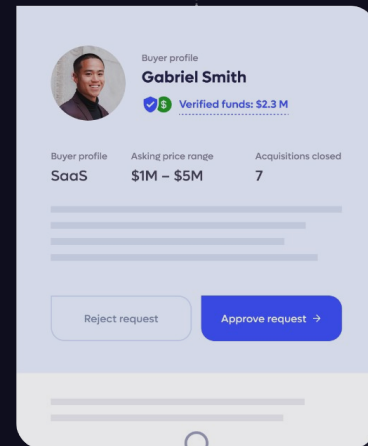
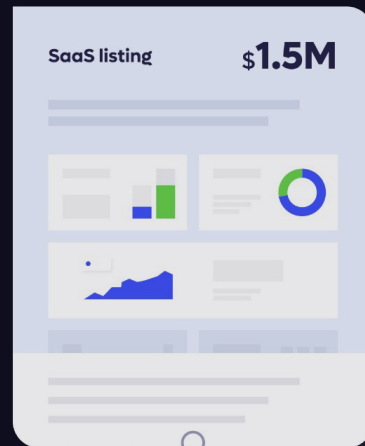


Buying Agencies in The AI Era

A New Playbook for Buyers

June 24th, 2026
Webinar hosted by
Andrew Gazdecki & Ky Pratt



Andrew Gazdecki

FOUNDER & CEO

Serial SaaS founder. Built and sold multiple companies before building Acquire.com — the largest marketplace for bootstrapped SaaS.

Has facilitated over \$1B in acquisitions and seen every deal type, every founder mistake, and every outcome.



Ky Pratt

LEAD ACQUISITION ADVISOR

Ky is the Lead Acquisition Advisor at Acquire.com and has spent the last three years helping founders achieve successful exits through the Guided by Acquire program.

He has advised on more than \$49.5M in completed transaction value, including \$29.6M in 2025 alone,

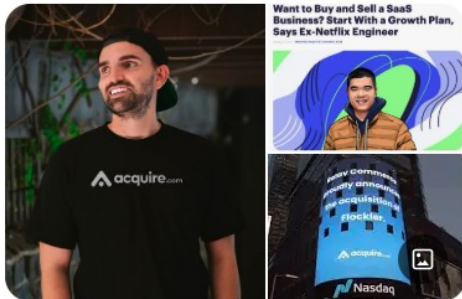
and specializes in helping SaaS, Agency and online business founders maximize valuation and navigate the acquisition process with confidence





Acquire.com, Inc.

5.0 ★



 acquire.com

Marketplace connects individuals seeking to buy profitable online businesses with founders looking to sell. It supports transactions involving SaaS, e-commerce, and other digital ventures. Tools are...
Summarized from the website

Founder Andrew Gazdecki

Date founded 2020



Who we are

World's most founder-friendly acquisition marketplace



What we do

Help thousands of founders get Acquired



Why we do it

To change lives, and enable a new generation of founders

Agenda

1

The Thesis

Why agencies are a great investment with the AI layer · what AI actually changed · the core thesis

2

The Opportunity

Market size · deep vertical expertise · why trust beats cheap software

3

The Buyer's Playbook

Productized agencies · AI operations · buyer filters ·

4

What buyers look for

Metrics and how they buy

5

For Sellers & Close

How we can help



Why Agencies were not the first choice.



Labor-intensive delivery

Revenue depends on people.
Scale required more headcount, not systems



Founder-dependent relationships

Key clients often hired the founder specifically



Lumpy, project-based revenue

Many agencies ran on project work — not retainers, MRR



Low perceived defensibility

Without proprietary software or hard IP, buyers questioned what they were actually acquiring



Manual operations

Reporting, content production, campaign analysis, required time per client

Agency Market Size

100,000+ Agencies Supporting Millions of Businesses.

100K+

U.S. AGENCIES

\$550B+

U.S. DIGITAL AD SPEND

Industries served by agencies:

- Healthcare practices
- Restaurants & hospitality
- Legal firms
- Schools & education
- Retail & ecommerce
- SaaS operators
- Local businesses
- Home services
- B2B companies

What Changed?

Ops Leverage. Not Customer Value.

WHAT HAS NOT CHANGED

- Customer trust takes years to build
- Niche expertise is hard to replicate
- Client relationships remain the core asset
- Industry knowledge still commands premium
- Acquisition costs for new customers remain high

WHAT AI HAS CHANGED

- Content production: AI-assisted at scale
- Reporting: automated and real-time
- Campaign analysis: AI-generated insights
- Workflow automation: systems over FTEs
- Research and internal ops: dramatically faster

The Thesis Customer Ownership + AI-Operations.

*The customer relationship stays **valuable**. The operational **efficiency improves**. That combo is what makes this category interesting.*

CUSTOMER OWNERSHIP

- Retainer clients.
- Long-tenure relationships.
- Recurring contracts.
- Built over years.
- Cannot be replicated by AI alone.

NICHE EXPERTISE

- Deep vertical knowledge in healthcare, legal, home services, SaaS.
- Compliance moats.
- Industry-specific trust.
- Hard to rebuild.

AI OPERATIONS

- Reporting, content, research, workflows automated.
- Same client value delivered at lower cost.

Specialization The Best Agencies Are Not Generalists.

They are **specific** verticals — difficult to **replicate**.

VERTICALS

- Healthcare & dental
- Legal services
- Home services
- Financial advisory
- Education / EdTech
- Ecommerce brands
- SaaS companies
- Local SMBs

WHY DEPTH MATTERS

- Compliance and regulatory knowledge
- Industry-specific conversion benchmarks
- Referral networks take years to build
- Client trust compounds over time
- Category-specific content authority
- Pricing and service norms
- Seasonal patterns and customer behavior
- Vendor and platform relationships

Bonus

Agencies = Data and Intelligence Assets.

Conversion benchmark data

01

What click-through rates
Cost per lead
Cost per acquisition actually look like in their vertical
Across campaigns, over years

Customer behavior patterns

02

Seasonal demand,
Referral patterns,
High-LTV customer profiles,
Churn triggers — real behavioral intelligence from actual
client customers

Competitive intelligence

03

What competitors are bidding on
What converts — built from years of running campaigns
across the vertical

Workflow and testing history

04

Years of A/B tests
Channel experiments
Knowledge base that an AI can help apply at scale

Why Distribution Is Becoming More Valuable.

Customer acquisition, trust, and niche expertise remain valuable.

Customer acquisition is still hard



Even with AI, winning the right customer still takes years of trust, authority, and expertise.

Trust compounds over time



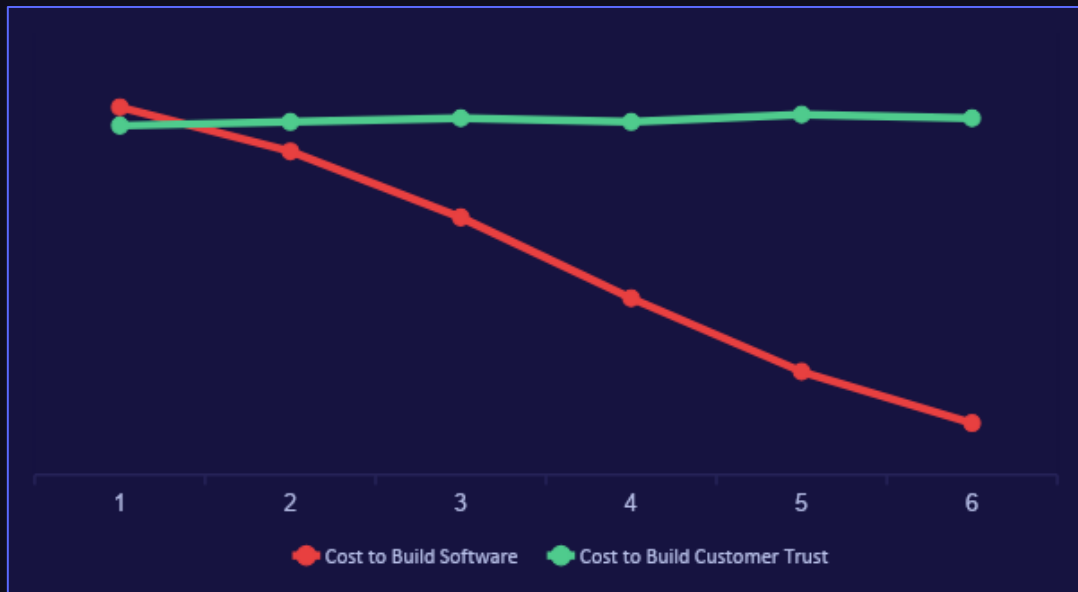
Brand equity in a niche is built over years, not generated overnight.

Switching costs are real



Embedded workflows create durable customer retention. Loyal and sticky clients will not switch easily.

Software Gets Cheaper. Trust Doesn't.



Customer acquisition is still hard

Reaching the right customer requires years of SEO authority and referral trust — AI doesn't shortcut that.

Trust compounds, AI can't fast-forward it

A 5-year agency relationship has brand equity no new entrant can replicate quickly, AI-assisted or not.

Switching costs are real

Clients with campaigns, reporting, and history inside one agency relationship face real friction to leave.

*AI is rapidly reducing the barrier to building software. **Customer trust and distribution remain the durable moat.***

What AI Actually Improves



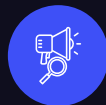
Reporting and analytics

Monthly client reports, attribution dashboards automated end-to-end with AI tooling



Content production

Blog posts, social copy, email, ad creative — AI generates first drafts that editors refine. Output per person increases



Campaign analysis

Pattern recognition across campaign data, bid optimization suggestions, A/B test analysis — AI handles the analytical layer at speed



Workflow automation

Client onboarding, recurring deliverable generation, status update communications — systematized with AI agents replacing manual coordination



Research and intelligence

The customer relationship stays valuable. The operational efficiency improves. That is the combination creating buyer interest.

Competitor analysis, market research, keyword research, industry monitoring — tasks that previously took analysts hours now take minutes

Productized Agencies: Why Agency Workflows Matter



SEO & Content

Retainer-based, AI-native delivery, strong client tenure. Google authority takes years — buyers pay for existing rank.



Email & CRM

Deep platform integration creates switching friction. AI automation is direct and measurable. Sticky clients.



Paid Media (PPC)

Technical moat deters self-service. AI handles reporting and creative testing. High client LTV.



Social Media

Retainer model. AI-native content and scheduling. Clients don't want to manage their own — high stickiness.



Analytics & Data

Niche, defensible, AI-enhanced. Clients pay for interpretation. Huge margin expansion opportunity.



Productized Services

Fixed packages. Recurring fees. Same deliverable every month. Closest to SaaS economics — at agency prices.

Reality check:

The "turn-key" trap: why most categories burn out founders

Restaurants

"Food is recession-proof!"

- 90-hr operator weeks are normal
- Staff turnover is high
- 5-8% net margins if lucky
- One bad review craters revenue

Franchises

"The system does the work!"

- Royalties eat your margin first
- You don't own the brand, you rent it
- Franchisor changes rules anytime
- Territory fights kill growth

Laundromats

"Passive income, machines do it!"

- Equipment breaks — a lot
- You're on call for every incident
- Lease risk is massive
- Growth ceiling hits fast

HVAC / Service Vans

"Recession-proof trades!"

- Tech shortages make hiring brutal
- Fleet costs scale painfully
- One liability claim destroys you
- Local market caps upside

These models get hyped as passive income. Operators call them **"simple"**. They are not.

Why Agencies Now

AI changed the math. The opportunity is open.



01

Recurring retainers = predictable cash flow



02

No physical footprint, no lease risk



03

AI replaces extra headcount. margins expand



04

Operational upside without physical grind



05

Low capex
no machines, vans, or kitchens



06

Geo-independent, scale without limits

AI changed the math. **The opportunity is open.**

LIVE On Acquire.com



Anonymous

AI-Powered Healthcare Development Agency

\$3.3M

Annual Revenue

17%

EBITDA Margin

20%

AI Revenue Share

WHAT MAKES IT STAND OUT

- ✓ Healthcare AI, EHR integrations & compliance specialist
- ✓ AI grew from 5% → 20% of revenue in just two years
- ✓ Deep niche moat vs. generalist agencies
- ✓ Recession-resistant sector, proven client base

LISTED ON ACQUIRE.COM

- Vetted. Verified. Ready to buy.
- Full financials & data room included
- Direct access to the seller
- NDA-protected buyer process

[View on Acquire →](#)

Case Study: Agency Spotlight

Strategic Bolt-On Acquisition Creates a Full-Service Growth Platform

BUYER ACQUIRED TWO COMPLEMENTARY BUSINESSES

ACQ 1

Digital marketing agency specializing in lead generation, SEO, paid ads, and websites for local service businesses.

+

ACQ 2

Remote staffing and virtual assistant company providing operational support to local businesses through a distributed workforce model.

WHY THE COMBINATION MADE SENSE



Marketing + Fulfillment

One company generates leads, the other provides the people and operational support to service those leads.



Shared Customer Base

Both businesses focus on local service companies, creating natural cross-sell opportunities.



Higher Customer Lifetime Value

Buyers can offer a broader suite of services under one umbrella.



Faster Growth Through Acquisition

Acquiring complementary capabilities was faster and less risky than building them internally.

KEY TAKEAWAY

This is a textbook bolt-on acquisition: the buyer didn't just buy two profitable agencies — they assembled a more valuable platform by combining customer acquisition with service delivery capacity, creating a stronger and more scalable business than either company alone.

What Buyers Evaluate



Retention

Client churn over 3–4 years, studied client by client



Automation Opportunity

Which delivery roles can AI displace — pre-acquisition modeling



Recurring Revenue

MRR composition, retainer vs project split, forward visibility



Niche Authority

Vertical depth, category reputation, referral network quality



Customer Concentration

No single client above 10–15% —



EBITDA Margin



Workflow Quality

Documented SOPs, systematized delivery, team independence



Growth Narrative

Is there a system for lead generation and client acquisition?

How It Works on Acquire.com

THE BUYER JOURNEY ·
From Search To Close

1

CREATE PROFILE

Set your criteria: budget, category, ARR range. Get matched to listings that fit.

2

BROWSE & FILTER

Live metrics, verified revenue, traffic data. No fluff listings. Sign NDAs for deeper access.

3

REACH OUT

Message the seller directly. No middleman. Build rapport early — it matters at the finish line.

4

SUBMIT LOI

Letter of Intent with your price, structure, and timeline. Keep it clean. Sellers hate complexity.

5

DUE DILIGENCE

Data room access. Typically 2–4 weeks for clean businesses. Use our DD checklist.

6

CLOSE

Escrow, asset transfer, transition support. Guided by Acquire team for \$1M+ deals.

What a Realistic Timeline Looks Like

60–90 Days From first message to close

Week 1–2	Week 2–3	Week 3–4	Week 4–8	Week 8–10	Week 10+
Browse, shortlist, sign NDAs, initial conversations	Deep dive call with seller, verify key metrics	Submit LOI, negotiate terms and structure	Due diligence: data room, tech review, legal	Purchase agreement, escrow, asset transfer	Transition period with seller support



Clean businesses close in 45–60 days. Messy ones drag to 90+ — or fall apart.



Have your financing arranged before you submit an LOI. Seller trust collapses if funding falls through.



Request a 30-day exclusivity window post-LOI to protect your due diligence investment.



A good acquisition attorney pays for itself three times over. Don't skip legal.

How Deals Are Actually Structured

From the Buyer's Side of the table

FULL CASH AT CLOSE or Partial combo



For buyers: Maximum seller confidence. You get clean handoff, no ongoing obligations. Best for businesses with verified, stable revenue.

Watch: Highest upfront capital. No risk share with seller.

EARNOUT



For buyers: Pay a portion based on future performance. Lowers upfront cost and aligns seller incentive to transition well.

Watch: Seller stays involved longer. Disputes can happen on metrics.

SELLER FINANCING



For buyers: Seller carries a note — you pay over time. Useful if you want to preserve cash and seller has high conviction in the business.

Watch: Creates ongoing relationship. Default risk to seller, so they'll be selective.

EQUITY ROLLOVER



For buyers: Seller retains a minority stake. They stay invested in the outcome. Works well when seller has a network or channel that helps growth.

Watch: Seller is still a stakeholder. Alignment must be documented carefully.

Most deals blend structures. Define your preferred structure before entering negotiations.

Acquire the Relationship. Deploy the AI.

FOR BUYERS

Thinking About Buying?

Browse verified agency acquisition opportunities on Acquire.com.

Create a Free Buyer Account →

FOR SELLERS

Thinking About Selling?

Get a free valuation and scorecard to understand what your business could be worth to our buyer network.

Get Your Free Valuation & Scorecard →

Q&
A