

BRIANA GRAY

A VENDING OPERATOR'S FIELD GUIDE

# The First Vending Machine Was Never the **Hard Part.**

*The real reason you haven't placed your first vending machine, even after all the research.*

3 MINUTE READ



IT'S NOT  
THE MACHINE



Why research keeps you stuck



The 3-part Operator's Doorway



The first yes that changes it

## You have watched the machine pay for itself. On a screen. Over and over.

It is 11pm. Four tabs open. The King 509. The Ace 779. A spreadsheet you started. One more video about someone turning a smart machine into a thousand a month.

You are not lazy. You have done more homework than most people do before buying a house.

And you still have not bought anything. You tell yourself you are being careful. Smart. You do not want to waste four thousand dollars on the wrong model. So you open another tab. Compare the screens. The card readers. You will decide once you are sure.

Here is the thing you have not said out loud. You are not stuck on the machine. You have known which machine for weeks.

You are stuck because the day it arrives, you have to walk in somewhere new, find the person in charge, and ask for a spot. That is the part your stomach drops about. Not the machine.

I get it. That was never what stopped me either. Picking a machine is easy. Walking in and asking was not. Cold calling was completely outside my comfort zone.

The machine takes an afternoon. Walking in and asking takes nerve. And nobody sells you nerve on a collection page.

*You were never stuck on the machine. You were stuck on walking in and asking for the spot.*

You could keep researching. It feels like progress. It costs nothing. No one can tell you no. That is the slow road. This book is about the other one. Stay with me.

## I went to school for nursing and ended up majoring in vending.

I started this in nursing school, broke, with about thirty thousand dollars in student loans. I still work as a nurse two or three days a week. I am not writing to you from the top of a mountain. I am one floor up from where you are standing, and I can see the stairs behind me.

And here is the part you should know before you trust a word of this. I did not jump in. I spent a full year researching before I bought a single machine. A year. When I finally moved, I bought a route of four machines for four thousand five hundred dollars. Since 2023 I have run eight machines across seven locations, and I have watched one machine clear over a thousand dollars in a single month.

I have also had a location that made eight hundred dollars a month die on me. So when I say the location is the whole game, it is not a theory I read. It is the thing that has made me money and the thing that has cost me money.

*I am not a guru. I am an operator who is one step ahead of you, and I remember what it is like to sit in the parking lot and not go in.*

That is all this book is. Me, handing back the one thing I wish someone had named for me sooner, before all the research that felt like progress but was not.

## You were told to research the machine. So you did. For months.

Look at what you actually ask. What is a good machine to start with. Classic or AI. What does it cost, what is the ROI, what number makes it worth it. Every one of those is a machine question. Every one of those has an answer you can find in an afternoon.

The questions you do not ask out loud are the ones that matter. How do I find a location. What do I say when I walk in. What if they say no. What if they say yes and I do not know what comes next.

So you stay on the side of the problem that feels safe. Researching a machine feels like work and it cannot reject you. A locked screen never says no. A building manager might.

You are not indecisive. You are not bad with money. You are doing the comfortable half of the work because the uncomfortable half is the half that actually starts the business.

*The machine is the part you can do alone in your kitchen. The location is the part that makes you an operator.*

So let me hand you the map. Three parts. You only have to walk through one doorway to stop being a researcher and start being an operator.

# The Operator's Doorway

Three parts. Every beginner gets stuck on one of them, and it is almost never the machine.

1

## The Taken Spots

The spots you wrote off were never actually asked.

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2

## The Ask

The short conversation, in person or by phone, that gets you a spot.

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3

## The First Yes

One machine, placed, becomes the only proof you ever needed.

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*Each part gets two pages. One to see it clearly, one to sit with it. Read slow.*

## You think the good locations are already taken.

It feels like every gym, office and apartment building already has a machine, and the ones that do not must not want one. So every spot looks taken before you have asked a single person. You decided the answer was no without letting anyone say it.

Here is what is actually true. Locations are not discovered like buried treasure. They are asked for. The operators with machines everywhere are not lucky. They asked more buildings than you have.

This part is for you if you have ever driven past a perfect spot and thought "they would never say yes" without slowing down.

*A location is not a place you find. It is a conversation you are willing to start.*

## Three questions before you write off another spot.

- 1 Which five buildings do you drive past every week without ever thinking of them as locations?
- 2 Who is the actual person who decides at each one, and have you ever learned their name?
- 3 If three of your "taken" spots are actually open, which one would you ask first?

### TAKE THIS WITH YOU

Pick one building from your list. Find out the name of the person who decides. That is the entire task. A name turns a spot you wrote off into a real one.



A RECOGNITION

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**The people with machines  
everywhere  
are not braver than you.  
They just *asked more  
buildings.***

## You think you need to be a salesperson. You do not.

The thing you are most afraid of is the ask, whether you walk in or pick up the phone. You picture yourself fumbling, getting a no, feeling foolish in front of a stranger. So you make it enormous in your head, and an enormous thing is easy to avoid.

The opener is small. It takes about twenty seconds, and it works the same whether you walk in or call. Most of the time the person who decides is not even standing there, so you are really just finding out who to talk to. "Hi, I'm a local vending operator. I place smart vending machines at no cost to the location, and I stock and take care of everything myself. Who would be the best person for me to talk to about adding one here?"

This part is for you if "I am not a salesperson" has been your reason. You do not need to be one. You are not closing anything, you are offering a service and asking one honest question out loud.

*You are not asking for a favor. You are offering a service.  
Show up like it.*

## Three questions before your next door or call.

- 1 What is the worst thing a "no" costs you, really, once you say it out loud?
- 2 Who could you practice your opener on this week, before a real door or call?
- 3 What would you say next if the manager said "tell me more"?

### TAKE THIS WITH YOU · THE OPENER

*"Hi, I'm a local vending operator. I place smart vending machines at no cost to the location, and I stock and take care of everything myself. Who would be the best person for me to talk to about adding one here?"*

That is the whole opener, in person or on the phone. Write it on one note card. Say it out loud ten times until it stops sounding like a script and starts sounding like you.



A RECOGNITION

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Ready was never going to  
arrive  
in your inbox.

It arrives the day you *place the  
first one.*

## You think you need a fleet. You need one yes.

You picture the end state, five machines, a real second income, and the gap between here and there feels so wide you do not start. The fleet is real, but it is not the goal right now. It is a story you tell yourself to stay frozen, because a fleet is far away and a single phone call is not.

One placed machine changes you more than a hundred hours of research. The fear breaks the day a real manager says yes and you realize you can do the thing you have been avoiding. Everything after that is repetition, not nerve.

This part is for you if you keep planning the empire and skipping the first brick. Jumping before I felt ready is the single thing that has propelled me. Not the planning. The jump.

*One machine in one location is not a small start. It is the only proof you have ever actually needed.*

## PART THREE · SIT WITH THIS

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### Three questions before you name a date.

- 1 What story about "needing more" are you using to delay the first one?
- 2 Which single location, if it said yes, would make the rest feel possible?
- 3 What is the smallest next action that moves you toward one yes this week?

#### TAKE THIS WITH YOU

Name one location and one date. Put both in your phone. A first yes starts as a deadline you gave yourself, not a feeling you waited for.



## The mistake is buying the machine before you have the spot.

Here is what smart, careful beginners do. They finally feel brave, so they spend the four thousand dollars on the machine, because that is the part that feels like starting. And then the machine sits in the garage while they work up the nerve to find a location. Now the pressure is worse, because the money is gone and the hard part is still ahead.

It happens because the machine is the comfortable purchase and the location is the uncomfortable conversation. Buying feels like progress. It is the most expensive way to keep avoiding the doorway.

The order is backwards. Get the yes first. Get the spot, then buy the machine to fill it. A machine with a home is an asset. A machine in your garage is a four thousand dollar reminder.

*Knowing all of this and still buying machine-first is the trap. Doing it in the right order is the whole skill.*

This is where the real work begins, and where most people quietly stop.

## You were never the kind of person who couldn't.

Think about who you were on page one. Four tabs open, savings untouched, telling yourself you were being careful. You were not careful. You were waiting for a feeling that was never going to come on its own.

Nothing about you changed in these pages except one thing. You stopped believing the machine was the problem. And the moment that belief goes, the doorway shrinks to what it always was: a short conversation you are allowed to have.

You could always do this. You had just never been shown the way in. Now you have.

*The whole time, you were only ever one conversation away.*

So before you research one more model, let me ask you something instead.

ONE LAST THING

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# Where are you actually stuck right now?

You just saw the doorway. Now answer a few honest questions about where you are right now, what you have tried, and what is really stopping you.

I am building a program to walk beginners through their first placement, location first. The people who answer get founding access, and founding pricing, when it opens.

[Answer a few questions →](#)

A FEW MINUTES · FOUNDING ACCESS WHEN IT OPENS

*Be honest with me. The harder the truth, the more it helps me build the right thing for you.*

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BRIANA GRAY

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