

FREE PLAYBOOK

The Reddit Growth Playbook

Karma, Subreddits & the First Hour

You know *when* to post. This is the *how* — the three levers that actually move reach on Reddit in 2026, in one repeatable system.

WHO IT'S FOR

Founders, marketers, and creators growing on Reddit without getting banned for self-promotion.

HOW TO USE IT

Read once end to end, then keep it open as a checklist while you plan each week.

Why Karma, Subreddits & the First Hour

Reddit has no follower feed — every post starts at the bottom of a community's *new* queue and has to climb on its own. Three levers decide whether it climbs or dies, and the data is blunt about how much each one matters.

Subreddits

The targeting lever — and the biggest one. In a 1,000-post study, subreddit size was the strongest predictor of upvotes: 10M+ communities scored ~6× the median of sub-500K ones.

Karma

The credibility lever. Account age and karma get you past spam filters and posting gates — and earn the benefit of the doubt that keeps you from being removed.

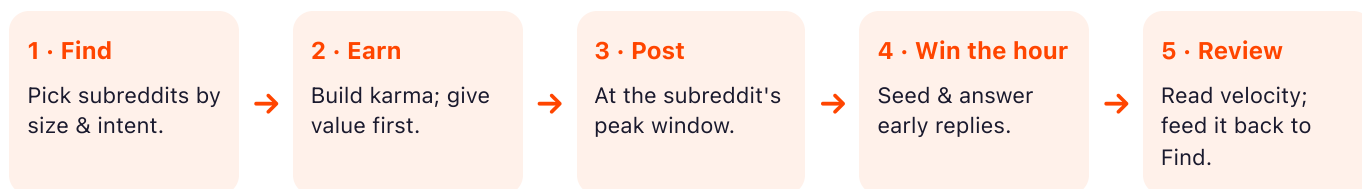
The First Hour

The velocity lever. Reddit ranks on *speed* of upvotes: the 9 AM–12 PM ET window earns ~8× the upvotes of late night, because early votes outrun time decay.

Timing decides who's online to cast the first votes. These three levers decide whether those votes ever arrive. The companion 90-Day Calendar covers the timing; this playbook covers the levers.

The growth loop

Reddit growth isn't one viral post — it's a loop you run every week. Most people skip straight to posting (and get removed). Run the whole loop, in order.



Timing (step 3) is covered by the companion 90-Day Calendar and the best-time guide at leadmore.ai. This playbook covers steps 1, 2, 4, and 5 — the parts that decide whether good timing actually pays off.

THE ONE RULE THAT TIES IT TOGETHER

Pick the right community, earn its trust, then post when it's awake — and judge every post by its **first-hour upvote velocity**, not its 24-hour total. Everything below serves that rule.

1 · Find — pick subreddits by size & intent

This is the lever that matters most. Perfect timing in a tiny subreddit still can't out-reach a mediocre post in a giant one — but the giant one has to actually fit your topic and audience. Balance reach against relevance.

THE SIZE-VS-INTENT TRADE-OFF

Subreddit type	What you get
Huge default (10M+)	Max reach, brutal competition, strict rules, low buyer intent — great for awareness, poor for conversion
Mid-size niche (100K–2M)	The sweet spot for most marketers — real reach <i>and</i> a focused, high-intent audience
Small niche (<100K)	Highest intent and easiest to stand out, but limited ceiling — stack several

HOW TO BUILD YOUR SHORTLIST

- ✓ Search your topic on Reddit; note which subs your customers already post in.
- ✓ Check each sub's size, posting rules, and whether links/self-promo are allowed.
- ✓ Sort the sub by Top → This Month to see what actually wins there.
- ✓ Pick the largest community that genuinely fits — then 2–3 smaller, higher-intent ones.

Skip the manual hunt: Leadmore AI's **Subreddit Recommender** ranks communities that fit your product by size and buyer intent, and the marketer's map at leadmore.ai/list-of-subreddits sorts 130+ subs by industry. Pick the lever that counts before you worry about the hour.

2 · Earn — build karma & stay rule-safe

Reddit is ruthless about self-promotion. A fresh account that drops a link gets removed or shadowbanned before anyone sees it. Karma and history buy you the credibility to post at all — and the benefit of the doubt when you do.

THE 9:1 RULE

The long-standing community norm: no more than **~10% of your activity** should be your own promotion. Comment, answer questions, and contribute at least nine times for every promotional post. This isn't just etiquette — many subs and Reddit's own filters enforce it.

ACCOUNT-WARMUP CHECKLIST

- ✓ Clear each target sub's **karma and account-age gates** before you post there.
- ✓ Comment genuinely in your target subs for 2–4 weeks first — be a familiar name.
- ✓ Read every sub's pinned rules; self-promo days and link policies vary widely.
- ✓ Never blast the same link across many subs at once — stagger and tailor each one.
- ✓ One removed post for breaking rules can cost you the whole community. Slow down.

If a community feels off-limits to promotion, that's normal — earn your way in by being useful first. Leadmore AI's Subreddit Analyzer surfaces each sub's self-promo rules so you don't learn them the hard way.

3 · Post — the title & format that earn votes

Once you've timed it right, the title and format decide whether the first hour catches fire. The data here comes from a 1,000-post analysis of front-page posts — and it contradicts a lot of popular advice.

WHAT THE DATA SAYS WINS

Lever	Finding
Title style	Statements out-performed questions by 16% — lead with the payoff, don't ask
Title length	Very short (1–5 words) and detailed (18+ words) beat the "ideal" 6–12 word range
Format	Video out-scored text by ~78%; external links to news/discussion scored highest of any type
Crossposting	Posts shared to other relevant subs earned 195% more upvotes at median

TITLE FILL-IN

Payoff / claim (a statement, not a question): _____

Who it's for / specifics: _____

Match the title to the subreddit's voice — read its top posts first. A title that fits the community's norms beats a "clever" one every time.

4 · Win the first hour

This is why timing matters at all: posting when a sub is awake only helps if you're there to fan the first sparks. Reddit's algorithm watches early *velocity* — upvotes and comments per hour while the post is young — and promotes or buries the post accordingly.

YOUR POST-PUBLISH CHECKLIST

- ✓ Be online for the first 30–60 minutes — this window decides the post's fate.
- ✓ Reply to every early comment fast; questions in the comments invite more replies.
- ✓ Seed genuine discussion — a post with 15 upvotes and 8 comments beats 40 upvotes and none, because comment velocity is a quality signal.
- ✓ Don't vote-manipulate or ask for upvotes — it backfires and breaks Reddit's rules.
- ✓ If it flops in the first hour, it rarely recovers — delete and repost later at a better time with a sharper title (just don't spam the same sub).

The mechanic: Reddit counts votes logarithmically and divides by time — every ~12.5 hours a post needs 10× more upvotes to hold its rank. Fast early votes are the only way to outrun that decay.

5 · Review — measure velocity, not vanity

Once a week, look back — but track the metric the algorithm actually rewards. A 24-hour upvote total tells you what happened; **first-hour velocity** tells you *why*, and what to repeat.

THE TEST LOOP

1. **Hypothesize** — start from the category window in the cheat sheet.
2. **Test** — for 2–4 weeks, post at 2–3 candidate times; change only the hour.
3. **Measure velocity** — net upvotes & comments in the *first hour*.
4. **Double down** — keep the winning window, then test it against a new one.

WEEKLY REVIEW — FILL THIS IN

Top 3 posts	Subreddit	1st-hour upvotes
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Best subreddit + window so far _____

One thing to change next week _____

Putting it together: your 90 days

Phase	Focus	What "done" looks like
Month 1 Credibility	Shortlist 3–5 subs; comment far more than you post; clear karma/age gates	A credible account and a familiar name in your target communities
Month 2 Windows	Test 2–3 posting times per sub; track first-hour velocity	You know each sub's real peak window from your own data
Month 3 Winners	Double down on the best sub + window; crosspost winners; drop what flopped	A repeatable formula that earns reach without breaking rules

Find the right subreddits, times & rules — automatically

Leadmore AI's Subreddit Recommender and Analyzer surface the communities that fit your product, their real peak hours, and their self-promo rules — then help you post from credible accounts, on time. Start free.

leadmore.ai