advantages, ranking content, review-site authority, and retention and expansion campaigns that lift net revenue retention above 100%.

Exercise: Plan your bottom-of-funnel content moat

Prioritise the content closest to a purchase decision. List the comparison, alternatives, use-case and integration pages your buyers are actively searching for, and group them into a topic cluster.

- Which competitor comparison and alternatives pages should you publish (Yourproduct vs X, Best X alternatives)?

- What use-case or industry pages match how your buyers actually search for a fit?

- Do you have many integrations, templates or use cases that could justify a programmatic SEO approach? Which dataset?

- What is the central pillar topic, and which supporting articles will cluster around it?

Worksheet: Review-site (G2 / Capterra) program plan

Plan how you will earn and use reviews on the sites where your buyers decide. Record your current position and your collection mechanics.

Current review count and average rating on G2 / Capterra / TrustRadius

Top competitor's review count and rating for comparison

Trigger moment for the review ask (milestone / high NPS or CSAT)

Incentive offered, if any (must be offered for any review, not only positive)

Collection method (G2/Capterra review program, direct link)

Where badges and ratings will be displayed (homepage / pricing / landing pages)

Who responds to critical reviews and how quickly

Worksheet: Churn and expansion campaign map

Map your retention, expansion and win-back plays. Separate involuntary (payment) from voluntary (value) churn, since the fixes differ.

Involuntary churn fix: dunning / payment-recovery tool and retry logic

Voluntary churn signal watched (declining logins / fewer features / removed seats)

Cancellation-flow interventions offered (pause / downgrade / help)

Upsell trigger: the plan limit or usage signal that prompts an upgrade

Seat-expansion play: how you encourage inviting teammates

Win-back trigger and offer for lapsed customers

Cancellation-survey question(s) used to learn why customers leave

Checklist: Moat and retention checklist

- Content priorities favour bottom-of-funnel buying-intent pages
- At least one topic cluster (pillar plus supporting pages) is planned or built
- A review-acquisition program asks at the right moment and uses an allowed incentive
- G2 / Capterra badges and ratings appear on high-intent pages
- Dunning / payment recovery is in place to cut involuntary churn
- A usage-based churn signal triggers re-engagement before cancellation
- Upsell and seat-expansion prompts fire at moments of natural demand
- A cancellation survey feeds both product and win-back messaging

Your Action Plan

1. Calculate your fully loaded CAC, LTV, CAC payback and net revenue retention, and write them where the whole team can see them.
2. Decide whether your unit economics call for spending more on acquisition or fixing retention first, based on LTV:CAC and NRR.
3. Map your honest time-to-value, then choose free trial, freemium or reverse trial accordingly and settle the credit-card question.
4. Focus on one or two acquisition channels your price point can afford, and design at least one product-led virality mechanism.
5. Strip the signup form to the minimum, add SSO, and defer qualifying questions to in-app onboarding.
6. Define a measurable activation event from your retention data and instrument your activation rate.
7. Build in-app onboarding, a setup checklist, templates for the empty state, and a goal question, that drives users to activation.
8. Set up a behaviour-based trial email sequence that branches on activation and includes a strong trial-ending email.
9. Publish bottom-of-funnel content, comparison, alternatives, use-case and integration pages, grouped into topic clusters.
10. Launch a G2 and Capterra review program, display the badges on high-intent pages, and fix dunning plus voluntary-churn and expansion plays to push NRR above 100%.

