A PLAYBOOK FOR CLINICIANS WHO CREATE

The *Clinician's* Ladder

Five steps from posting reels the algorithm buries to owning a business built on your expertise.

RNS · NPS · PAS · MDS · DOS · DPTS
& EVERY LICENSED CLINICIAN

Jackie Giannelli, FNP-BC
FOUNDER OF THE IN THE SADDLE NEWSLETTER

BEFORE YOU FILM ANOTHER REEL

The views were never the business.

If you hold a clinical license and post evidence-based content, whether you're a nurse, NP, PA, physician, DPT, or therapist, you already know this feeling. A reel finally breaks 40,000 views and changes nothing about your income. A PR package shows up at your door and you wonder if free moisturizer is what your doctorate was for. Your best clinical content gets quietly suppressed by an algorithm that treats the word "hormone" like a threat. And every dollar you actually earn still requires you to be in a room with a patient.

So here is the question worth sitting with: **is any of this yours?** If Instagram disappeared tomorrow, what would you own? For most clinicians the honest answer is a follower count. And follower counts are rented.

The creators who turn attention into real businesses think differently. They treat views as raw material, not the product. Study any creator whose income survives an algorithm change and you will find the same architecture behind the feed: an owned email list, expertise consolidated into named assets, a deliberately chosen revenue lane, and eventually income that stands on its own. None of it happened by accident. They climbed a ladder, rung by rung, from posting to owning.

This playbook walks that same ladder, translated for people who hold a license. Because you are not starting from zero. **You already did the hard part.** The credential, the knowledge, the trust patients hand you every day: that is the scarce asset. The business layer on top is learnable, and it is far more forgiving than any board exam you have passed.

WHY LISTEN TO ME

I'm Jackie Giannelli, a board-certified family NP and women's longevity specialist. I still practice, in Connecticut and New York City. Around my clinical week I've built brand partnerships, advisory and strategist roles, a weekly newsletter, and a documentary now in production. Everything in this guide is either something I've done or something I'm doing right now, in the cracks of a clinical schedule.

THE MAP

Five rungs, in order.

Most clinicians online are standing at rung zero: posting, hoping, refreshing the view count. Some have a brand deal or two and no idea what comes next. Every rung below moves value off the platform and into your hands. You climb them in order, and you don't need a big following to start.

1

Run it like a practice

You would never run a clinic without systems and support staff. Your content deserves the same, with a fierce grip on the few things only you can do.

2

Learn how the money works

No one teaches this in training. Meet the top five ways clinicians with an audience get paid online, in plain English, then pick one lane. And they are far from the only five.

3

Build your own front door

An email list is the one place your people can always find you, with no algorithm standing in between. You can open yours tonight.

4

Write your protocol

You already answer the same questions on repeat. Turn those answers into a named method, the way you would write any protocol. This one carries your name.

5

Earn beyond your hours

Advisory seats, royalties, programs your team delivers. Income that arrives while you are in clinic, asleep, or on vacation. This is where the ceiling lifts.

RENTED

Followers · Reach · Viral moments · The algorithm's mood · A platform's terms of service

OWNED

Your email list · Your products · Your framework · Your relationships · Your equity

1 Run it like a practice

You already operate one of the most demanding service businesses there is. You triage, you delegate to your team, you co-sign the chart. Bring that same discipline here: let a virtual assistant or AI tools carry the editing, captions, and scheduling, while **clinical accuracy, your judgment, and your voice** never leave your hands. The final review is yours on every post, because your license and your integrity are the moat around everything you will build.

> DO THIS
>
> Write down everything you do for content in one week. Circle the two or three things only you can do. Everything else belongs on a delegation list, and the sooner you build that muscle, the sooner you stop being the bottleneck.

2 Learn how the money works

Clinical training teaches you everything except this. So here it is, in plain English: when a clinician builds trust online, money most often arrives through five doors.

> **Brands pay you.** Companies you would actually recommend pay for your voice and your credibility. This door only works if you say no often. And payment is not always cash: product-in-kind deals trade real product for your platform, which is income in everything but name.

> **People buy from you.** A guide, a cohort course, a paid newsletter, a private community. The subscription versions become recurring revenue: money that arrives every month whether or not you posted that week.

> **Companies hire your brain.** Consulting, advisory seats, and sometimes equity. Health and wellness companies need clinical judgment they can trust, and an audience is proof that yours is.

> **Stages and media pay for your expertise.** Speaking, writing, expert commentary. Your credential opens these rooms; your content keeps you top of mind.

> **Your practice fills itself.** The quietest door. Content brings aligned patients to your own schedule, on your terms.

These are the top five, not the whole map; quieter doors open as you climb. The mistake is not missing a door, it's drifting: accepting whatever lands in your DMs and calling it a strategy. **Choose one door as your main entrance for the next year** and let the others stay ajar. A PR package, for the record, is not a door.

> DO THIS
>
> Notice which door made you lean in. That reaction is data. Write it at the top of your notes as your main entrance.

3 Build your own front door

> *Think of your followers as a waiting room you don't control, and your email list as your own panel. One of them can be taken from you. The other cannot.*

This rung matters more for you than for almost any other kind of creator, because health content is exactly what platforms suppress. You've watched a carefully sourced post about menopause or mental health get a fraction of its usual reach while dance trends sail past. An email list ends that hostage situation. Every subscriber chose you, and your message reaches their inbox whether or not an algorithm approves of the word "estrogen."

And you do not need anything clever to start filling it. The tools that convert followers into subscribers are the simplest ones: a two-minute quiz, a symptom self-check, a short guide answering what your patients and followers keep asking you. Build it around the question you hear most, put the link in your bio, and say it out loud in your reels. That is the entire machine.

Do not wait until you feel "big enough." A list of 500 people who trust a clinician is worth more than 50,000 passive followers, because you can reach all 500 of them on purpose, on the day it matters, with no one standing in between.

> DO THIS
>
> Open a free email platform account tonight (beehiiv and Substack both work). Put the signup link in your bio before you post again. Your first lead magnet is whatever you are already asked most often.

4 Write your protocol

You write protocols all day: take a complex clinical problem, distill it into ordered steps, hand it to someone who needs it. This rung is that exact skill, pointed at your content. Right now your best thinking is scattered across a feed, buried in DM replies, and repeated out loud in exam rooms, where it evaporates the moment you say it. Nothing scattered compounds.

So consolidate it. Give your approach a name and a shape: a patient-education guide, a named framework, a handbook, a short course. It does not need a publisher and it rarely makes its money directly. The value is what it does to your standing. It turns "an NP who posts good reels" into **"the clinician who wrote the method."** Patients, brands, journalists, and institutions all treat a named body of work differently than they treat a feed. It is the difference between being quoted and being cited.

Your source material already exists. The questions that fill your DMs and your exam rooms are a completed needs assessment; most businesses pay for that research, and yours walks in the door every day.

The organizing question is not *"what should I create?"* It is *"what do I find myself explaining for the tenth time this month?"*

> **DO THIS**
>
> Start a running note on your phone titled "Asked Me Again." Every time a patient, follower, or colleague repeats a question, log it. In a month you will be holding the outline of your first durable asset.

5 Earn beyond your hours

You already know the math that caps a clinical income: no hours, no revenue. Every RVU, every visit, every shift requires you in the room. The trap waiting at the top of this ladder is rebuilding that same math online, a content business that only earns when your face shows up. That is not a business. That is a second clinic with better lighting.

This rung is about income that does not bill by your presence, and for clinicians the paths are concrete. A seat on a startup's founding clinical team that converts into equity you keep long after you stop working there, equity that can become real cash when the company grows or sells. Clinicians are landing on cap tables right now, and most of us were never told that door exists. An advisory retainer at a supplement, femtech, or digital-health company that pays for your clinical judgment. A formulation or protocol you helped design, earning royalties. A membership community or cohort program your team delivers while you review outcomes. A paid newsletter compounding month over month. A patient-education library that other practices license. A brand serving the condition you treat most, run day to day by people who are not you, held to standards that are.

What unlocks every one of those rooms is the audience you are building right now. To a company, an engaged clinician-led audience is proof that patients trust you and evidence of demand they cannot manufacture. You stop applying for these opportunities and start being recruited for them. **This is the rung where "clinician who posts" quietly becomes "founder."**

You don't start here, and you shouldn't. You earn this rung by climbing the first four. But knowing it exists changes how you post tomorrow morning: every reel stops being a lottery ticket and starts being a brick.

> **DO THIS**
>
> Audit what you've built so far. How much of it depends on your face showing up daily? Note one thing from this page that could eventually run without you: an advisory niche, a licensable resource, a program a team could deliver. You're not building it yet. You're just aiming.

THE FIRST RUNG IS FREE

Five moves you can make today.

None of these require permission, a follower threshold, or a single new post. They require about ninety minutes, total.

- [ ] **Run the one-week audit** RUNG 1
  List everything you do for content in a week. Circle the two or three things only you can do: your clinical judgment, your voice, your final accuracy check. Everything else goes on a delegation list.

- [ ] **Choose your door** RUNG 2
  Reread the five doors on the money page and notice which one made you lean in. Write it at the top of your notes as your main entrance for the next year, and judge incoming opportunities against it.

- [ ] **Open your email list tonight** RUNG 3
  Free account on beehiiv or Substack, signup link in your bio, done before bed. Do not wait to feel ready. Subscriber number one can be you.

- [ ] **Start the "Asked Me Again" note** RUNG 4
  One note on your phone. Log every question patients, followers, and colleagues repeat. This becomes your first lead magnet, then your first product, then your method.

- [ ] **Film the answer, once** MOMENTUM
  Take this week's most-asked question and answer it on camera in 60 to 90 seconds, in plain language, evidence first. End it with one sentence: "I go deeper on this in my newsletter, link in bio."

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In The Saddle

KEEP CLIMBING

Watch me build it, *while still practicing.*

I write **In the Saddle**, a weekly newsletter where I document this climb in real time: the partnerships, the products, the advisory work, and the exact tools I use to run it all around a full clinical schedule. No guru talk. Just a working clinician showing the build.

If this guide named something you've been feeling, the newsletter is where we take the next rung together.

INTHESADDLENEWSLETTER.COM

Your license was the hard part.
— Jackie