
BOOK TWO - THE FLIPPING DIRT SERIES

FLIPPING DIRT

with Little to No Money



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FLIPPING DIRT II

With Little to No Money

By Mike Deaton

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: The Myth That Almost Stopped Us..... 6

PART I: THE REFRAME 20

Chapter 1: Land – The Ultimate Low-Barrier Asset Class..... 21

Chapter 2: Rethinking What “Capital” Really Means 32

Chapter 3: The Mindset That Replaces Money..... 43

PART II: THE MODELS 58

Chapter 4: Bird Dogging - Find Deals, Get Paid 59

Chapter 5: Controlling Deals Without Owning The Asset 74

Chapter 6: Wholesaling - Buying Low, Selling to Another Investor..... 91

Chapter 7: LandARB - Someone Else Acquires the Deal. You Sell It..... 105

Chapter 8: Advanced Moves - Novation Deals and Double Closes..... 118

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

PART III: CREATIVE CAPITAL & SCALING FROM ZERO.....	134
Chapter 9: Seller Financing on the Buy Side - Negotiating Your Way In.....	135
Chapter 10: Joint Ventures & OPM - Bringing Value Beyond Money.....	150
Chapter 11: From Zero to Momentum - Reinvesting Your First Profits.....	166
PART IV: EXECUTION - YOUR FIRST DEAL	186
Chapter 13: Your First Deal Plan - From Model to Money	200
Chapter 14: The Dirt Road Ahead - From First Deal to Freedom.....	215
Appendix: Capital-Light Toolkit.....	229

Introduction: The Myth That Almost Stopped Us

Mile 47.

We still had three miles to go and Ligia was dead on her feet.

We were somewhere deep in the Grand Canyon, thirteen hours into a 50-mile ultramarathon, and Ligia was done. Not “I need a break” done. Done done. Legs locked up. Steps measured in inches. The kind of exhaustion where your body sends a very clear, very loud message: *stop*.

I wasn't much better.

We'd trained in the Dallas-Fort Worth summer heat, which we thought had prepared us. It hadn't. Running at elevation is a different animal entirely. The first 24 miles had gone fine. And then everything changed. Hot. Behind on nutrition and hydration.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

Walking more than running. Doubting the decision to be out here at all.

By mile 47, doubt had turned into something heavier. I remember looking at the trail ahead and thinking, *there is absolutely no way*. But Ligia was struggling more than I was, so I pushed whatever I was feeling aside and encouraged her. She'd do the same for me a few minutes later when my legs screamed back. In the ultrarunning world, they call this a death march. Slow, painful, relentless forward motion. One foot. Then the other. Repeat.

At some point, we could literally see the finish line and I wasn't sure we would make it. Ligia was literally shut down. Checked out. But we were so close.

We managed to death march our way to the finish line.

There was no fanfare. In fact, the race event was being broken down and packed up by the time we crossed. No cheering crowds. No cameras. No showers left set up as had been promised. Just two wrecked humans exchanging a look that said *oh my God, we actually did it*. A hug. A volunteer came over and placed medals around our necks. And then we went for some food and water before crawling into a tent to sleep — no showers, no celebration, just a sleeping bag, exhaustion, and the quiet knowledge that we'd survived something together.

I'm sharing this story because starting a business with no money feels exactly like mile 47 of that race.

Nobody's cheering. The course markers are gone. The people who started before you seem to be finished already, and you're still out here grinding, wondering if the finish line even exists.

But you keep moving. Not because it's easy. Because you've committed.

This book is about that commitment — and the specific, proven strategies that make it possible to start flipping land even when your bank account (or your mindset) says you can't.

The #1 Objection

In the years since Ligia and I built our land flipping business and began coaching others, the single most common thing I hear from aspiring investors is some version of: *"I don't have the money to start."*

I get it. I really do.

In the summer of 2016, both Ligia and I were laid off from our corporate jobs within weeks of each other. No income. Two teenage daughters to provide for. We were living off savings and a severance package, watching the balance go down every month with

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

nothing coming in to replace it. The financial pressure was real and it was constant.

When we decided to go all-in on land flipping, we allocated \$100,000 of our savings into the business and gave ourselves twelve months to either make it...or pivot. Then we invested \$50,000 in coaching — \$12,500 upfront plus \$3,500 a month for a year. I remember sitting on the sales call hearing that number and thinking, *no frickin' way*.

After the call, Ligia and I talked. She grew up in Communist Romania, where having little was the norm. Risk didn't scare her the way it scared me. "I think we should go for it," she said.

I was shocked. That was an incredible sum of money. It ate directly into our seed capital. But we knew we wanted this to be our future, and the investment made sense if it got us up and running faster while avoiding costly mistakes.

I didn't sleep that night. Worry. Anxiety. The weight of a decision you can't undo. But we moved quickly. They say "skin in the game" creates motivation. That's exactly what it was. Every sleepless night, every moment of doubt, became fuel to make it work.

And here's the thing. *It did work*. But not overnight. We crawled before we walked, and walked before we ran.

But What If You Don't Have \$100,000?

Here's why I'm writing this book.

Our story — the seed capital, the coaching investment, the financial runway — that's one path. It's the path we took because our circumstances pushed us into full-time commitment from day one. But it's not the only path. And for many people, it's not a realistic starting point.

What if you have \$1,500? What if you have \$500? What if you have nothing but time, hustle, and a willingness to figure it out?

That's not a hypothetical. One of our coaching clients — we'll call him Keith — came to us as a W-2 employee who also flipped houses on the side. He had some capital but wasn't comfortable risking it without proof that the land model worked. So we steered him toward a strategy called LandARB, where an experienced investor buys land and resells it to you on terms — tiny down payment, small monthly installments. You find a retail buyer and profit from the spread.

Keith connected with a LandARB provider, reserved some properties, and found cash buyers for two parcels in Arizona. He'd wholesaled each for \$2,500 and resold them for \$5,500 cash. That was \$6,000 in profit without buying a single property outright.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

What did he do with that \$6,000? He reinvested it. Bought two traditional properties for \$2,200 each and flipped them for close to \$6,000 each. Then he leveled up again — a 40-acre property for \$12,000, sold for \$36,000 in three weeks.

Keith was literally astounded at how easy the model is. And he's a guy who already knew real estate. He'd flipped houses. He understood the complications, the contractor headaches, the rehab budgets. When he saw what land could do with minimal capital, it changed his perspective entirely.

Keith's story is not unique. It's a pattern. And this book is going to show you exactly how to replicate it, step by step, model by model.

What This Book Will Give You

I'm going to be straight with you about a few things before we go any further.

First: the strategies in this book are real. They work. People use them every day to flip land with little to no money of their own. Bird dogging, wholesaling, option contracts, LandARB, joint ventures, creative seller financing — these aren't theories. They're proven models with real track records in the vacant land space.

Second: they require hustle. This is where I see guru types hype up the potential and gloss over what it

actually takes. If you're replacing financial capital with sweat equity, you need to understand that the sweat part is literal. You'll be spending hours finding deals, making calls, building relationships, researching markets, and following up with buyers and sellers. It's work. Real work. The kind of work that most people aren't willing to do, which is exactly why it creates opportunity for those who are.

Third: this book is designed as a progression. We call it crawl, walk, run. The early chapters address why land is the best asset class for capital-light entry and the mindset shifts that make the difference between people who start and people who just think about starting. Then we move through five specific business models, ordered from zero capital and lowest complexity up to more sophisticated deal structures. Then we cover creative financing, reinvestment strategies, and a complete first-deal execution playbook. By the end, you'll have the knowledge, the tools, and a 30-day action plan to put into motion.

Here's what you won't find in this book: hype. No promises of overnight riches. Or complicated strategies that require an MBA to understand. I have an MBA, and I can tell you — the best strategies are the simple ones executed with discipline and consistency.

A Roadmap

The book is organized in four parts:

Part I: Reframing the Game makes the case for land as the ultimate low-barrier asset class, redefines what “capital” really means (spoiler: you have more than you think), and addresses the mindset barriers that stop people before they ever make their first offer.

Part II: Capital-Light Business Models walks you through five proven strategies — from bird dogging (zero dollars, pure hustle) to LandARB and more advanced deal structures. Each chapter breaks down the model, shows you real examples, and gives you what you need to get started.

Part III: Creative Capital & Scaling from Zero covers seller financing on the buy side, joint ventures, and — critically — how to turn your first deal’s profit into momentum. How bird dog fees become wholesale capital. How wholesale profits fund your first flip. How one flip funds three more. This is the compounding engine most “no money down” books leave out.

Part IV: Execution gives you a zero-budget lead generation system, a step-by-step first deal playbook, and a closing chapter that connects your first deal back to the bigger picture — the freedom, the lifestyle, the life you’re actually building.

Mike Deaton

The Appendix includes contract templates, scripts, a selection of AI prompts, a deal analyzer, and a complete zero-budget resource map. You can also find additional tools and resources at <https://flippingdirt.us/resources/>.

The Opportunity Is Real — and It's Massive

Before we go further, let me give you a sense of the playing field.

There are over 30 million parcels of vacant land in the United States. More than 350,000 vacant land sales happen every year. And the vast majority of these parcels are owned by individuals, many of whom, for a wide variety of reasons, are motivated to sell but haven't listed their properties. They're off-market. Invisible to traditional buyers. And accessible to anyone willing to do the work to find them.

Unlike houses — where the average renovation runs about \$48,000, property management fees eat up 8-10% of gross rental income, and tenant headaches are a way of life — land is clean. Simple. No tenants. No toilets. No renos. You buy it, you sell it. Or you buy it, you finance it to a buyer, and you collect monthly payments. We've purchased properties for as little as \$99 and turned them into some of our best-performing deals — on a percentage basis.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

The strategies in this book don't require you to buy anything at all to get started. But when you're ready to, the entry points are lower than almost any other investment class. Properties are available from under \$500 in many markets across the country. And there are always ways to take down bigger deals even if you don't have the capital to buy outright. That's the beauty of real estate — and vacant land.

This isn't a niche. It's an ocean. And most people don't even know it exists.

Who This Book Is For

If you're a W-2 professional feeling the weight of golden handcuffs — the salary is fine, but it's not where you want to be long-term — I know that feeling. I lived it for decades. The 80-hour weeks, the office politics, the “what have you done for me lately” culture, the constant anxiety about the next reorganization. Or worse yet — is AI coming to replace me? This book shows you how to start building something on the side without betting your family's financial stability on it. Five to ten hours a week. Proven models. A real path to a different future.

If you're already in real estate and frustrated by the complexity — the tenants, the midnight maintenance calls, the contractors who don't show up, the property management fees eating your returns — this book

introduces you to an asset class where the ROI is extraordinary and the return on your TIME is even better. One of our clients put it perfectly: “This is one of the only businesses I’ve seen where doubling your money is considered a bad deal.” He wasn’t exaggerating.

If you’re someone who’s dreamed about designing your next chapter but didn’t know where to start — and you’re skeptical of anyone promising easy money — good. You should be skeptical. I was too. Ligia and I were skeptical when we first heard about land flipping. We thought it sounded too good to be true. We sat with that dusty binder that promised to teach us land investing for months before we even cracked it open.

But we opened it. Took one step. And then another. And it changed everything.

My Promise

I’m not going to pretend this is effortless. It’s not. Ligia and I spent five months grinding before our first sale — working at the dining room table in Plano, stuffing envelopes and licking stamps on direct mail campaigns, showing up and digesting coaching sessions every week, and learning the completely new language of real estate terminology and deal structures. We watched other peers in our coaching

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

program find success while we struggled to sell our first property. It was disheartening. But we kept going because we had a powerful “why,” we had each other, and because we’d committed.

What I will promise you is this: the information in this book is honest, practical, and proven. It’s the book I wish existed when I was staring at that dusty binder in 2016, wondering if two laid-off corporate employees with dwindling savings could really build a life flipping dirt.

We could. We did. And you can too.

One More Thing

Remember the Grand Canyon? The death march? Mile 47?

What I didn’t tell you earlier is that Ligia and I trained in the flatlands of Dallas-Fort Worth. We showed up at the canyon thinking our preparation would carry us through. It didn’t. Running at elevation is a completely different challenge than running at sea level. The skills transfer, but the terrain changes everything.

Starting a business with limited capital is the same. The principles of land flipping are identical whether you have \$100,000 or \$100. Buy low. Sell for a profit. Repeat. But the terrain is different when you’re starting light. The models are different. The lead

Mike Deaton

generation is different. The timeline and the hustle required are different. And that's exactly why this book exists — not to repeat what's in *Flipping Dirt*, but to give you the specific playbook for YOUR terrain.

In the Grand Canyon, Ligia and I finished because we had each other. We pulled each other through when neither of us had anything left. In business, we did the same thing. If you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together. And through this book, through our coaching, through the community of people who are building something real with land — you don't have to do it alone either.

We finished that race in the quiet. No fanfare. Medals around our necks. A tent. No showers. Gone the next morning to drive home and start the next chapter.

Your next chapter starts now.

Let's dig in.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

PART I: THE REFRAME

You do not need a big bank account to start flipping land.

You need a different way of thinking about what you already have.

Before we get into models, strategies, and deal structures, we need to address the thing that stops most people before they start: the belief that without money, there's no way in. That belief is wrong. But it's deeply held, and breaking it requires more than just saying "trust me."

These first three chapters will change how you see capital, how you see risk, and how you see yourself as an investor. Because the biggest barrier between you and your first deal isn't financial. It's mental.

Let's start there.

Chapter 1: Land – The Ultimate Low-Barrier Asset Class

Before we dove into land, Ligia and I considered just about everything.

Rental properties were the obvious first thought. That's what most people picture when they hear "real estate investing." Buy a house, rent it out, collect checks. Passive income. The dream.

Except it's not really passive. And it's definitely not cheap to start.

The average home renovation runs about \$48,000. Property management fees eat 8-10% of your gross rental income. And then there are the tenants. The midnight calls about a broken water heater. The eviction process when someone stops paying. The insurance premiums, the maintenance reserves, the vacancy rates. All of this before you've earned a dollar.

When we were freshly laid off, staring at our savings account and trying to figure out how to build income from scratch, rental properties felt like a mountain we couldn't afford to climb. We didn't have \$48,000 for a renovation. We didn't want to manage tenants. We

didn't want to be on call for someone else's plumbing emergencies when we were trying to rebuild our entire lives. Even if you leverage debt, it can take years, if not decades, to get that paid down and make a significant cash flow that you can live off of.

We also looked at house flipping. Same problem - massive upfront costs, contractor dependencies, timelines that stretch way beyond what you plan. And if a deal goes sideways, you're holding a property that's bleeding money.

Then we found land.

The seed had actually been planted years earlier. Like a lot of people, I'd read *Rich Dad Poor Dad* and had my thinking cracked open about money, assets, and the difference between working for income and building wealth. I'd been listening to podcasts - Pat Flynn's *Smart Passive Income*, *Side Hustle Nation* - taking in ideas about alternative income streams. And at some point, I'd heard two different people on two different podcasts talking about their success flipping vacant land.

I'd even invested in a toolkit. A land investing course that came in a binder. It sat on the back shelf of my office, collecting dust, for months. I wasn't ready. We were still employed. Life was busy. The binder gathered dust.

Then the layoff happened. And in those strange, disorienting weeks afterward, my attention was

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

drawn back to that binder. Ligia and I consumed its contents over two days. We were skeptical. But it sounded plausible. Even...simple?

We went to a weekend bootcamp. We met people who were doing it - real people with real results. And something clicked. Not a lightning bolt. More like a slow exhale. *This could actually work.*

And it did. It changed everything.

The Simplicity That Changes the Equation

Here's what makes vacant land fundamentally different from every other real estate asset class: there's nothing on it. No structure. No roof. No plumbing. No tenants.

That might sound like a disadvantage. It's actually the biggest advantage in real estate.

No tenants means no midnight phone calls, no evictions, no property management fees. No structure means no renovations, no contractors, no inspections, no surprises behind drywall. No improvements means dramatically lower holding costs - in many cases, your only ongoing expense is property taxes, which on vacant land can be remarkably low.

What you're left with is the simplest transaction in real estate: buy a piece of land for well below market value, and sell it for a profit. That's it. No value-add

construction. No appreciation waiting game. No complicated financing structures. You buy, you sell, you profit, you repeat.

Or - and this is where it gets really interesting - you buy, you offer owner financing to a buyer who can't get a traditional bank loan (most banks want nothing to do with raw land loans), and you collect monthly payments. Now you have passive income without a single tenant.

We call this business "the best kept secret in real estate." There are "No tenants. No toilets. No renos." And we mean it.

An Ocean Most People Don't Know Exists

One of the most common reactions I get when I tell people what we do is a blank stare. "You flip...dirt?"

Yes. And so do hundreds of other investors across the country. But the general public - and even most real estate investors - have no idea this market exists. That lack of awareness is your advantage.

There are over 30 million parcels of vacant land in the United States. More than 350,000 vacant land sales happen every year. And the vast majority of these parcels are owned by individuals, many of whom are motivated to sell but have never listed their properties. They're sitting on land they inherited,

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

land they bought decades ago and forgot about, land in another state they've never visited. Real off-market opportunities that aren't on Zillow, aren't on the MLS, and aren't on anyone's radar.

Unlike house flipping - where you're competing with experienced investors, real estate agents, and institutional buyers in bidding wars - the land space is relatively uncrowded. The competition is a fraction of what you'd face in any other asset class. We bump into other land flippers occasionally, and we hear from prospects that they've received other offers. That's fine. Competition is a sign of a healthy market. But it's nothing like the intensity of trying to buy a rental property in a hot housing market.

This abundance - millions of parcels, thousands of counties, hundreds of thousands of transactions a year - means that deal flow is never the problem. There's always land to be found. The question is whether you have the knowledge, the hustle, and the system to find it.

We began our land investing journey targeting markets in Texas - a state with a tremendous amount of land. Metro areas, suburban lots in the path of growth, rural acreage. After some early stumbles in East Texas (a story for later), we found our groove in West Texas and built real momentum there. Eventually we shifted our focus to Colorado, with stunning land we love to buy and sell. We simply resonate more strongly with mountains, pine trees,

and elevation. But the point is: you can find success in a wide variety of markets and property types. Desert plots, forested land, agricultural acreage, suburban lots - there's no shortage of options. And you can run this business from anywhere. We built ours from our dining room table in Plano, Texas, and now run it from the mountains of Colorado, or on the road in Europe for weeks at a time. Location independence is built into the model.

This book gives you the knowledge, the hustle, and the system.

Where This Gets Real for the Capital-Light Investor

Now, everything I just described is true for land investors at every level. But here's where it gets specifically relevant to you - the person starting with limited capital.

Land has entry points that no other asset class can match.

We've purchased properties for as little as \$99. Ninety-nine dollars! We've also been given land - once as a bonus to a portfolio deal and other times just to alleviate tax situations. And some of those became our best-performing deals on a percentage basis. Properties are regularly available for under \$500 in markets across the country. A first deal in the

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

\$1,000-\$3,000 range is very common among some of our coaching clients.

Compare that to a rental property requiring tens of thousands for a down payment and renovation. Or a house flip requiring \$50,000+ before you've even started marketing it. Land simply plays in a different league when it comes to capital requirements.

But here's what makes it even more relevant to this book's audience: many of the strategies we'll cover in Part II don't require you to buy anything at all.

Bird dogging - finding deals and referring them for a fee - costs nothing. Wholesaling - putting a property under contract and assigning that contract to another buyer - requires only a small earnest money deposit and some marketing hustle. LandARB - where an experienced investor sells you land on terms with a tiny down payment - can get you into a deal for a few hundred dollars. Option contracts let you control a property without purchasing it.

And there are always ways to take down bigger deals even if you don't have the capital to buy outright. Joint ventures, creative seller financing, partnership structures. That's the beauty of real estate - and vacant land in particular.

The entry door is wider than you think. You just need to know where it is.

Keith Saw It Immediately

Let me tell you about Keith.

Keith was a W-2 employee who also flipped houses on the side. He understood real estate. He'd lived the contractor headaches, the renovation budgets, the timeline overruns. He knew what it was like to have \$30,000 tied up in a property that was three months behind schedule.

When Keith came to us, he had some capital but wasn't willing to risk it until he had proof that the land model actually worked. So we pointed him toward LandARB as a starting point. Minimal capital required. Real deals. Real proof.

He connected with a LandARB provider, reserved a few properties, and found cash buyers for two parcels in Arizona. He "bought" each for \$2,500, resold for \$5,500 cash. Six thousand dollars in profit without ever owning a property outright.

Then he reinvested. Bought two traditional properties for \$2,200 each, flipped them for close to \$6,000 each. Leveled up to a 40-acre property for \$12,000, sold for \$36,000 in just three weeks after purchase. Real momentum and real simplicity.

What struck me most about Keith wasn't the numbers - it was his reaction. He was literally astounded at how easy the model is. This is a guy who already knew real estate. Who had flipped houses. Who

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

understood complexity. And when he experienced the simplicity of land, it fundamentally changed his perspective.

“This is so much simpler,” he told me. Not easier - simpler. There’s a difference. Land still requires work. But the work is clean. Straightforward. Predictable. There’s no contractor who doesn’t show up. No mold behind the bathroom wall. No tenant who stops paying.

Just land. A buyer. And a profit.

The Numbers Speak for Themselves

I want to give you some context on what’s possible so you have a realistic picture - not hype, but real numbers from our own business.

Ligia and I have averaged over 150% annual ROI over 8+ years of flipping land. That’s not a cherry-picked highlight. That’s the sustained, average return across hundreds of deals, good markets and tough ones, mistakes and wins included.

Our coaching client Will - zero real estate experience, small budget - purchased a 2-acre plot for \$1,250 and sold it for \$5,500 in six weeks. His first deal ever.

Another client closed on 4 lots for a total of \$6,500 and had a wholesaler lined up to buy them for \$26,000. He said something that’s stuck with me: “This is one of

the only businesses I've seen where doubling your money is considered a bad deal." He wasn't joking.

These aren't anomalies. This is the model working as designed. Buy well below market value - we target 30-50% of estimated market value - and the profit margin is built in from the start.

There's an important principle we teach, and it's fundamental to everything in this book. There's a popular saying in real estate that "you make your money on the buy." I despise that sentiment.

You DON'T make any money on the buy. You DO set up the profit margin on the buy. Money only comes after the sale.

That distinction matters. Buying right doesn't mean you've made money. It means you've created the conditions for profit. The sale is where money changes hands. But if you've targeted the right market and bought right - at a significant discount to market value - the sale is the straightforward part.

Why Land. Why Now. Why You.

Here's what I want you to take from this chapter.

Land is the most approachable, flexible, and forgiving asset class in real estate. It has the lowest entry costs, the simplest deal structure, the lowest ongoing

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

expenses, and the widest range of strategies available to someone starting with limited capital.

It's not a niche. It's an ocean. And most people - including most real estate investors - don't know it's there.

The models in this book will show you how to enter that ocean at whatever depth matches your current situation. No money? Start as a bird dog. A few hundred dollars? Try LandARB. A couple thousand? You can buy your first property. And every dollar you earn from your first deal becomes fuel for the next one.

As I mentioned in the Introduction - real estate is one of the most powerful ways to create lifestyle flexibility and make unlimited amounts of income. Within real estate, land reigns supreme in terms of approachability, flexibility of ways to capitalize from it, and opportunities.

The question isn't whether the opportunity is real. It is. The question is whether you're willing to do the work.

Let's keep going.

Chapter 2: Rethinking What “Capital” Really Means

When most people hear the word “capital,” they think of one thing: cash in a bank account.

That’s the first belief we need to break.

Because if capital only means money, then the title of this book is a contradiction. You can’t flip land with no money if money is the only resource that matters. But it’s not. Not even close.

In the world of real estate - and especially in land flipping - capital comes in at least five forms. Most people fixate on one. But the ones who succeed with limited cash are the ones who learn to leverage all five.

Let me show you what I mean.

The Five Capitals

1. Financial Capital - This is the obvious one. Cash, credit, liquid assets. It’s what everyone thinks of first, and it’s what stops most people from starting. “I don’t have the money” is the number one objection I hear. But financial capital is only one piece of the puzzle,

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

and as you'll see throughout this book, it's the most replaceable of the five.

2. Human Capital - Your skills, your knowledge, your education, your experience. If you've spent years in a corporate job, you have operational skills, project management abilities, analytical thinking, and professional discipline. Those aren't worthless just because you switched industries. They transfer. Powerfully.

3. Social Capital - Your relationships, your network, your reputation. Who do you know? Who trusts you? Who would take a call from you and actually listen? Social capital is what makes joint ventures possible. It's what gets your foot in the door with an experienced investor. It's what creates deal flow when you can't afford mailers.

4. Intellectual Capital - Your expertise, your understanding of systems and markets, your ability to evaluate opportunities. This is different from human capital. Human capital is broad - your overall skill set. Intellectual capital is specific - what you know about THIS business. Every chapter of this book is adding to your intellectual capital. By the time you finish, you'll know more about capital-light land strategies than 99% of people in real estate.

And here's something that's changed dramatically in just the last few years: AI tools have become an enormous accelerator of intellectual capital. You can

use AI to research markets, analyze comparable sales, draft listing descriptions, write outreach emails, evaluate deal structures, and organize your workflow. Tools that used to require experience or expensive software are now accessible to anyone with a laptop. We've included a selection of prompts in the Appendix to get you started, and you can request access to the full AI Prompt Pack inside the our free Flip Side community at <https://flippingdirt.us/theflipside/>. This is a huge asset - especially for someone starting with limited financial capital. Your intellectual capital has never been cheaper to build.

5. Sweat Equity - Time, effort, hustle. The willingness to do the work that other people won't. Make the calls. Research the markets. Drive the counties. Follow up. Follow up again. Sweat equity is the currency that every single person reading this book already has. It's the great equalizer.

Here's the critical insight: these five capitals are interchangeable.

If you're low on financial capital, you can substitute sweat equity and intellectual capital to find and structure deals that require little or no cash. If you're low on social capital, you can build it by demonstrating hustle and competence - people want to partner with someone who brings energy and expertise, not just money. If you have deep expertise

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

but no network, you can use your knowledge to add value to someone else's deal and get paid for it.

The question isn't "how much money do I have?" The question is "what capital do I have, and how do I deploy it?" When we work with any new client, this is the first step we focus on - what are your available resources across these five capital types, and how can we take advantage of the strengths and develop any that are thin.

The Unconscious Inheritance

I didn't learn any of this in business school. I learned it watching my dad.

My father was a general contractor for most of my adolescence. He built homes, renovated them, managed subcontractors, and ran his own business for years. I started working with him when I was 13 - and I don't mean tagging along. I mean working. Cutting grass on job sites. Cleaning post-construction houses. Then, as I got older: concrete, roofing, framing, masonry. By the time I could drive, he was sending me on solo assignments. Real work. Real responsibility.

At the time, I didn't see any of that as "entrepreneurial training." I was just helping my dad. I wasn't thinking about capital structures or business

Mike Deaton

models. I was thinking about getting the job done and getting home.

But here's what was actually happening: I was building human capital (physical skills, work ethic, the ability to complete tasks independently), social capital (learning how to interact with clients, subs, and suppliers), and sweat equity (the habit of putting in hours without being asked). My dad was building up each of my capital accounts - without me being aware of it.

In the 1980s, when my dad's business was at its peak, there was a Savings and Loan crisis and lending terms really tightened up. At the same time, big-box builders started squeezing margins on smaller general contractors, and my dad pivoted out of home building. He adapted. He found other ways to generate income. He didn't have a term for it, but what he was doing was reallocating his capital. There was less financial capital available in home building, so he leaned harder on human capital, social capital, and sweat equity to reinvent - applying his skills in a different lane.

I didn't catch the entrepreneurial bug consciously. Not then. I was headed toward medicine - the "safe" path, the big salary, the Poor Dad mindset (as Robert Kiyosaki would call it). I never had a mentor who pointed me toward business ownership. Nobody in my family said "you should be an entrepreneur." But the values - the work ethic, the adaptability, the

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

integrity in how you treat clients and collaborators - those imprinted. Deeply.

I'm really only seeing it now, years into building a land business and coaching practice, how much of what my dad modeled shows up in how I operate today. The hustle. The willingness to pivot. The belief that you can figure it out if you show up and do the work. And the way he treated the people around him - clients, subcontractors, suppliers - with respect and integrity, regardless of the size of the job. That's in our coaching DNA. It's in how we treat our clients and our community. It came from watching a man in work boots who probably never used the word "capital" in his life but was deploying every form of it, every single day.

That's capital. Real capital. And if you grew up watching someone work hard, adapt, and build - even if they never called it a business - you have more of it than you think.

The \$2-to-Make-\$6 Conversation

When I talk to people who say they can't afford to start, I often ask a simple question: "Would you invest \$2 to make \$6?"

Everyone says yes. Of course. That's a 200% return.

"Okay. What about \$200 to make \$600?"

Still yes.

“What about \$2,000 to make \$6,000?”

Now the hesitation starts. Not because the math changed - the ratio is identical - but because the dollar amount crossed a psychological threshold. The money feels real now. The risk feels real. The fear kicks in.

This is the scarcity mindset at work. And it's one of the biggest barriers for capital-light investors. Not the lack of money, but the fear of losing whatever money they do have.

Here's the reality: land and real estate are incredibly flexible when it comes to the ratio of money and time you put in. If you have more money, you can invest it and let the systems do more of the work. If you have more time than money, you put in the sweat equity - you find the deals yourself, you build the relationships yourself, you market the properties yourself. You use what you have.

And the range of entry points in land is enormous. You can find properties starting at \$500. You can wholesale deals where your only out-of-pocket cost is a few hundred dollars in earnest money. You can bird dog deals for zero dollars. The financial capital requirement scales to fit your situation.

The person who invests \$1,500 and their evenings and weekends into learning this business is deploying

capital just as legitimately as the person who writes a \$50,000 check. The mix is different. The commitment is the same.

The Variety of Low-Cost Land Flipping Models

To give you a preview of what's coming in Part II, here's how the five business models in this book map against the different types of capital:

Bird Dogging - Financial capital: Zero. You find deals for other investors and get paid a referral fee. The "capital requirement is a full tank of gas and a notepad," as someone once put it. What you're really investing is sweat equity and whatever intellectual capital you've built about what a good deal looks like.

Contract Assignments - Financial capital: Minimal (earnest money deposit, at most). You find a deal, put the property under contract, and assign that contract to another investor or buyer for a fee. You never take title. Your capital investment is intellectual (knowing how to evaluate deals and find buyers) and social (having relationships with both sellers and buyers). This is different from wholesaling - which is buying a property at a wholesale price and reselling it to another investor. With an assignment, you're transferring the contract itself, not the property. The

distinction matters, and we'll dig into the mechanics in Chapter 5.

Options - Financial capital: Very small (option consideration, often \$10-\$500). You lock the right to purchase a property without the obligation. Your capital is time - the marketing window to find a buyer while your option to purchase is active.

LandARB - The term comes from "arbitrage" - buying and selling the same asset in different markets to profit from the price difference. Financial capital: Low (small down payment and monthly installments). An experienced investor buys land and sells it to you on terms. You find a retail buyer and profit from the spread. This requires a blend of all five capitals - some cash, deal evaluation skills, buyer relationships, hustle, and market knowledge. We'll expand on how LandARB works in Chapter 7.

Joint Ventures - Financial capital: Potentially zero. You bring the deal, the expertise, or the hustle. Your partner brings the cash. The capital you're contributing is everything except money - and it's just as valuable.

Notice the pattern. As you move from bird dogging to joint ventures, the financial capital required increases - but it never becomes the dominant factor. At every level, the other four capitals are doing heavy lifting.

This is why the "I don't have money" objection, while completely understandable, is incomplete. It's looking

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

at one column of a five-column spreadsheet and concluding you're broke. You might be cash-poor. But you're probably not capital-poor. And once you see the difference, the path forward opens up.

What You Already Have

I want you to do something before you move on to Chapter 3.

Take five minutes. Grab a piece of paper or open a note on your phone. Write down the five capitals - Financial, Human, Social, Intellectual, Sweat Equity - and under each one, list what you currently have.

Under Financial, maybe it's \$500. Maybe it's \$2,000. Maybe it's nothing right now, but you have a paycheck coming in two weeks. Write it down.

Under Human, write your professional skills. Your education. Your ability to research, analyze, communicate, negotiate. Whatever you've developed in your career or your life - it counts.

Under Social, write the names of people who trust you. Friends, family, colleagues, former coworkers. People who would listen if you said "I found an interesting investment opportunity." You don't need a hundred names. You need five.

Under Intellectual, write what you've already learned from this book. The land model. The fact that 30

Mike Deaton

million parcels exist. The concept of buying below market value. The AI tools available to accelerate your research. You're already building this account, chapter by chapter.

Under Sweat Equity, write the hours per week you're willing to commit. Five? Ten? Fifteen? Be honest. This is the capital that replaces everything else when the bank account is thin.

Now look at that list. That's your personal "capital stack." That's what you're bringing to this business. And I promise you - it's more than you thought.

You don't need all five to be full to get started. You need one or two to be strong enough to compensate for the ones that are thin.

That's the whole game. And that's the beauty of real estate - and vacant land.

Now let's keep building.

Chapter 3: The Mindset That Replaces Money

The biggest thing standing between you and your first land deal isn't your bank account.

It's your head.

I know that sounds like something a motivational speaker would say right before asking you to close your eyes and visualize abundance. That's not what this is. I'm a personal development enthusiast - I can remember discovering a box of Tony Robbins cassette tapes as a teenager and being blown away - but I'm also an operations guy with an MBA who spent decades running international supply chains for top Fortune 5 companies. I believe in systems, metrics, and execution. So when I tell you that mindset is the number one factor that determines whether someone succeeds in this business, I'm not being philosophical. I'm being practical.

The mechanics of land flipping are straightforward. You can learn them. The capital-light models in this book are real and they work. But none of it matters if you can't get past what's happening between your ears. And for people starting with limited capital, the mental game is even more intense - because there's less margin for error, less room for expensive

Mike Deaton

mistakes, and a louder voice in your head saying *who are you to think you can do this?*

Let me tell you about that voice. Because I know it well.

The Night I Almost Talked Myself Out of Everything

In the Introduction, I told you about the \$50,000 coaching investment and the sleepless night that followed. What I didn't tell you is what was actually going through my mind as I lay there staring at the ceiling.

It wasn't just the money. The money was the trigger, but what was really happening underneath was a full-blown identity crisis. I had spent decades in corporate operations. I understood org charts, budgets, KPIs, and supply chain logistics. I was good at that world. Comfortable in it. And even though that world had just spit me out - both Ligia and me, within weeks of each other - my brain was still wired to think like a corporate employee.

Corporate employees don't bet \$50,000 on themselves. Corporate employees update their resumes, reach out to recruiters, and interview for the next position. That's the playbook. I'd done all of those things after the layoff. I'd applied, I'd networked, I'd taken calls. And every single one of them made me feel nauseous.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

Not because the opportunities were bad, but because my body was telling me something my brain hadn't caught up to yet: *that path is over.*

Ligia saw it before I did. She grew up in Romania when it was ruled by a dictator and governed under Communism. Where you learned early that the systems around you could collapse at any time. She didn't attach her identity to a corporation or a title. She attached it to our ability to figure things out together. When she said "I think we should go for it" on that coaching call, she wasn't being reckless. She was being clear-eyed about what mattered: us, our freedom, and our willingness to build something of our own.

I was the hesitant one. I'm risk-averse by nature. It's why I stayed in corporate jobs as long as I did. The salary was the ceiling, but it was also the safety net.

That night in bed, the fear wasn't really about \$50,000. It was about *what if I'm not built for this?*

And that's the fear most people starting with limited capital are carrying too. Not just "I don't have enough money." But deeper: "Am I the kind of person who can actually pull this off? Can someone like me - no real estate background, no connections in this space, no proof it works - really make this happen?"

The answer is yes!

But getting to that answer requires some rewiring.

The Mechanics Are Simple. Your Mind Makes Them Complicated.

Here's something I wrote in my first book, *Flipping Dirt*, that I want to repeat here because it's that important: *The mechanics of any business are generally straightforward and easy to learn. It's when our minds get in the way, when our internal dialogue and stories interfere, that we face doubt, uncertainty, overcomplication and in the most extreme cases, surrender.*

This is especially true when money is tight. When you have capital, you can afford a few mistakes. You can buy a property that takes longer to sell. You can absorb a bad deal. You can throw money at problems.

When you're starting with little to no capital, you can't. Your margin for error tightens. And your brain knows that. So it does what brains do - it tries to protect you. It manufactures every possible reason not to act. It disguises fear as "research." It calls paralysis "being careful." It turns procrastination into "waiting for the right time."

I experience this in ultramarathon events. It's a great training ground for building resilience.

I also see this consistently in coaching. Let me give you two examples.

The Market Selection Spiral

We had a client, Dan, who is one of the most analytical, action-oriented people I've coached. Smart. Driven. The kind of person who, once they make a decision, moves fast. But he couldn't make the decision once he entered the new and unknown domain of land flipping.

Dan had several markets to choose from. He'd pulled data on all of them. He'd run the numbers. He knew the comparable sales, the parcel counts, the pricing trends. But he kept going back. Rechecking. Recalculating. Running one more analysis. He was stuck in what felt like due diligence but was actually fear wearing a spreadsheet disguise. He wanted a clear and decisive market to stand out; but that's just not how it works.

When we got on a coaching call, I could feel it. He wasn't confused about the data. He was afraid of picking the wrong market. Afraid that if he chose wrong, he'd waste the limited capital he had and be worse off than when he started.

Here's what I told him, and it's something I've shared with nearly every client since: there's a quote I love from Dr. Ellen Langer - *"Don't worry so much about making the right decision. Make the decision right."*

The point is simple. No market is perfect. No decision is permanent. You pick a market, you test it, and you adjust. You're not signing a 30-year mortgage. You're

testing a hypothesis. If the market doesn't perform, you move. The only decision you can't recover from is the one you never make.

Dan picked his market. He sent his first campaign. And he got 12 accepted offers back. Twelve. More than he could handle at once, which created an entirely different kind of paralysis - but that's a good problem to have, and we'll talk about how to solve it in Chapter 13.

It's Not Failure. It's Feedback.

Something I've had to develop as an entrepreneur is the mindset that there is no failure - only feedback. The best entrepreneurs are experimenters. Testing. Getting feedback. Iterating...quickly. A market that didn't produce? Feedback. An offer that was too high? Feedback. A buyer who backed out? Feedback. You adjust and you move forward.

I don't even like to use the word "failure." Failure to me is not trying something at all. Everything else is data.

This is one of the most critical shifts you need to make when starting with limited capital. Because when money is tight, every setback FEELS like failure. It feels permanent. It feels like proof that you shouldn't have tried. But it's not. It's information. And the faster you can internalize that - the faster you can take a

setback, extract the lesson, and move - the faster you'll build momentum.

The people who struggle aren't the ones who make mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes. The ones who struggle are the ones who let a mistake stop them.

The Overwhelm Freeze

Cody was a different situation. He'd already taken action - sent his first campaign, gotten responses back. Eight accepted offers. And he froze.

Eight deals in front of him, limited budget, and no idea which ones to pursue. Every property looked both promising and risky at the same time. He was looking at all the details - price, comps, area, physical characteristics - and the volume of information was paralyzing him.

When we got on the call, I could hear it in his voice. Feel the anxiety coming through the screen. He wasn't lazy. He wasn't unmotivated. He was overwhelmed. Uncertain.

So we slowed down. I had him build a simple table - nothing fancy, just a matrix. List the properties out with acquisition cost, estimated resale value, margin, how easy the buyer market would be, and any qualitative factors like location, zoning, or potential issues. Rank them. One through eight.

The moment he got it all into that simple, clear table in front of him, I could hear the shift. The overwhelm lifted. He could see which deals made sense and which ones didn't. He narrowed from eight to his top picks and moved forward with clarity.

That's the thing about analysis paralysis. The cure is rarely more analysis. It's structure. Action. Utilizing a framework that organizes the chaos so your brain can do what it actually does well - evaluate and decide.

What Scrappy Beginners Have That Others Don't

Here's something that might surprise you. In my experience, people who start with limited capital often have an advantage over those who start with plenty of it.

When you have money, you can be sloppy. You can skip the research because you can afford the mistake. You can throw cash at marketing without testing whether it works. You can buy properties impulsively because the financial sting of a bad deal won't hurt that much.

When you have limited capital, every dollar matters. Every decision matters. You have to be sharper. More creative. More disciplined. You research harder because you can't afford not to. You negotiate better

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

because there's no cushion. You execute faster because you can't afford to sit on deals.

That hunger, that urgency - it's an asset. Don't apologize for it. Use it.

And there's something else. People who start from a place of constraint tend to build better systems. Because they have to. They can't brute-force their way through problems with money. They have to think. They have to systematize. They have to be efficient. And those habits compound over time into a more sustainable, more scalable business than the one built on unlimited capital and loose discipline.

Rewriting the Story You Tell Yourself About Money

We all carry a money story. It's the narrative we've internalized - usually from childhood - about what money means, how hard it is to get, and whether we "deserve" it. These beliefs run deep, and most of the time we're not even aware of them.

"Money doesn't grow on trees." "We can't afford that." "People like us don't..."

Sound familiar?

When Ligia and I started, our money stories were working against us. I was risk-averse, conditioned by decades of corporate life to view money as something

Mike Deaton

you earn through salary, save carefully, and protect. Ligia had a different story - growing up with very little in Romania had made her more comfortable with uncertainty, but it had also created its own set of limiting beliefs about what was possible...or even worthy of.

After the layoff, I hired a life coach. Not a career coach - a life coach. Someone to help me see myself again. Through that work, I went through a core values exercise that fundamentally changed my perspective. I ranked my values and what surfaced at the top surprised me in some regards: self-respect, integrity, compassion, optimism, curiosity, authenticity. And my anti-values - the things I rejected most deeply - were arrogance, dishonesty, and contempt.

None of those values said "play it safe." None of them said "stay comfortable." They said *be authentic, be curious, maintain your integrity, and respect yourself enough to go after what matters.*

That values exercise didn't give me more money. But it gave me something more important. It gave me clarity about who I was and what kind of life I wanted to build - which wasn't the one I had been building. Once that was clear, the financial risk of starting a business felt less like a gamble and more like an investment in alignment.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

I'd encourage you to do the same exercise. Write down your top values - not what you think they should be, but what they actually are. Then look at your current situation through that lens. Is the life you're living aligned with those values? Is the path you're on leading toward them?

If the answer is no, that gap between your values and your reality isn't a problem. It's fuel.

The Frameworks That Got Us Through

I'm a personal development enthusiast. Always have been. And the frameworks I've studied over the years weren't just nice ideas - they were survival tools when things got hard. Here are the ones that mattered most:

Growth Mindset (Carol Dweck). One of my favorite books of all time is *Mindset* by Carol Dweck. The core idea: your abilities aren't fixed. They can be developed through work, dedication, and learning. This matters enormously when you're starting something new with limited resources, because the fixed mindset says "I'm not a real estate person, I don't know how to do this, I'm going to fail." The growth mindset says "I don't know how to do this *yet* - but I can learn." That one word - *yet* - changes everything.

Grit (Angela Duckworth). Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Starting with no money isn't a sprint. You won't close a deal in your first week. There will be days - weeks - where nothing seems to be working and you question whether it's worth it. Grit is what keeps you going when motivation runs out. As we say in ultrarunning: keep running when you hit the marathon wall at mile 20.

And speaking of ultrarunning - there's a pacing strategy I use in long races that applies perfectly here. In a 50-miler, you don't run the whole thing...at least not all at once and definitely don't think of the entire event for too long. You hike the climbs and save your legs for the long haul. You fuel early and often - not waiting until you're depleted to eat. You break the race into manageable sections - aid station to aid station, and sometimes right foot, left foot. You don't think about mile 50 when you're at mile 8. You think about the next aid station. The next milestone.

Starting a business with limited capital works the same way. You don't think about your first \$100,000 year when you're trying to earn your first \$500 bird dog fee. You think about the next step. The next action. The next aid station. And when you get there, you refuel and move to the next one. That's not a lack of ambition. It's intelligent pacing. It's how people actually finish the race.

The Gap and the Gain (Dan Sullivan). This one is critical for people starting small. When you're focused

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

on how far you still have to go between where you are and where you want to be - the gap - everything feels impossible. But when you measure backward - how far you've come from where you started - suddenly your progress is visible and your confidence builds. Did you research three markets this week? That's three more than you'd researched before. Did you make your first cold call? That's one more than you'd ever made. The gain is real. Celebrate it.

The 4Cs Formula (Dan Sullivan). Commitment leads to Courage, which builds Capability, which creates Confidence. Notice the order. Confidence doesn't come first. It comes last. You don't wait until you feel confident to start. You commit first, take courageous action, develop capability through doing, and confidence follows. This is exactly the pattern you'll experience with the models in Part II of this book.

RPM System (Tony Robbins). Results, Purpose, Massive Action Plan. When you link what you want to achieve (your goal) with an unstoppable reason why you MUST achieve it (your purpose), you create the fuel for a plan that can overcome any obstacle. Ligia and I had a powerful "why" - freedom, control of our time, building something together. That "why" got us through every sleepless night, every month without a sale, every moment of doubt.

Don't Worry About Making the Right Decision. Make the Decision Right.

If there's one thing I want you to take from this chapter, it's this: the people who succeed in this business are not the smartest, the richest, or the most experienced. They're the ones who take action despite being scared. Who make a decision and then pour everything they have into making that decision work. Who understand that setbacks aren't endings - they're feedback.

Honestly, looking back, Ligia and I were full of doubt and uncertainty in those early days. We were afraid of making a misstep. We were focused on the challenges and not seeing the opportunities. We were overthinking instead of executing.

But we had three things working for us: a powerful "why," each other, and a willingness to be uncomfortable.

You have a "why" too. You picked up this book for a reason. Maybe it's freedom. Maybe it's frustration. Maybe it's fear of staying exactly where you are for the next 10 years. Whatever it is, hold onto it. Write it down. Put it somewhere you'll see it every day.

Then take a decision. Make it right. And move.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

Before we move into the specific models, I want to make sure you have something more than just the concepts in this book.

Throughout the chapters ahead, I'll reference tools, templates, and checklists that Ligia and I use in our business every day. The frameworks are right here in these pages. But the editable, ready-to-use versions - the spreadsheets, the worksheets, the stuff you can actually open on your computer and start filling in - those live in our free community space called The Flip Side.

It's where book readers connect with each other, access the tools, and start putting this into action. No cost. Just your email so we know where to send the invite.

Join us on The Flip Side at
<https://flippingdirt.us/theflipside>

Now let's dig into the models.

PART II: THE MODELS

Now that you see what's possible, let's get specific.

The next five chapters cover every capital-light model for getting into land deals. Bird dogging with zero dollars out of pocket. Controlling deals through assignments and options without ever owning the property. Wholesaling for quick profits. LandARB, where someone else acquires the deal and you sell it. And advanced structures like novation and double closes for when simpler approaches don't fit.

Each model builds on the last. Each one requires a little more skill, a little more confidence, and opens the door to a little more profit. Crawl, walk, run.

You don't need all of them. You need one that fits where you are right now.

Let's find it.

Chapter 4: Bird Dogging - Find Deals, Get Paid

If you came to me tomorrow with nothing but a phone and a free afternoon, and said “Mike, I have zero dollars but I want to get into land investing,” this is exactly where I’d point you.

Bird dogging is the absolute lowest barrier to entry in the land business. You don’t buy anything. You don’t sign a purchase agreement. You don’t take title. You don’t control a contract. What you do is connect the dots that other people are too busy to connect - and get paid for it.

It’s the crawl in our crawl-walk-run framework. And it’s where more people should start than actually do.

What a Bird Dog Actually Does

A bird dog is a matchmaker. You bring together parties who need each other - a land investor who needs buyers, or a capital partner who needs deals - and you earn a fee when the connection leads to a closed transaction. Normally this ranges from \$500 to

\$2,000 per deal, but can easily be more on larger properties.

The term comes from hunting. The bird dog doesn't take the shot. It finds the bird, flushes it out, and brings it to the hunter. In land investing, you're the scout. Someone else does the buying, selling, and closing. You get paid for the finding.

There are two ways to bird dog in land, and they require different skill levels. Let me walk you through both.

Level 1: Find Buyers for Investors Who Already Have Inventory

This is the simplest version. And for a true beginner - someone with no market knowledge, no experience evaluating deals, and no capital - this is where I'd point you.

Here's the situation: there are land investors right now who have properties sitting in their inventory. They've already bought the land. They've already done the due diligence. They know what it's worth. What they need is a buyer. And finding buyers takes time, effort, and marketing energy that many investors would happily pay someone else to handle. Heck, they typically utilize realtors in much the same way. In my experience, bird doggers outwork realtors.

You become that someone.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

The conversation sounds like this: “Hey [Investor Name], I see you have land inventory you’re looking to move. If I bring you a qualified buyer who closes, would you pay me a referral fee?” Most active investors will say yes without hesitation. A buyer who closes is worth far more to them than a \$500-\$1,000 fee.

Then your job is simple: market the property. Post it in Facebook groups. List it on Craigslist. Share it in land investing communities. Reach out to people who are actively looking to buy land in that area. You’re not negotiating price. You’re not handling contracts. You’re not doing due diligence. You’re connecting a property with someone who wants it.

This version works because you don’t need to know what a “good deal” looks like yet. The investor has already made that determination. You just need hustle, basic communication skills, and the willingness to put in the hours to find a match. (Bird dogs fall in the “working group” category for a reason!)

We’ve had hustlers approach us about doing exactly this - marketing our properties and earning a fee on the ones that sold. It makes perfect sense for both sides. The investor gets more exposure and faster sales. The bird dog gets paid to learn. Win-win!

Level 2: Find Deals for Land Investors Looking for Acquisitions

Mike Deaton

This is the more traditional version of bird dogging, and it requires more knowledge. Here, you're finding properties below market value or motivated sellers and referring those leads to land investors who have the capital and experience to close and are looking to grow.

The land investor might say: "I'm looking for vacant parcels between 1 and 10 acres in Navajo County, Arizona, that I can pick up for around \$3,000. Bring me anything that fits." Your job is to network, scour free data sources, find properties that match, do some basic research to confirm they're legitimate opportunities, and deliver those leads.

This version requires more intellectual capital - you need to understand enough about the market to recognize when something looks like a deal. You need to know how to navigate county sites for records and other sources to pull basic comparable sales. You need to understand what makes a property attractive vs. problematic (access issues, back taxes, zoning restrictions).

The good news? Every week you spend bird dogging at this level builds exactly that knowledge. You're getting a hands-on education in deal evaluation, market research, and seller dynamics. All of this will serve you well as you expand to other business models. And you're getting paid for it.

Why This Is the Smartest Way to Start

I know what you might be thinking. "\$500 a deal? That's not life-changing money."

You're right. It's not. And that's not the point.

The point is what you're getting PAID to do: learn. Every lead you research teaches you how to evaluate a market. Every conversation with a seller teaches you how motivated sellers think. Every interaction with an investor teaches you what a good deal looks like - and what a bad one looks like. Every time an investor passes on a lead, you learn why. Every time they close, you learn what made it work.

Think about what you'll know after 90 days of active bird dogging: how to read county GIS data, what comparable sales look like in multiple markets, how motivated sellers talk, what active investors look for in a deal and why they pass on certain properties, the difference between a parcel with access issues and one that's ready to sell, and the mechanics of how deals move from lead to close. All without risking a dollar.

That knowledge IS intellectual capital. And you built it while getting paid.

There's also a second benefit that most people miss: bird dogging is a capital-raising strategy. Those \$500 and \$1,000 fees add up. Do five bird dog deals and you've got \$2,500-\$5,000 in seed money. That's

enough to fund your first contract assignment, your first LandARB deal, or even your first traditional property purchase. Bird dog fees become the launchpad for everything else in this book.

A Best Practice That Applies to Every Model in This Book

Before we go further, I want to plant a seed that's relevant well beyond bird dogging.

One of the best practices we teach in coaching - and something you'll see the most efficient operators doing - is building buyer relationships early. Not as a prerequisite. You don't need a buyer lined up to start. Plenty of successful deals begin with finding the property first and then finding the buyer. But the investors who develop a sense of who's buying, what they're looking for, and where demand is strong tend to move faster and more confidently when opportunities appear.

Think of it this way: if you've spent a few weeks having conversations with people who buy land in your target market - whether they're end-users, other investors, or builders - you start to develop a feel for what sells and what doesn't. Honing that "feel" informs every future decision you make, from which markets to target to which deals to pursue to how to price your offers.

This isn't a requirement. It's a form of human capital and networking that makes everything smoother. Keep it in mind as we move through the models in this section. The ones who build these relationships - even casually - tend to accelerate faster.

Where to Find Leads and Buyers (Zero Budget)

Whether you're finding buyers for an investor's properties (Level 1) or finding deals for an investor's capital (Level 2), the tools are the same - and they're free.

For finding buyers:

Facebook Groups - There are dozens of active land buying and selling groups. People post "ISO" (in search of) requests for specific property types all the time. These are your warm leads. Search for "land" related groups and join the ones that stand out to you. Spend a little time learning the lay of the land, so to speak, and then network with active members. These connections and conversations will be gold for future business.

Craigslist - The real estate wanted section. People actively looking to buy land post here. Search your target markets and reach out.

Land investing communities - BiggerPockets, Reddit's land investing threads, Discord groups. Buyers and investors congregate in these spaces. Plug into these and let both the education and learning begin.

Local connections - Builders, contractors, and developers in growing areas are often looking for lots. A few phone calls can uncover real demand.

For finding deals:

County GIS Systems - Most counties have free online mapping tools where you can search parcels, see ownership information, and identify vacant land. This is your single best free resource.

Google Earth - Combine with GIS data to visually evaluate properties. Look at terrain, access, neighboring development, and physical characteristics.

Delinquent Tax Lists - Many counties publish lists of properties with unpaid taxes, often available through FOIA requests or directly on county websites. Owners with delinquent taxes are frequently motivated to sell.

County Assessor Websites - Free access to ownership records, tax information, and property details. Many counties also provide access to sales data. This is great for assessing market (and submarket) health as well as comp data.

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FSBO Listings - Sellers marketing their own land are often more motivated and more open to conversations. You can find these on Zillow, Facebook, and many other land listing sites.

Who to Partner With

Your bird dog business is only as good as the people you work with. For Level 1, you need investors who have inventory and will pay you for bringing buyers. For Level 2, you need investors who are actively acquiring and will pay you for bringing deals.

Here's how to find them:

Land investing communities - The same Facebook groups and forums where you find deals and buyers are where investors hang out. Pay attention to who's posting about closed deals or available inventory. Those are your potential partners.

Land listing sites - Sites like LandWatch, Land.com, LandModo, and others are full of professional land investors. Spend some time reviewing the listings and you'll quickly see the ones that stand out. Get their contact info and reach out.

YouTube and podcast communities - Land investing educators (including us at Flipping Dirt) have communities of active investors. Many are looking for exactly this kind of help.

Real estate meetups - Local and virtual. Be direct: “I’m building a deal-sourcing and buyer-finding business for land investors. I find leads and buyers, you close deals, we both profit.”

Once you’ve identified potential partners, have a direct conversation about what they need. Do they need help moving existing inventory (Level 1)? Or do they need more deal flow (Level 2)? The clearer you are about what they’re looking for, the better your results.

Scripts

Approaching an investor (Level 1 - buyer finding):

“Hey [Name], I see you have properties listed in [market]. I’m building a marketing operation focused on finding buyers for land investors. If I bring you a qualified buyer who closes, I’d like to earn a referral fee. What properties are you most motivated to move right now?”

Approaching an investor (Level 2 - deal finding):

“Hey [Name], I’m building a deal-sourcing operation for vacant land investors. I do the research legwork - finding motivated sellers, pulling property data, identifying below-market opportunities. If I bring you a solid lead that you close on, I’d like to earn a referral fee. What markets and criteria are you focused on?”

Light-touch seller conversation (Level 2 only): “Hi, I noticed you own a property at [address/APN]. I work with a group of land investors and wanted to check - have you ever considered selling? No pressure at all, just exploring.”

Keep it clean and relaxed. You’re qualifying interest, not negotiating. Don’t be afraid to position yourself as new to the business and the fact that you’re looking to hustle to get started and ramp up quickly. If the seller says yes, you pass the warm lead to your investor partner.

The Legal Line

As a bird dog, you are a referrer, not a broker. The distinction matters.

A real estate broker negotiates transactions, represents parties, and earns commissions. That requires a license. A bird dog finds leads or buyers and makes introductions. In most states, receiving a flat referral fee for connecting parties is legal as long as you’re not negotiating on behalf of either party.

That said, the legal landscape varies by state, and I’m not an attorney. Keep your role clean: find deals or buyers, make introductions, collect your fee. Don’t cross into negotiating, contracting, or representing. Do some research for any particular market that you

look to get started in. AI can be a great way to quickly find targeted information in this regard.

Get a simple finder's agreement in writing with your investor partners. One page. "I bring leads/buyers, you close deals, you pay me \$X per closed transaction." Protects both sides.

Common Mistakes

Bringing garbage leads. Quality over quantity, always. Pre-qualify what you bring - whether it's a buyer lead or a deal lead. Don't waste your partner's time with unvetted contacts.

Not following up. You send a lead and disappear. Did the investor pursue it? Did they close? Do they owe you a fee? Keep a simple spreadsheet of every lead, to whom, and the status.

Working with the wrong people. Not every investor will honor their commitment to pay. Work with people who have a reputation. Get your agreement in writing before you start sending leads.

Trying to do too much. You're a bird dog, not an assignor or wholesaler (yet). Stay in your lane, do it well, and the progression will come naturally.

The Transition

Bird dogging isn't the destination. It's the on-ramp.

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Say you commit seriously for 90 days. You partner with two or three active investors. You spend 10 hours a week finding buyers for their inventory and researching markets. Three of your leads close at \$750 average per fee. That's \$2,250.

You've also built relationships with investors who know you and trust your judgment. You've developed market knowledge in two or three counties. You understand how deals flow from lead to close. And you have seed capital that you didn't have before.

That's enough to fund an earnest money deposit on your first contract assignment. Or a down payment on a LandARB deal. Or even a small property purchase.

Maybe an investor you've been working with says "hey, why don't we partner on this next one?" Or if not a full partnership, you might at least find a mentor. Maybe you spot a deal so good that you don't want to just refer it - you want to control it.

That's the crawl becoming the walk.

Process Roadmap

1. Identify investor partners (land investors with inventory or acquisition capital)
2. Clarify their needs (buyers for existing properties? Or new deal leads?)
3. Sign a simple finder's agreement (fee per closed deal)
4. Research and hustle (free tools, communities, outreach)
5. Deliver qualified leads or buyer introductions
6. Follow up on status
7. Collect fee when deal closes
8. Reinvest fees into your next model

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Capital at a Glance

Capital Type	Requirement	Notes
Financial	None	Zero out-of-pocket cost
Human	Low	Basic communication and research skills
Social	Moderate	Need relationships with active investors
Intellectual	Low (Level 1) / Moderate (Level 2)	Level 1: just match buyer to property. Level 2: evaluate deals
Sweat Equity	High	Hours of research, outreach, and follow-up

Best Fit For: Someone with zero cash, plenty of time, and a willingness to learn by doing. Level 1 is ideal for true beginners. Level 2 suits those building market knowledge.

Typical Earnings: \$500–\$2,000 per closed deal.

Risk Profile: Time only. You don't buy anything. You don't sign anything binding. You don't control any contracts.

Now let's step into the next model - where you start controlling deals yourself.

Chapter 5: Controlling Deals Without Owning The Asset

In the last chapter, Bird Dogging, you were a matchmaker. You connected land owners with land investors, and you earned a fee for any successful transactions. You controlled nothing - no contracts, no properties, no transactions.

Now we take the first real step up.

In this chapter, you'll learn two ways to control a deal without ever taking title to the property. Both let you lock in a deal, find a buyer, and collect the profit - without the capital required to purchase the land outright. The difference between the two is the type of contract you use and the level of commitment involved.

Tool 1: Contract Assignments - You sign a purchase agreement with the seller, then transfer (assign) that agreement to your buyer. Your buyer closes directly with the seller. You collect the spread as an assignment fee.

Tool 2: Option-to-Purchase Agreements - You pay a small fee for the right (but not the obligation) to buy the property within a set timeframe. You market the

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

property, and if you find a buyer, you exercise the option or assign it. If you don't, you walk away - losing only the option fee.

Same front-end model: find a deal, get it under contract, find a buyer, collect the spread. Two different contract structures, each with its own advantages. Let's dig into both.

Contract Assignments

How It Works

With a contract assignment, you shift to controlling the deal. You have a signed purchase agreement with the seller. You have the legal right to buy that property at an agreed price. But instead of closing on it yourself, you transfer that right to purchase - your contract - to another buyer, and you collect the spread between your contract price and what the buyer is willing to pay. The contract is the asset. You never take title. You never own the property. But you control it long enough to profit from it.

How It's Different from Bird Dogging

The difference is one word: control.

As a bird dog, you have no contractual position. If the investor decides not to pursue your lead, you have no recourse. If someone else brings the same deal, you have no protection.

With an assignment, you're the one on the purchase agreement. The seller has agreed to sell to YOU or your assignee (more on that language in a minute). Until that contract expires or you assign it, nobody else can buy that property. You have leverage. You have a position. You have something of value that another investor will pay for.

How It's Different from Wholesaling

This distinction matters, and you can hear it defined differently depending on who you speak with. So let me be clear on how I define the different models.

In a contract assignment, you never take title. You don't buy the property. Your buyer closes directly with the seller. You collect an assignment fee at closing.

In wholesaling (next chapter), you actually purchase the property. You take title. You own it - even if only briefly. Then you resell it to another investor.

Why does this matter for a capital-light investor? Because assignments require almost no financial capital. Your only out-of-pocket is earnest money (often \$100-\$500 in land deals) and whatever time you invest in finding and marketing the deal.

The Assignment Process - Step by Step

Step 1: Find a deal.

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This is where your bird dogging skills pay dividends - and where the relationships you built in Chapter 4 give you a head start.

You're looking for motivated sellers with properties either priced below or that they're willing to sell below market value. The margin between what you can contract for and what a buyer will pay is your entire profit. No margin, no assignment.

For a capital-light investor, deal finding doesn't have to start with direct mail:

Networking and dead leads. Other land investors often have leads they didn't pursue - properties that came back from their mailers but didn't fit their criteria, or sellers who responded months after the campaign ended. These "dead leads" are gold for an assignor. Ask investors in your network if they have any sitting leads they'd let you work. A few will say yes - it costs them nothing, and if you close, everyone benefits.

FSBO and online listings. Sellers who are marketing their own land (Zillow, Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace, LandWatch) have already raised their hand. They want to sell. Your job is to determine if the price has room for a margin. Many FSBO sellers have been listed for months and would consider a lower offer for a quick cash close. Look for signs of distress, such as excess DOM (days on market) or even cross-reference for any back tax situations.

County records and tax data. Delinquent tax lists, inherited property records, and county assessor data are free or nearly free. Owners who owe back taxes or inherited land they don't want are among the most motivated sellers you'll find.

Direct mail (if you have a small budget). If you've accumulated even a few hundred dollars from bird dog fees, a small targeted mailing campaign (200-500 letters) can generate responses. At \$0.50-\$1.00 per letter, a \$250 campaign could yield multiple leads. This is where bird dog earnings start compounding.

Step 2: Get it under contract.

You sign a purchase agreement with the seller. Two critical elements:

First, the buyer line. Many assignors use "Your Name and/or assigns" as the buyer. This gives you the legal right to assign the contract. Some use a more detailed assignment clause that explicitly states "Buyer may assign this contract to a third party."

Second, the timeline. You need enough time between signing and the closing deadline to find your buyer. 45-60 days is safer for beginners. Longer is better, but you have to negotiate a working option with the seller.

Step 3: Find your buyer.

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This is the engine of the model - and where your social capital and hustle matter most.

This is where you need to shine. Put together a compelling sales pitch for the property - numbers tell a great story. Include the comps, the margin opportunity, the market context. Make it easy for a buyer to say yes.

Post in land investing Facebook groups. List on Craigslist and Marketplace. Share in BiggerPockets and investor forums. Reach out directly to investors who buy in that market. List on LandWatch, Land.com, and similar platforms. A warm contact with a good deal closes faster than any generic post.

Remember the best practice from Chapter 4: if you've already been building buyer relationships, this step gets dramatically easier.

Step 4: Assign the contract.

Your buyer wants the deal. You sign an assignment agreement - a simple document that transfers your rights in the purchase agreement to the new buyer. The assignment agreement specifies the assignment fee.

Step 5: Close.

The buyer closes directly with the original seller. The seller gets their agreed price, the buyer gets the property, and you get your assignment fee - paid out of the closing funds.

Assignment Worked Example

You find a 5-acre parcel in a growing Arizona market. The owner inherited it, lives out of state, and is motivated to sell for cash. Comparable sales show \$12,000-\$15,000. The owner agrees to \$5,000.

You have them sign a purchase agreement for \$5,000 with a 45-day closing window.

You market the deal. An investor agrees to take the assignment at \$8,000.

The closing happens. Seller gets \$5,000. Investor-buyer pays \$8,000. You collect a \$3,000 assignment fee.

The investor-buyer has a property worth \$12,000-\$15,000 that they paid \$8,000 for - plenty of "meat on the bone." The seller got cash for land they didn't want. You made \$3,000 without owning anything.

Option-to-Purchase Agreements

Now let's look at the second tool - and why you might choose it over an assignment in certain situations.

How It Works

An option-to-purchase agreement gives you the right - but not the obligation - to buy a property at a specific price within a specific timeframe.

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You pay the seller a small fee called the option consideration - typically \$10-\$500 in land deals. In exchange, the seller agrees not to sell the property to anyone else during the option period. You have the exclusive right to purchase.

During that window, you market the property. If you find a buyer, you either exercise the option and resell (often through a simultaneous close using the buyer's funds), or you assign the option itself for a fee. If you don't find a buyer, you let the option expire. You lose the option consideration - that's it.

The Key Difference: No Obligation

With an assignment, you've signed a purchase agreement - you're committing to buy, and your earnest money is at risk if you don't perform. With an option, you've paid for the right to buy, but you can choose not to. The option is genuinely optional.

This makes options the lowest-risk way to control a deal with actual contractual protection.

When to Use an Option Instead of an Assignment

You're not sure about resale potential. Comps are mixed, the market is slow, or you want to test buyer interest before committing. An option lets you validate demand before you're on the hook.

The property is higher value. If it's worth \$20,000-\$50,000 and you can't fund it outright, an option locks it down for a fraction of the cost. If your buyer falls through, you're out a few hundred dollars instead of thousands in earnest money.

You want to test a new market. Options are a low-cost way to get active in unfamiliar territory - secure a deal, market it, see what the buyer response looks like. All for less than the cost of a direct mail campaign.

The seller needs time. Probate, lien clearance, or just decision-making time. An option accommodates that while giving you control.

Negotiating the Option

The conversation is straightforward: "Would you be open to giving me 60-90 days to purchase this property at \$X? I'll pay you a small option fee upfront for that right. If I don't buy within that window, you keep the fee and you're free to sell to anyone."

Most sellers haven't encountered this before, so keep it simple. Cover the option price (below market), the consideration (keep it low), the option period (60-90 days minimum), and the terms (consideration typically non-refundable but credited toward purchase if exercised).

Option Worked Example

You find a 10-acre parcel. Owner lives out of state, hasn't listed it. Comps show \$8,000-\$10,000. You negotiate an option at \$4,000 with a \$200 consideration and a 90-day window.

You market the property. An investor agrees to buy at \$7,500.

You exercise the option, purchasing at \$4,000, and close the resale at \$7,500 - ideally same-day through a simultaneous close using the buyer's funds.

Profit: \$7,500 minus \$4,000 minus \$200 (option fee) minus roughly \$300 in closing costs. That's \$3,000 net on a \$200 initial investment.

If you hadn't found a buyer? You'd be out \$200. Period. That's the power of an option.

What Makes Both Tools Work in Land

A few things about land make assignments and options especially effective:

Low price points mean accessible deals. Earnest money or option fees of \$10-\$500 are normal. The financial barrier to controlling a deal is tiny.

Off-market sellers are plentiful. With 30 million+ vacant parcels in the U.S., many owned by absentee or inherited owners, motivated sellers are everywhere. Many have never listed their property, don't want to, and are motivated to sell for cash. This is where the margin lives.

Land buyers are cash buyers. Most land transactions under \$15,000 are cash deals. And when you wholesale to another land investor, deals close quickly and in cash. No waiting for bank financing approval.

Deal evaluation is straightforward. Location, access, comparable sales, back taxes, zoning, liens. Clean due diligence you can learn quickly.

The Comps Nuance - Watch for This

When pulling comparable sales data, make sure you're looking at retail sales - what end-buyers actually paid. Some recorded sales are other land investors buying at 30% of market value from motivated sellers or investor-to-investor transactions just like your deal (flipper-traded sales) at discounted prices. Those pull your comp data down.

So take a minute to dig deeper into sales data to find potential segmentation trends. Look for sales to individuals (not LLCs), sales with typical market pricing, and normal days-on-market timelines. This

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gives you a cleaner picture of what a retail buyer would actually pay - which determines your profit potential.

Common Pitfalls (Both Tools)

Overpricing your fee. There needs to be enough margin for all parties, especially the buyer, to be motivated. Leave some “meat on the bone.” A deal where everyone profits is a deal that closes.

Underestimating the timeline. Give yourself more time than you think you need. 45-60 days minimum for assignments. 60-90 days for options. Longer is better, but you have to negotiate a working arrangement with the seller.

Skipping due diligence. Just because you’re not buying doesn’t mean you can skip DD. Title issues, back taxes, or access problems discovered by your buyer kill deals and damage your reputation.

Contract language mistakes. For assignments: include “and/or assigns” or an explicit assignment clause. For options: clearly specify the option price, consideration, and expiration date. Without proper language, a title company may refuse to process the transaction.

Not finding an investor-friendly title company. Some title companies are unfamiliar with assignments or simultaneous closings. Ask around in land

investing communities. This saves you a headache at closing.

Resources

We've created downloadable contract templates - including a basic purchase agreement with assignment language and a sample option-to-purchase agreement - available at <https://flippingdirt.us/resources>. These are starting points, not legal advice. Have an attorney review any contracts before you use them. These templates and additional tools are also included in our Launchpad program.

Choosing Your Tool - Quick Reference

	Assignment	Option
Your commitment	Purchase agreement - you're committing to buy	Right to buy - no obligation
Upfront cost	Earnest money (\$100-\$500)	Option consideration (\$10-\$500)
If deal falls through	Earnest money at risk	Option fee lost (usually smaller)
Best when	You're confident in the deal and have buyers	You want to test demand or protect downside
Seller familiarity	More common, easier to explain	Less familiar, may need explanation

Process Roadmap

1. Find a motivated seller with a property below market value
2. Choose your contract tool (assignment or option) based on your confidence and the situation
3. Sign the agreement (purchase agreement with assignment clause OR option-to-purchase)
4. Conduct basic due diligence (title, taxes, access, zoning, liens)
5. Market the deal aggressively to your buyer network
6. Assign the contract/option to your buyer, or exercise and close simultaneously
7. Collect your fee/spread at closing
8. Reinvest into your next deal

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Capital at a Glance

Capital Type	Requirement	Notes
Financial	Minimal	Earnest money or option fee (\$10–\$500 typical)
Human	Moderate	Negotiation, communication, basic contract knowledge
Social	Moderate	Need relationships with both sellers and buyers
Intellectual	Moderate	Must evaluate deals accurately - comps, DD, pricing
Sweat Equity	High	Finding deals, marketing to buyers, follow-up, DD

Best Fit For: Someone with minimal cash who can hustle to find both deals and buyers, and who's comfortable with basic contracts. Assignments for confident deal-makers. Options for those who want maximum flexibility and protection.

Typical Earnings: \$2,000–\$10,000+ per deal (varies by property value, spread, and contract structure).

Mike Deaton

Risk Profile: Earnest money or option fee (small).
Time invested if deal falls through. Reputation if you
can't perform.

Now let's step into the next model - where you
actually take title and own the asset. More capital,
more control, more profit.

Chapter 6: Wholesaling - Buying Low, Selling to Another Investor

In the last chapter, you controlled a contract. You had leverage, you had a position, and you collected a fee when you transferred that position to a buyer. But you never owned the property. You never took title.

Now you do.

Wholesaling is the first model in this book where you actually buy the land. You take title. You own it. And then you sell it - not to a retail end-buyer at full market price, but to another investor at a price that's above your cost and below retail. Both of you profit. You make money on the spread between what you paid and what they pay. They make money on the spread between what they pay and what they sell it for on the open market.

This is where your capital starts working harder - and where the returns start compounding faster.

How It's Different from an Assignment

The distinction is ownership.

Mike Deaton

With an assignment, you control a contract but never take title. Your buyer closes directly with the seller. If the deal falls through, you lose your earnest money and your time - but you never owned the property.

With wholesaling, you close on the property yourself. The deed transfers to your name (or your LLC). You own the asset. Then you resell it to another investor. Your buyer closes with you, not with the original seller. The original seller is out of the picture once you've closed.

This means more financial exposure - you've put real money into the purchase. But it also means more control. You set the resale price. You choose when to sell. You can pivot your exit strategy if conditions change. And because you own the property, no one can cut you out of the deal.

An alternative view: you can work wholesales from both positions. Sometimes it's good to bypass the typical acquisition steps in land flipping and simply buy properties below market value. We did this early on in our journey. Purchased 12 small New Mexico lots for \$500 each and they ended up being some of our highest ROI deals on a percentage basis. But they only netted small actual dollar amounts as you can imagine. Most of them we sold on owner financing terms for \$99 down and \$99/mo. That was the moment for us when we realized we can do the same amount of work and effort on \$5,000 properties for a much better revenue result.

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But sometimes inventory gets low and it's a great pool to tap into to replenish and keep the business running smoothly.

Why Would You Wholesale Instead of Assign?

Good question. If assignments require less capital and less risk, why would anyone choose to wholesale?

Several reasons:

Some sellers won't allow assignments. They simply don't want to deal with the complexity. If the deal is good enough, buying outright is the path forward.

Larger spreads. When you own the property, you capture a bigger piece of the margin. An assignment fee might net you \$3,000 on a deal. Buying and reselling to an investor might net you \$5,000-\$8,000 on the same deal because you're capturing the full wholesale spread rather than just a contract transfer fee.

More control over the process. You're not racing a contract deadline to find a buyer. You own it. You can take your time marketing it (within reason - holding costs exist, but on land they're minimal). You can adjust your price. You can even shift to a retail sale or owner financing if the investor market is slow.

Credibility and positioning. Owning inventory positions you differently in the market. Other investors see you as an operator, not just a middleman. That opens doors to partnerships, deal flow, and repeat buyers.

The Numbers - How Everyone Profits

Here's the math that makes wholesaling work:

A property has a retail market value of \$4,000. You purchase it from a motivated seller for \$1,000 - roughly 25% of market value.

You resell it to Investor B for \$2,000-\$2,500. That's a 100-150% return for you - and you've done it quickly.

Investor B now owns a property worth \$4,000 that they paid \$2,000-\$2,500 for. They resell to an end-buyer at or near market value. If they sell for cash, they double their money. If they sell on owner-financed terms, they might collect \$5,000-\$6,000 over time with interest. Either way, there's plenty of margin for Investor B to profit.

This is the "meat on the bone" principle in action. You're not trying to squeeze every dollar out of the deal. You're pricing it so that the next person in the chain has a clear, motivating reason to buy from you. When everyone in the chain profits, deals close fast and relationships compound.

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This is also a core principle we teach, and it applies here directly: **You DON'T make your money on the buy** as so many in the real estate space like to say. **You DO set up the profit margin on the buy. Money only comes after the sale.** But your acquisition price determines the margin available to all parties in any transaction. Buy right, and the rest follows.

The Process - Step by Step

Step 1: Find a deal.

Same deal-finding methods as Chapter 5 - networking, dead leads, FSBO listings, county records, delinquent tax lists, and even direct offers / off-market deals if you have the budget. The difference now is that you're evaluating deals not just for assignment potential, but for purchase. You need to be confident in the property's value because you're putting your own money on the line.

Step 2: Negotiate and contract.

Get the property under contract (purchase option or agreement) at a price that leaves enough spread for both your profit and your buyer's profit. In land, this typically means acquiring at 25-40% of estimated retail market value. The lower your acquisition price, the more room you have.

Step 3: Due diligence.

This step is even more critical now because you're buying. Confirm ownership, check for liens, verify back taxes, assess access (legal and physical), check zoning, review any HOA restrictions, and pull comparable sales. You own what you buy - so know what you're buying.

Step 4: Close and take title.

Fund the purchase and close. In land deals at this price range, most transactions are cash. Title companies or closing attorneys handle the paperwork. Some investors use SimpliFile for self-closings on lower-value properties. The deed transfers to your name or your entity.

Step 5: Market to land investor buyers.

Now you resell. Your audience is other land investors - people who will buy below retail to flip at market value or sell on terms.

Your investor network. The buyer relationships you've been building since Chapter 4 are your first call. Investors who've seen your deals before, who trust your comps, who know you bring quality inventory.

Facebook groups and forums. Post the deal with clear details: location, acreage, your asking price, comparable sales, and why it's a good opportunity for the buyer.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

Land listing sites. LandWatch, Land.com, and similar platforms. Some investors list wholesale properties specifically for other investors.

Direct outreach. Email or call investors who buy in that market. A direct, personalized message with a well-packaged deal closes faster than a generic post.

Step 6: Close with your buyer.

Your buyer pays you, the deed transfers from you to them, and you pocket the spread. Clean, simple, done.

A Worked Example

You identify a 2-acre parcel in a growing rural market. County records show the owner lives out of state and has owned it for 15 years. Comparable retail sales in the area range from \$6,000-\$8,000 for similar parcels. You reach out, and the owner agrees to sell for \$2,000 - they just want it off their plate.

You close on the property. Total cost: \$2,000 purchase price plus roughly \$200 in closing costs. You're in for \$2,200.

You market it to your land investor buyer network at \$4,800. An investor who sells land on owner-financed terms in that market recognizes the opportunity - they can sell this parcel for \$8,000-\$10,000 on terms,

collecting a down payment plus monthly payments with interest. They buy from you at \$4,800.

Your profit: \$2,600 on a \$2,200 investment. That's a 118% return. The investor-buyer has a property they can sell for double or more on terms. The original seller got quick cash for land they didn't want. Everyone wins.

Now take that \$4,800 in proceeds and roll it into two more deals at the same price point. The flywheel turns.

Keith's Progression - From Assignments to Ownership

Remember Keith from Chapter 1? He started with LandARB - minimal capital, real deals, proving the model worked. His early Arizona assignments generated \$6,000 in profit without ever owning property outright.

But then he did something that's relevant to this chapter: he reinvested. He bought two traditional properties for \$2,200 each and flipped them for close to \$6,000 each. Then he leveled up to a 40-acre property - purchased for \$12,000, sold for \$36,000 in three weeks.

That progression from assignment profits into wholesale purchases into larger flips is exactly the

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

capital ladder this book is built around. Each rung funds the next. Keith didn't start by buying a \$12,000 property. He started by controlling deals with minimal capital, proved the model, generated seed money, and then stepped into ownership when he had the confidence and the capital to do it.

That's the walk becoming the run.

Holding Costs - The Trade-Off

Here's the reality of ownership that doesn't exist with assignments or bird dogging: holding costs.

When you own land, you're responsible for property taxes from the moment you close until you sell. The good news? On vacant land, property taxes are often remarkably low. We're talking \$50-\$200 per year on many rural parcels. That's not going to break you even if it takes a few months to find a buyer.

But it IS a real cost, and it matters when you're operating with limited capital. Every month you hold a property is a month that capital isn't working on the next deal. This is why pricing your wholesale deals competitively matters - you want turnover. A property that sits for six months earning you \$3,000 is a worse use of capital than one that moves in three weeks for \$2,000.

Speed and capital velocity. That's the wholesaler's mantra (and the land flipper's too!).

When to Wholesale vs. Assign

A quick decision framework:

Assign when: You have minimal capital. The deal is small. You have a buyer ready. The seller allows assignment. You want to minimize risk and move fast.

Wholesale when: You have seed capital (even \$1,000-\$3,000). The spread is large enough to justify ownership. The seller won't allow assignment. You want more control and a bigger share of the profit. You're building inventory and an investor buyer network.

Many operators do both, depending on the deal. Some deals are better as quick assignments. Others are worth buying. Having both tools in your belt makes you more versatile.

Where the Capital Comes From

If you've been following the progression in this book, you already know the answer: bird dog fees and assignment profits.

Say you earned \$2,250 from bird dogging over 90 days (Chapter 4). Then you closed two assignments at

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

\$2,500 each (Chapter 5). You now have \$7,250 in capital you didn't have six months ago.

That's enough to buy multiple wholesale properties in many markets. A \$1,000 parcel here, a \$2,500 parcel there. Each one you resell generates more capital for the next purchase. The flywheel starts turning.

This is the crawl-walk-run progression in action. You crawled as a bird dog. You walked through assignments. Now you're running - buying real assets, building real inventory, compounding real capital.

Common Pitfalls

Overpaying. The single biggest risk in wholesaling. If you misjudge comps or get emotionally attached to a deal and pay too much, your margin evaporates. Discipline on acquisition pricing is everything.

Holding too long. Price to move. If a property sits for 60-90 days without interest, reassess your pricing. Sitting on inventory ties up capital and slows your growth.

Ignoring due diligence. You own it now. Title issues, access problems, undisclosed liens - these are YOUR problems after closing. Do thorough DD every time.

Not leaving enough margin for your buyer. If your wholesale price is too close to retail, investors won't

buy it. They need room to profit. Price your wholesale deals so the next investor can clearly see the opportunity.

Process Roadmap

1. Find a motivated seller with a property well below market value
2. Negotiate and get under contract (target 25-40% of retail value)
3. Conduct thorough due diligence (title, taxes, access, zoning, liens, HOA)
4. Close and take title (fund the purchase)
5. Market to land investor buyers (network, groups, listing sites, direct outreach)
6. Close with your buyer and collect the spread
7. Reinvest capital into next deal(s)

Capital at a Glance

Capital Type	Requirement	Notes
Financial	Moderate	Must fund the purchase (\$500–\$5,000+ typical for starter deals)
Human	Moderate	Negotiation, due diligence, marketing
Social	Moderate	Investor buyer network is critical
Intellectual	Moderate	Comps must be accurate - you're buying, not just assigning
Sweat Equity	Moderate	Deal finding, DD, marketing, buyer outreach

Best Fit For: Someone who has recycled bird dog or assignment fees into seed capital, or who has \$1,000–\$5,000 to invest and wants full control of the deal.

Typical Earnings: \$1,000–\$5,000+ per deal (depending on property value and spread).

Risk Profile: You own the property until it sells. Holding costs (taxes, minimal). Must price comps correctly or risk overpaying.

Mike Deaton

Not every deal requires you to buy it - or even find it yourself. In the next chapter, we'll look at a way to lock down a deal with zero to minimal capital and maximum flexibility, giving you the ability to flip vacant land deals and build real momentum.

Chapter 7: LandARB - Someone Else Acquires the Deal. You Sell It.

Every model we've covered so far has one thing in common: you're doing the work on the front end. You're finding the deals, sourcing the sellers, pulling comps, running due diligence. Whether you're bird dogging, assigning, or buying outright, the deal-finding engine is yours to build and run.

LandARB flips that script.

With LandARB (short for Land Arbitrage), an experienced land investor has already done the hard work. They've mailed the letters, negotiated with the seller, purchased the property, completed the due diligence, and confirmed the market value. They have inventory - real properties, already acquired, already vetted.

Your job? Buy those properties from them on terms, then resell to retail buyers at market value. The experienced investor makes their profit on the wholesale. You make your profit on the retail sale. Everyone doubles their money.

And the entry cost? A doc fee and a small down payment. We're talking a couple hundred dollars to get into a real deal.

How LandARB Works

The concept is simple. It's wholesale - but instead of paying the full wholesale price in cash upfront, you purchase on terms.

Here's the math. Say an experienced investor (Investor A) finds a 1-acre property worth \$4,000 at retail. They purchase it from the motivated seller for \$1,000. The standard expectation in a wholesale transaction is that each person in the chain doubles their money.

If Investor A wholesales it to you for cash, you'd pay \$2,000 and then sell for \$4,000. Everybody makes 2x.

But with LandARB, instead of paying \$2,000 cash upfront, you purchase on terms. A typical structure might look like:

- \$25 doc fee
- \$150 down payment
- Monthly payments over 36 months (principal + interest)

The total you'll pay over the life of the note will be slightly more than \$2,000 because of the interest

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

component - the experienced investor is extending you credit, and that has a cost. But your initial out-of-pocket? Under \$200. That's it. You now have a real property to market and sell.

The moment you sign the LandARB contract, you begin marketing that property. You don't wait. You have the due diligence report. You have the marketing photos. You have the market data. Your focus from minute one is finding a buyer - because the business's number one priority is making money.

Two Exit Scenarios

When you find a buyer, one of two things happens:

Scenario 1: Cash buyer. Your buyer pays you cash for the property. You use those proceeds to pay off the remaining balance with Investor A. The deed transfers from Investor A to you, and then from you to your buyer. Clean, fast, profitable.

Scenario 2: Terms buyer. Your buyer purchases on owner-financed terms from you - say \$99 down and \$99/month. You continue making your monthly payments to Investor A while collecting higher payments from your retail buyer. The spread between what you pay Investor A and what your buyer pays you is your profit. Over time, you collect the full retail price while only paying the wholesale price. This creates monthly cash flow from day one.

In either scenario, the math works because Investor A bought at 25% of market value, wholesaled to you at 50%, and you're selling at or near 100%. There's room in the chain for everyone to profit.

Why LandARB Is Powerful for Capital-Light Investors

Let me be direct about why this model is in this book - and why it might be the most important chapter for someone starting with very little capital.

Cost savings. Instead of spending hundreds on mailers and \$1,000+ to purchase your first property, you can begin your land business with a couple hundred dollars. No mailing costs. No list-building costs. No due diligence costs. The experienced investor has absorbed all of that.

Time savings. We mail 1,500+ letters per month, and what we've found is that responses to mailers are like clockwork. On average, it's a 6-8 week turnaround from your first mailer until you get your first response back. Response rates can vary from 0-3%, and until you've spent time in a market, you just don't know. With LandARB, you skip that entire ramp-up period. You start with inventory on day one.

Marketing focus. Too often, new land investors splurge a major portion of their initial capital on things that don't bring money into the bank account -

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

lists, mailers, data subscriptions, websites, logos, CRMs, tools. LandARB lets you concentrate on the one activity that generates revenue: selling.

Market expertise. Most new investors aren't sure which county to start with. They spread their mailings across multiple markets, casting a wide net. That means more ads, more marketing, more time learning different areas, different restrictions. With LandARB, you can become a specialist in a particular area - the area where the experienced investor already has inventory. That specialization sets you apart from your competition.

Built-in inventory depth. Seasoned investors will tell you to keep 7-10 properties in your inventory at all times. Why? When you find an interested buyer, you can offer them more than one option. If the first property isn't right, you've got six to nine others in the same area. More properties, more chances to make a sale. LandARB gives you that inventory depth from the start.

Reduced risk. Here's something most models can't offer: if for any reason you decide the land business isn't for you, or you want to work a different area, you can cancel the LandARB contract and return the properties without penalty. Instead of being stuck with thousands of dollars' worth of inventory, you walk away clean. That reduces your risk tremendously.

Keith's Story - The Capital Ladder in Action

Keith was a W-2 employee who also flipped houses on the side. He understood real estate. He'd lived the contractor headaches, the renovation budgets, the timeline overruns. When he came to us, he had some capital but wasn't willing to risk it until he had proof that the land model actually worked.

So we pointed him toward LandARB.

He connected with a LandARB provider, reserved a few properties in Arizona, and started marketing. He found cash buyers for two parcels. And after finding those buyers, he went ahead and outright purchased each parcel at around \$2,500, resold for \$5,500 cash. Six thousand dollars in profit without ever going through the full acquisition cycle himself.

That \$6,000 became seed capital.

He reinvested into two traditional purchases at \$2,200 each. Flipped them for close to \$6,000 each. Then he leveled up to a 40-acre property - \$12,000 purchase, sold for \$36,000...in just three weeks. Real momentum and real simplicity.

What struck me most about Keith wasn't the numbers - it was his reaction. He was literally astounded at how simple the model is. This is a guy who'd flipped houses. Who understood complexity. When he

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

experienced the simplicity of land, it fundamentally changed his perspective.

“This is so much simpler,” he told me. Not easier - simpler. There’s a difference.

Keith’s progression is the capital ladder this entire book is built around:

LandARB (under \$200 in) → Cash from sales →
Traditional purchases → Larger flips →
Compounding growth

He didn’t start by buying a \$12,000 property. He started with a couple hundred dollars and LandARB. Each rung funded the next. That’s the crawl-walk-run progression working exactly as designed.

The Deed Question

One important detail to understand: with LandARB, the experienced investor (Investor A) retains the deed until you’ve paid off the balance. The property is recorded in their name, not yours. When you pay off the remaining balance, the deed transfers to you - and then you transfer it to your buyer.

So how fast do you want the deed in your name? That depends on your exit strategy.

If you sell for cash and can pay off Investor A quickly, the deed transfer can happen fast - especially if the

county uses SimpliFile for electronic recording. If the county requires physical mail for deed recording, factor in some additional time.

If you sell on terms and continue making monthly payments to Investor A while collecting from your buyer, you'll carry that arrangement longer. The deed stays with Investor A until you pay off, so plan your timeline accordingly.

This isn't a problem - it's just a structure you need to understand and work with.

Pass-Through Costs

Beyond the doc fee, down payment, and monthly payments, there are a few additional costs that may get added to your monthly obligation:

- **Note servicing fee:** Typically \$5-\$35/month for payment processing.
- **Property taxes:** Estimated, prorated annual taxes charged monthly.
- **HOA dues:** If applicable.

Here's the key: all of these costs should be passed along to your retail buyer. They're not actually a cost to you - they're built into the terms you offer your buyer. In fact, many land investors charge their retail buyers a higher servicing fee, creating a small additional margin.

Finding LandARB Opportunities

LandARB relationships typically form within land investing communities. Experienced investors who have more inventory than they can sell - or who specifically want to help newer investors get started - will offer properties on LandARB terms.

Land investing groups and forums. Facebook groups, BiggerPockets land threads, and dedicated land investing communities are where these opportunities surface. Watch for posts from investors offering wholesale or LandARB deals.

Direct networking. The connections you've built through bird dogging and earlier chapters are your best resource. Investors you've worked with may have properties they'd offer you on terms once they see your hustle and reliability.

LandARB programs. Some investors run structured LandARB programs with curated inventory, due diligence packages, and marketing materials included. These remove much of the guesswork for beginners.

Coaching communities. Many land investing coaching programs facilitate LandARB deals between experienced members and newer students. This is one of the tangible benefits of investing in education and community early.

Common Pitfalls

Sitting on inventory without marketing. The clock is ticking on your monthly payments to Investor A whether you're marketing or not. Start marketing the day you sign the contract. Every day you wait is a day you're paying without earning.

Not passing through costs. Make sure your retail buyer's terms include property taxes, servicing fees, and any HOA dues. If you absorb these, they eat into your margin.

Choosing properties you don't understand. Even though the experienced investor has done the due diligence, take time to understand the property and the market. You're the one marketing and selling it. Know what you're selling.

Underpricing your retail sale. The standard expectation is that each person doubles their money. If you're selling below market value, you're leaving profit on the table. Don't shortchange yourself.

Process Roadmap

1. Connect with an experienced land investor offering LandARB properties
2. Review available inventory and select properties in a market you want to learn
3. Pay the doc fee and down payment to reserve your properties
4. Sign the LandARB contract
5. Download due diligence reports and marketing materials
6. Begin marketing immediately (Facebook, Craigslist, land listing sites, local outreach)
7. Find a buyer (cash or terms)
8. Pay off the remaining balance to Investor A (lump sum or continued monthly payments)
9. Receive the deed transfer and complete the sale to your buyer
10. Reinvest profits into your next deal - whether that's more LandARB or traditional acquisitions

Capital at a Glance

Capital Type	Requirement	Notes
Financial	Very Low	Doc fee + down payment only (\$100–\$300 typical per property)
Human	Moderate	Marketing, buyer communication, basic terms negotiation
Social	Low	LandARB provider handles the front end; you focus on selling
Intellectual	Low	DD is provided; you need to understand the market and property basics
Sweat Equity	Moderate	Marketing effort and buyer outreach are your primary contribution

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

Best Fit For: Someone with very limited capital who wants real inventory to sell from day one, without the time and cost of building their own acquisition pipeline. Also ideal as a proving ground - test the model, build confidence, generate seed capital.

Typical Earnings: Varies by property, but the standard expectation is 2x your total investment. On a \$2,000 wholesale property sold at \$4,000 retail, your gross profit is \$2,000 minus fees.

Risk Profile: Very low. Down payment and monthly payments at risk. Can cancel and return properties without penalty. No mailing costs, no DD costs, no acquisition risk.

We've now covered five distinct models for flipping land with little to no money - from bird dogging (zero capital) through LandARB (minimal capital with built-in inventory). In the next chapter, we'll look at two more advanced transaction structures - novation deals and double closes - that give you additional tools for specific situations where a standard assignment or wholesale doesn't quite fit.

Chapter 8: Advanced Moves - Novation Deals and Double Closes

At this point, you have a solid toolkit. Bird dogging, assignments, options, wholesaling, and LandARB cover the vast majority of deal structures you'll encounter as a capital-light investor.

But every once in a while, you'll run into a situation where none of those tools quite fit. The seller won't allow an assignment. The assignment fee is large enough that it might spook the buyer. A retail buyer wants to use financing, and their lender won't process an assignment. Or you want more transactional privacy - you'd rather the seller and buyer not see each other's numbers.

That's where novation deals and double closes come in. These are advanced transaction structures that solve specific problems. They're not your everyday tools - they're the ones you reach for when the standard approaches hit a wall.

I want to be upfront: these are more complex than anything else in this book. Most beginners won't need them on their first few deals. But understanding them now means you'll recognize the situations where they

apply - and you won't walk away from a profitable deal just because the standard playbook doesn't fit.

Double Closing (Back-to-Back Closings)

A double close is the simpler of the two, so let's start here.

What It Is

In a double close, you actually purchase the property and then immediately resell it - often on the same day, sometimes within hours. Two separate transactions happen back-to-back. And here's what makes it relevant to this book: when structured correctly, you may not need to bring any of your own money to the table.

Transaction 1 (A→B): You (Investor B) buy the property from the original seller (Seller A) at your contracted price.

Transaction 2 (B→C): You immediately sell the property to your end-buyer (Buyer C) at a higher price.

You become the owner of record - but only for minutes or hours. The deed goes from A to you, then from you to C. Two closings, two sets of paperwork, one profit.

Why Would You Double Close Instead of Assign?

A few specific situations:

The seller or title company won't allow an assignment. Some contracts prohibit it. Some title companies are unfamiliar with assignments and refuse to process them. A double close sidesteps this entirely - you're simply buying and selling, which every title company understands.

You want transactional privacy. With an assignment, the seller often sees what the buyer is paying (your fee shows up on the closing statement). With a double close, each party only sees their own transaction. The seller sees their sale price. The buyer sees their purchase price. Your profit stays between you and the closing agent.

The spread is large. If you're buying at \$5,000 and your buyer is paying \$12,000, a \$7,000 assignment fee on the closing statement might raise eyebrows. A double close keeps the numbers clean - each side sees a normal-looking transaction.

Your buyer is using financing. Most land deals are cash, but occasionally a buyer uses a lender. Many lenders won't fund a deal with an assignment in the chain. A double close puts you in the chain of title as a legitimate seller, which satisfies lender requirements.

How It Works - The “No Money Out of Pocket” Scenario

You get the property under contract with Seller A at your negotiated price. You find Buyer C and get them under contract at a higher price. You schedule both closings for the same day with the title company.

Here’s where it gets interesting: in the ideal scenario, the title company uses Buyer C’s funds to complete your purchase from Seller A. You never bring the purchase price to the table. C’s money pays A, covers closing costs on both transactions, and what’s left is your profit. You walk away having bought and sold a property without using any of your own capital.

This is sometimes called a “dry double close” or “simultaneous close” - and many investor-friendly title companies handle them routinely.

But not all title companies will use C’s funds to pay A. Some require you to bring your own money for the A→B leg. In that case, you have two options:

Use your own cash. If you have the capital available, you fund the purchase, then get repaid from C’s funds hours later.

Transactional funding. Specialized short-term lenders (sometimes called “flash funders”) will wire you the purchase amount for the A→B closing, with the agreement that you repay them the same day from the B→C closing proceeds. They typically

charge a flat fee (\$1,000-\$1,500) or 1-2% of the funded amount. This fee comes out of your profit.

Transactional funding only makes sense when your profit is large enough to absorb the cost. If your spread is \$2,000 and the funder charges \$1,500, the math doesn't work. In that case, assign the deal instead.

The Cost Trade-Off

Double closes come with extra costs: two sets of closing fees, potentially two title insurance policies, two sets of recording fees. This can add up depending on the deal size and location.

One thing to know: many title companies offer a discounted or waived second title insurance premium when both transactions close on the same day or within a short window. This is sometimes called a "simultaneous issue" rate or "hold-open" policy. It can save you several hundred dollars on the deal. Ask your title company about this upfront - it's standard practice at investor-friendly companies but not always offered automatically.

Even with discounts, factor the extra costs into your numbers before committing to a double close. The spread needs to be large enough that these costs don't eat your profit. For smaller land deals (under \$10,000), assignments are usually more cost-effective.

Double closes make more financial sense on larger deals where the absolute profit justifies the extra expenses.

Novation Deals

Novation is the most advanced strategy in this book. It's not for your first deal - or your fifth. But it's worth understanding because it opens a door that no other model can: selling to retail buyers without taking title.

What It Is - And Where the Term Comes From

The word "novation" comes from the Latin *novāre*, meaning "to make new." The concept originated in Roman law, where it was one of three standard methods for modifying legal obligations: substituting a new debtor, a new creditor, or replacing an entire contract. The term entered English law in the 16th century and has been a standard tool in business and commercial transactions ever since - used in mergers, lease transfers, loan assumptions, and development deals for decades. Nothing new about the mechanism itself.

What is relatively new is its application in real estate investing as a wholesaling exit strategy. That took off around 2020-2022, driven largely by a handful of investors and educators who recognized that the traditional wholesale formula was breaking down. In the hot seller's market of that era, property owners

stopped accepting the deep discounts that wholesaling required. Deals were falling apart because sellers wouldn't budge on price. Investors like Eric Brewer (who developed what became known as "The Brewer Method") and Corey Geary (who scaled the approach nationwide and built a community he called "Novation Nation") began applying this centuries-old legal concept to solve a modern problem: how do you profit from a deal when the seller won't take a wholesale price and your best buyer is a retail consumer, not a cash investor?

The answer was novation. Instead of assigning the contract to another investor at a discount, you novate it - replace your contract with a new one between the seller and a retail end-buyer at or near market value. The strategy gave wholesalers a way to monetize leads they'd normally walk away from by accessing the full retail buyer pool, including financed buyers, instead of being limited to cash investors.

So how does this work in practice?

In a novation, you get a property under contract with the seller, then find a new buyer - typically a retail end-buyer or consumer, not an investor. Instead of assigning your contract or double closing, you work with the seller to replace your contract with a new one between the seller and the end-buyer. The original contract is "novated" - canceled and replaced with something new.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

You're paid out of the closing proceeds through a separate agreement. You never appear in the chain of title. The seller sells directly to the end-buyer.

When Would You Use a Novation?

Your best buyer is a retail buyer, not an investor. Most of the models in this book assume your buyer is another investor buying below market. But sometimes the best (and most profitable) exit is a retail sale at or near full market value. Novation lets you capture that retail spread without purchasing the property yourself.

The buyer needs bank financing. Banks generally won't fund an assignment. And some have "seasoning" requirements that prevent funding a purchase from someone who just acquired the property (which would block a double close). A novation creates a clean transaction between the seller and the financed buyer.

You want to market the property as if you were the seller. With a novation agreement and sometimes a limited power of attorney, you can list the property, field buyer inquiries, negotiate with the end-buyer, and essentially control the sale process - without owning the property.

How It Works

You get the property under contract at a discounted price. Then you and the seller sign a novation

agreement - a separate document that gives you authority to market the property and find a buyer, and states that when you do, the seller will sign a new contract with that buyer and pay you an agreed amount from the proceeds.

You market the property at or near retail value. When you find a buyer, the seller executes a new purchase agreement with them. Your original contract is released. At closing, the settlement statement includes your fee as a line item - paid from the buyer's funds.

The seller gets their agreed price. The buyer gets the property. You get paid for finding the buyer and orchestrating the transaction.

Why It's Advanced

Novation requires:

Seller cooperation. The seller needs to understand and agree to a more complex arrangement than a standard sale. Not all sellers will.

Legal paperwork. Novation agreements, potential power of attorney, coordination between multiple contracts. This isn't a one-page assignment form.

A knowledgeable title company or attorney. Many are unfamiliar with novation structures. You need professionals who've handled these before.

Patience and marketing skill. You're marketing to retail buyers, which typically takes longer than

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

finding an investor buyer. And you're managing a relationship with the seller throughout the process.

For capital-light investors, the appeal of novation is that you can capture a retail-level spread without funding the purchase. The risk is complexity and the chance that the deal falls apart due to any number of moving parts.

A Practical Decision Framework

Here's how to think about which tool to use:

Situation	Best Tool
You have a buyer ready. Seller allows assignment. Small deal.	Assignment
You want to test demand before committing.	Option
You have capital and want full control.	Wholesale (buy and resell)
Seller won't allow assignment. Large spread. Want privacy.	Double Close
Best buyer is retail. Buyer needs financing. Higher-value property.	Novation

Most of your early deals will use assignments, options, or LandARB. As you gain experience and encounter more complex situations, double closes and novation become valuable additions to your toolkit.

Common Pitfalls

Not coordinating with the title company in advance. Both double closes and novations require title companies that understand the transaction structure. Don't surprise them on closing day. Discuss the deal type upfront and confirm they'll process it.

Underestimating double close costs. Two closings means two sets of fees. Ask about simultaneous issue discounts on title insurance. Do the math before committing - make sure the spread justifies the extra expense.

Attempting novation without legal support. Novation agreements need to be drafted or reviewed by an attorney familiar with real estate transactions in your state. Don't try to DIY this from a template you found online or through your "AI Legal team."

Overcomplicating simple deals. If an assignment works, do an assignment. If a wholesale works, do a wholesale. Double closes and novations are for situations where simpler tools won't get the job done. Don't use a sledgehammer when a regular hammer works fine.

Process Roadmap - Double Close

1. Get the property under contract with Seller A
2. Find Buyer C and get them under contract at a higher price
3. Coordinate with an investor-friendly title company for back-to-back closings
4. Arrange funding for A→B leg (C's funds, your own cash, or transactional funding)
5. Close A→B and B→C on the same day
6. Collect your spread from the proceeds

Process Roadmap - Novation

1. Get the property under contract with the seller at a discounted price
2. Sign a novation agreement giving you authority to market and find a buyer
3. Market the property at or near retail value
4. Find a retail buyer
5. Seller signs new purchase agreement with end-buyer (your original contract is released)
6. Close - your fee is paid from the buyer's funds per the novation agreement

Capital at a Glance

Capital Type	Double Close	Novation
Financial	Low-Moderate (earnest money + possible transactional funding fee)	Low-Moderate (earnest money + marketing costs)
Human	Moderate (coordination, timing)	High (seller management, legal docs, marketing)
Social	Moderate (need investor-friendly title company)	Moderate-High (seller trust, legal contacts)
Intellectual	Moderate (understand dual closing mechanics)	High (contracts, novation law, retail marketing)
Sweat Equity	Moderate	High

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

Best Fit For: Experienced investors who've completed several standard deals and encounter situations where assignments or wholesaling won't work. Not recommended for first-time deals.

Typical Earnings: Double close - similar to wholesale spreads but with additional closing costs. Novation - potentially higher margins due to retail pricing, but more time and complexity.

Risk Profile: Double close - similar to assignment risk, plus transactional funding costs if needed. Novation - higher complexity risk, seller cooperation required, longer timeline, and potential for deal to unwind.

That completes Part II of this book.

You now have a full toolkit of capital-light models. Bird dogging, assignments, options, wholesaling, LandARB, novation, double close. Any one of these can get you into the land business without a big bank account.

But knowing the models and executing the models are two different things.

If you haven't already, head over to The Flip Side at <https://flippingdirt.us/theflipside> and grab the editable Model Selection Decision Tree, the Five Capitals Assessment Worksheet, and the Deal Ranking Matrix. These are the tools that take what you just read and turn it into a decision you can act on.

And if you want guidance on progressing through market evaluation, list building, and deal analysis - exactly how I'd approach each step - we built *Flipping Dirt with Little to No Money: The Implementation System* for exactly that. It's a full course with video walkthroughs, expanded templates, and a community of people doing the work alongside you. You can find details at the link above and in the community.

Either way, you're equipped. Let's keep building momentum.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

In Part III, we shift from the “what and how” of deal structures to the practical systems that make everything work - seller financing, joint ventures, deal flow, and building your first deal plan.

PART III: CREATIVE CAPITAL & SCALING FROM ZERO

You've learned the models. Now let's talk about how to fuel them - and how to turn your first deal into a business that grows on its own.

The next three chapters cover the creative capital strategies that multiply your reach: negotiating seller financing on properties you buy, partnering with capital providers through joint ventures, and the reinvestment engine that compounds one deal into momentum.

This is where the math starts working in your favor. Not because you suddenly have more money. Because you know how to make every dollar - and every deal - do more.

Chapter 9: Seller Financing on the Buy Side - Negotiating Your Way In

Welcome to Part III. If Part II gave you the toolkit - the models for getting into deals with little to no money - Part III is about creative capital structures that multiply your reach. These concepts in Part III aren't business models. They're the financing strategies that ideally work alongside any model you choose.

And the first one is a concept you already understand, even if you don't realize it yet.

Flipping the Script

If you've read *Flipping Dirt* or spent any time in the land investing world, you've heard about owner financing on the sell side. You buy a property for cash, then sell it with terms - a down payment and monthly installments from your buyer. It's one of the most powerful strategies in land investing. It lets you sell faster, sell at a higher price, and create passive income through a portfolio of "notes" - promissory notes to be exact.

But here's what most beginners never consider: the same tool works in reverse.

Seller financing on the buy side means the person selling you the property agrees to let you pay over time instead of requiring all cash at closing. They become your lender. You make a down payment - sometimes very small - and then monthly payments until the balance is paid off.

Same concept. Same mechanics. Just flipped around. Instead of you being the bank for your buyer, the seller is being the bank for you.

Why Vacant Land Sellers Carry Terms

It's a powerful method in real estate in general, and land is no different.

Banks generally don't finance raw land purchases under \$15,000, especially if you're not intending to develop it in any way and even more so if you're planning to flip it. There's no structure to appraise, no rental income to underwrite, and the loan amounts are too small for most lenders to bother with. That means the vast majority of vacant land transactions are cash deals.

This creates a problem for sellers. Their buyer pool is limited to people who can pay cash. And for properties that have been sitting unsold for months or

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

years, the seller's options narrow further. They're often sitting on a property they don't want, paying taxes on it every year, and watching it go nowhere.

Enter you with a creative offer.

When you propose seller financing, you're not asking for charity. You're solving a problem. You're giving the seller something they might not be able to get otherwise: a sale. Plus, you're offering them something a cash buyer doesn't - interest income over time. Many sellers, once they understand the structure, realize they can actually make more money by carrying terms than by accepting a discounted cash offer.

Here's the math. Say a property is worth \$10,000. A cash buyer might offer \$5,000 - take it or leave it. You offer \$8,000 on terms: \$1,000 down, the remaining \$7,000 at 8% interest over 36 months. The seller gets a higher total price (\$8,000 plus interest), regular monthly income (\$219/month), and a sale they couldn't otherwise close. You get a property with only \$1,000 out of pocket.

That's the deal. Both sides win.

36 months is really just a timeframe example. In reality, you'd scope this tighter to your strategy and market dynamics. This could be 6- or 12-months in a market you're comfortable with and confident in the likelihood of a flip. You could also specify details around an early payoff, even putting in a discount if

you pay off early...or leave it as-is as a perk for the seller. Remember, you're likely getting 100%+ ROI on your flip, so 7% to the seller is nearly a rounding error and can easily be absorbed into the deal.

When Sellers Are Most Likely to Say Yes

Not every seller will agree to terms. But certain situations make it much more likely:

Long-term owners who inherited the property. They've been paying taxes for years on land they'll never use. Their basis is low or zero. They just want relief and closure. A down payment and monthly income feels better than continuing to hold and pay taxes for nothing.

Properties that have been listed for a long time without selling. The longer a property sits, the more motivated the seller becomes. If it's been listed for six months and the only offers are lowball cash bids, your terms offer starts looking very attractive.

Sellers who don't need immediate cash. This is the key qualifier. If a seller needs money right now to pay medical bills or settle a debt, terms won't work. But many landowners aren't in a rush. They'd rather have a steady income stream than a one-time lump sum they'll spend and forget.

Out-of-state owners. Absentee landowners often have the least emotional attachment and the most motivation to simplify their financial life. Monthly payments from you beats annual property tax bills from the county.

Older sellers planning for retirement income. Some sellers like the idea of a note paying them monthly. It's like a small annuity. For a retired couple, an extra \$200/month from a land note can be meaningful.

The sellers who are least likely to carry terms: anyone who needs cash immediately, anyone selling in a competitive market with multiple cash offers, and anyone selling through a bank-owned or auction process. Don't waste your time pitching terms to a bank REO department.

How to Approach the Conversation

This is where most beginners freeze up. They know the concept but they're terrified of the conversation. "How do I ask a stranger to be my bank?"

Here's the thing. You're not asking them to be your bank. You're making an offer that includes a payment structure. That's it. Sellers hear offers all day. Yours just has a different structure than the others.

The key is to lead with what the seller gets, not what you need.

Mike Deaton

Instead of: "I can't afford to pay cash, so would you be willing to let me make payments?"

Try: "I'd like to make you an offer that gets you a higher price than you'd see from a cash buyer, plus monthly income over the next few years. Would you be open to discussing terms?"

The first version sounds like you're begging. The second sounds like you're offering something valuable. Same deal. Completely different framing.

A few practical approaches that work:

The two-offer method. Present two offers side by side. Offer A is a lower cash price. Offer B is a higher price on terms. "I can do \$4,500 cash and close in two weeks, or, if you're open to a creative arrangement, I can do \$7,500 in total, with \$1,000 down and monthly payments over three years. Which sounds better to you?" This gives the seller a choice and lets the math speak for itself.

The interest angle. Some sellers perk up when they hear the word "interest." "You'd be earning 8% on your money - better than any savings account or CD right now. And the property secures the loan, so if I stop paying, you get the land back."

The tax advantage mention. When a seller receives the full purchase price in one year, they may owe taxes on the entire gain that year. With an installment sale, they can spread the tax hit across multiple years.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

This is a real benefit for sellers with low-basis properties, especially inherited land. (Note: always recommend the seller consult their tax professional. Don't give tax advice.)

Structuring the Terms

Once the seller is open to the idea, you need to agree on the specifics. Here's what a seller-financed land acquisition looks like:

Down payment. In land deals, this can range from 0% to 20% of the purchase price. Realistically, most sellers want some skin in the game from you - it shows commitment and reduces their risk. Common range: 10-20%. On a \$5,000 property, that's \$500-\$1,000. On very motivated sellers or very cheap land, you might negotiate even lower. Some sellers have accepted token amounts - \$100 or \$200 - just to get the deal moving.

Interest rate. Land seller financing typically runs 6-12%, with 8-10% being the most common range. This is higher than a traditional mortgage, but remember - there's no bank involved, no credit check, no underwriting. The seller is taking on risk and deserves compensation for it. That said, some sellers don't think much about interest rates. They're more focused on the monthly payment amount and the total price. Occasionally, you'll find a seller willing to

do 0% interest just to move the property. It happens. Don't count on it, but don't be afraid to ask.

Term length. Most land notes run 2-5 years for lower-value properties. Longer terms (up to 10 years) are possible on higher-value parcels. Shorter terms mean higher monthly payments but less interest paid overall. Longer terms mean lower payments but more total cost. As the buyer, shorter terms are generally better for you - you pay off the debt faster and can resell or refinance sooner. But the monthly payment needs to be manageable within your cash flow.

Security instrument. This is how the deal is legally structured. The two most common approaches in land are:

A **land contract (contract for deed)** means the seller retains legal title until you've paid in full. If you default, the seller can reclaim the property relatively simply - they never gave up the deed. This is simpler and cheaper to set up, and many land sellers prefer it because they maintain control.

A **promissory note with deed of trust (or mortgage)** means the seller transfers the deed to you at closing, but a lien is recorded against the property. If you default, the seller would need to foreclose, which is more complex. This gives the buyer (you) more rights and is generally considered more protective of the buyer's interests.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

Which one you use often depends on state law and local custom. Work with a title company or real estate attorney who understands these instruments in your state. This isn't a place to cut corners. You also want to strongly consider your business case and make sure any arrangement allows flexibility or you to achieve your goal - cash flips, financed deal, buy and hold, etc.

The Wrap - Where It Gets Really Interesting

Here's the strategy that makes seller financing on the buy side truly powerful for capital-light investors. It's called a "wrap" or "wraparound," and it's the reason this chapter exists in a book about flipping land with little to no money.

The concept: you buy a property from a seller on terms, then turn around and sell that same property to a retail buyer on terms - at a higher price, with a higher interest rate, and with a higher monthly payment.

You're sitting in the middle, collecting payments from your buyer and passing a portion of those payments to your original seller. The spread - the difference between what's coming in and what's going out - is your profit.

Let's walk through an example.

Your buy side: You purchase a property for \$5,000 from the seller. \$500 down, 8% interest, \$141/month for 36 months.

Your sell side: You sell the same property for \$9,000 to a retail buyer. \$1,500 down, 10% interest, \$242/month for 36 months.

Right away, you've collected \$1,500 from your buyer's down payment, spent \$500 of it on the seller's down payment, and pocketed \$1,000 in cash. Every month after that, you collect \$242 from your buyer and pay \$141 to the seller. That's \$100/month in positive cash flow for 36 months.

Total profit: \$1,000 (down payment spread) + \$3,600 ($\100×36 months) = approximately \$4,600 in profit. Your out-of-pocket cost: \$500. Your ROI: somewhere in the neighborhood of 970%.

And you never needed a bank. You never needed a large lump of cash. The seller financed your acquisition, and your buyer's payments covered the seller's payments with room to spare.

This is the same principle that powers LandARB (Chapter 7). The difference is that in LandARB, Investor A is another investor who bought the property and is wholesaling it to you on terms. In seller financing on the buy side, the original property owner is the one carrying the terms. Same cash flow mechanics. Different source of financing.

Pro Tip: When structuring a wrap, always make sure your buyer's payment amount exceeds your seller payment, and that your buyer's note term doesn't extend beyond your seller's note term. If your buyer stops paying, you still owe the seller. Build in enough margin to cover a month or two of missed payments without it sinking you. And use a loan servicing platform to automate the incoming and outgoing payments so you're not manually juggling checks.

What Can Go Wrong

Seller financing on the buy side isn't risk-free. Here are the pitfalls to watch for:

You overpay because terms feel "free." Just because you're not writing a big check doesn't mean the price doesn't matter. You still need to buy at a discount that leaves room for profit. Run your numbers as if you were paying cash. If the deal doesn't work at the cash price, adding terms doesn't fix it. It just delays the pain.

The seller needs a payoff and you can't deliver. Some seller-financed deals include a balloon payment - a lump sum due at the end of the term. If you haven't resold the property or saved the cash by that date, you're in trouble. Only agree to a balloon if you have a clear plan for paying it.

You commit to payments you can't afford. If the monthly payment to the seller is higher than your incoming cash flow can support (whether from your buyer's payments or your other income), one hiccup can cascade into default. Before you sign, stress-test the numbers. What happens if it takes several months for you to resell the property? What happens if your buyer misses two months? Can you still cover the seller?

You skip due diligence because the seller is carrying. A common mistake. Beginners sometimes think, "If the seller is willing to finance it, the property must be good." Not necessarily. The seller might want interest income. They might want to spread their tax hit. Or they might know something about the property that makes it hard to sell for cash. Due diligence applies to every deal, regardless of how it's financed. Check ownership, liens, back taxes, access, zoning, and any HOA, LOA or POA dues. Every time.

Legal structure is wrong for your state. Land contracts are great in some states and heavily regulated or even effectively prohibited in others. If you use the wrong instrument, you could face legal complications down the road. Get local guidance. A title company or real estate attorney familiar with land transactions in your target state is worth every dollar.

Combining Seller Financing With Other Models

This is where the creative capital structures in Part III really shine. Seller financing doesn't replace the models in Part II. It supercharges them.

Seller financing + wholesaling. You negotiate a seller-financed purchase, then assign the contract (or double close) to another investor who wants the terms deal. Your assignment fee is the spread between what you negotiated and what the investor pays.

Seller financing + cash flip. You buy on terms, then resell for cash at a higher price. You use the cash proceeds to pay off the seller in full (make sure there's no prepayment penalty in your agreement). Your profit is the difference between the cash sale price and the total owed to the seller.

Seller financing + owner-financed sale (the wrap). As we covered above. Buy on terms, sell on terms, profit from the spread. This is the most capital-efficient combination because you're never putting up significant cash.

Seller financing + LandARB. If you're buying a LandARB deal from Investor A, you're already using a form of seller financing - A is financing your purchase. But you could also negotiate seller financing directly with a property owner and then sell

that property as a LandARB deal to a newer investor. You become the A in the chain.

Process Roadmap

1. Identify a property where the seller is motivated and doesn't need immediate cash
2. Run your numbers - determine what the property is worth and what you can pay (with profit margin for resale)
3. Present two offers: a lower cash price and a higher terms price
4. Negotiate the specifics: down payment, interest rate, term length, payment schedule
5. Have the agreement reviewed by a title company or attorney familiar with land contracts in your state
6. Close the deal and begin making payments
7. Market and sell the property (cash flip or owner-financed sale) while making payments to the seller
8. Either pay off the seller from your sale proceeds or manage the wrap payments over time

Capital at a Glance

Best Fit For: Investors who have completed a few deals and understand deal evaluation, but want to stretch their capital further. Also works for newer investors who have strong communication and negotiation skills.

Typical Economics: Down payments of \$200-\$2,000 depending on property value. Monthly payments of \$50-\$300. Profit margins similar to standard flips, but with less cash tied up upfront.

Risk Profile: Moderate. You're committing to a payment obligation. If you can't resell or if your buyer defaults on a wrap, you still owe the seller. Mitigated by proper due diligence, conservative deal evaluation, and payment reserves.

Seller financing on the buy side is one of the most underused tools in land investing. It's not complicated. It doesn't require special licenses or exotic legal structures. It just requires a conversation with a motivated seller and a deal structure that works for both sides.

In the next chapter, we'll look at the other major creative capital strategy: joint ventures and using other people's money to fund deals. If seller financing is about negotiating your way into a deal, JVs are about partnering your way in.

Chapter 10: Joint Ventures & OPM - Bringing Value Beyond Money

There's a reframing phrase I absolutely love:

Don't ask yourself "can I?".

Ask "HOW can I?"

And there's a moment in every land investor's journey where a deal shows up that's bigger than their bank account. The numbers are right. The due diligence checks out. The profit margin is sitting there, clear as day. And you can't pull the trigger because you don't have the cash.

Most people walk away from that deal. They tell themselves they'll come back to it when they have more capital. But the deal doesn't wait. It goes to someone else. And that's the lesson that hits hard - not that you failed, but that you let a good deal die because you thought money was the only thing you could bring to the table.

It's not.

This chapter is about the other thing you can bring. Actually, several other things. And how those things -

your hustle, your knowledge, your time, your deal-finding ability - are worth real money to the right partner.

What a Joint Venture Actually Is

A joint venture (JV) is a partnership on a specific deal or set of deals. One person brings one thing, another person brings something else, and together you do what neither could do alone. Then you split the profits according to whatever you agreed to upfront.

In land investing, the most common JV structure looks like this: one partner brings the capital, the other brings the operations. The capital partner funds the purchase. The operations partner does the work - finding the deal, running due diligence, closing the acquisition, marketing the property, managing the sale, and handling any notes if you're selling on terms.

That's not the only structure. Some JVs involve two people splitting costs and work equally. Others involve one person contributing a deal they've already locked up under contract and the other providing the capital to close it. Some involve three or more partners, each filling a different role. The structure is flexible. What matters is that every partner is contributing something real and that the split reflects those contributions fairly.

The key distinction: a JV is not a loan. When you borrow money, you owe it back with interest regardless of how the deal goes. When you JV, both partners share the risk and the reward. If the deal loses money, both partners lose. If it makes money, both partners win. That shared skin in the game changes the relationship entirely.

What You Bring When You Don't Bring Money

This is where most beginners get stuck. They think, "Why would someone give me their money? I have nothing to offer." That's not true. It's just that you haven't framed your value correctly yet.

Here's what the capital-light partner typically brings to a land JV:

Deal flow. You find the deal. In land investing, this is the hardest part. You pull lists, send mailers, answer calls from sellers, evaluate properties, run comps, and separate the winners from the time-wasters. Most people with money to invest don't have the time or knowledge to do this. When you bring a vetted, numbers-verified deal to a capital partner, you're saving them dozens of hours and giving them access to an opportunity they wouldn't have found on their own. That has real value.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

Due diligence. You verify the deal is clean. Ownership confirmed, no surprise liens, back taxes checked, access verified, zoning confirmed, HOA dues accounted for. This is tedious, detail-oriented work that most capital partners don't want to do - and don't know how to do. Your expertise in running the due diligence process is a skill worth paying for.

Marketing and sales. You list the property, manage buyer inquiries, negotiate offers, and close the sale. Whether it's a cash flip or an owner-financed sale, the operations partner handles the entire disposition process. On a seller-financed deal, you might also manage the note - collecting payments, handling defaults, and maintaining the portfolio.

Knowledge and systems. You know how to evaluate a market. You know which counties have deal flow. You know how to price an offer letter. You know how to structure owner financing. You understand the seven steps of land flipping. That knowledge is your intellectual capital, and for a partner who has money but no experience in land, it's exactly what they need.

Time and execution. You do the work. Full stop. Most capital partners are busy professionals. They have money because they've been working hard at something else. They don't want another job. They want to deploy capital into something that earns a return without requiring their daily attention. You provide that by being the boots on the ground.

When you stack all of this up - deal flow, due diligence, marketing, knowledge, and execution - you're not bringing "nothing." You're bringing everything except the check. And for the right partner, that's the better half of the equation.

Randy

One of our coaching clients, Randy, is a perfect example of how JVs work in practice.

Randy came into our program ready to learn but also ready to act. He was building his own deal pipeline in Apache and Navajo counties in Arizona - pulling lists, sending mailers, talking to sellers. He had the hustle. He had the systems dialed in. What he needed was capital to scale faster.

We partnered on a deal together. We bought a property for \$12,000 and sold it for \$36,000. After expenses, we split the proceeds. That profit went right back into Randy's pipeline, funding more deals.

But here's what made it work: Randy wasn't asking for a handout. He brought a vetted deal. He'd done the research. He knew the market. He had the comps. He was already working the county and had a system going. When we looked at the opportunity, we weren't taking a risk on someone with a dream and a handshake. We were partnering with someone who had done the work and just needed capital to execute.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

As Randy put it: “It makes sense for us to do it together... the power of doing things together and buying power.”

That’s the JV mindset. It’s not “give me money.” It’s “let me show you what I’ve built, and let’s do this together.”

Randy’s parcels in Apache County are now covering themselves with monthly profits. He’s mailing consistently, getting responses regularly, and hasn’t even scratched the surface of his target counties. One JV deal funded the next phase of his business.

Structuring the Deal

There’s no single “right” JV structure. But there are common patterns that work well in land investing:

The 50/50 split. The simplest and most common. One partner puts up the money, the other does the work. Alternatively, both can put up 50% of the capital and contribute work as well. Profits are split evenly. This works well when the deal size is moderate and both partners are contributing roughly equal value. It’s clean, easy to understand, and easy to agree on.

The 60/40 or 70/30 split. When one partner is contributing significantly more - either a much larger amount of capital or a much larger amount of work - the split adjusts accordingly. There’s no formula here. It’s a negotiation based on what each person brings. A

capital partner funding a \$50,000 acquisition might reasonably expect a larger share than on a \$5,000 deal, because their risk is proportionally higher.

Fee plus split. The operations partner gets a flat fee for their work (say, \$1,000-\$2,000 for managing the deal from acquisition to sale), plus a smaller percentage of the profit. This compensates the operator for their time even if the deal takes longer than expected or yields a smaller profit. It's particularly useful when the operator is doing all the heavy lifting.

Preferred return plus split. The capital partner gets their initial investment back first, plus a preferred return (say, 10-15%), before profits are split. This protects the capital partner's downside and ensures they get a minimum return for their risk. After the preferred return, remaining profits are split according to whatever ratio you've agreed on.

Which structure you use depends on the deal, the relationship, and what each partner values most. Some capital partners want simplicity - 50/50, no fuss. Others want downside protection and prefer the preferred return model. Talk it through. Get aligned before any money changes hands.

What Must Be in Writing

This is non-negotiable. Every JV deal needs a written agreement. It doesn't need to be a 40-page legal document, but it does need to cover the essentials:

Who contributes what. Spell it out. "Partner A contributes \$12,000 for the property purchase and closing costs. Partner B handles all acquisition, due diligence, marketing, and sale operations."

How profits are split. Be specific. "Net profits (sale price minus all costs including purchase price, closing costs, marketing expenses, and taxes) are split 50/50."

How losses are handled. What happens if the deal loses money? Is the capital partner absorbing the loss, or is it shared? This matters more than you think.

Decision-making authority. Who has final say on the sale price? On the marketing strategy? On whether to accept a lower offer or wait for a better one? Define this upfront or you'll argue about it later.

Timeline and exit. How long will this deal take? What happens if it's not sold in 12 months? Does either partner have the right to force a sale? Can the capital partner pull their money out early?

Expense handling. Who pays for what during the hold period - property taxes, marketing costs, title search fees? Are these fronted by the capital partner and deducted from profits, or split as they occur?

Default provisions. What happens if one partner doesn't fulfill their obligations? If the operator stops working the deal? If the capital partner can't fund as promised?

You can draft a basic JV agreement yourselves and have an attorney review it. Or use a template and customize it for your deal. The point isn't to create a legal fortress. It's to make sure both partners have the same understanding of the deal on paper, not just in conversation.

Pro Tip: The conversations you don't want to have before the deal are exactly the conversations you need to have before the deal. "What if this doesn't work?" is uncomfortable to discuss when you're excited about the opportunity. But it's ten times more uncomfortable to discuss after \$15,000 is on the line and things aren't going as planned.

Finding Capital Partners

So where do you find someone willing to put up capital for your land deals?

Closer than you think.

Your personal network. Friends, family, colleagues, former coworkers. You're not asking them for a favor. You're presenting a specific investment opportunity with a defined structure and expected return. Many

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

people have money sitting in savings accounts earning almost nothing. A land deal with a 50-100% return potential is compelling - if you can present it clearly with real numbers and a clear plan.

Real estate investment groups. Local REI meetups, BiggerPockets forums, Facebook groups for land investors. These are full of people with capital looking for deal flow. Many experienced real estate investors in other asset classes (rental properties, fix-and-flips) are intrigued by land because of its simplicity. They have the money. You have the knowledge of how to deploy it. Network. Network. Network!

Self-directed IRA holders. Some investors hold self-directed IRAs that allow them to invest in real estate. They're actively looking for opportunities outside the stock market. A land JV can be structured to work within these accounts. (They'll need to work with their IRA custodian to set this up properly.)

Other land investors. This one is often overlooked. More experienced land investors who have capital but limited bandwidth might JV with you on deals in markets they don't cover. You bring the local knowledge and operations, they bring the funding. It's a natural fit.

Previous clients or coaching peers. If you've been through a coaching program or community, you already have a network of people at different stages of the journey. Someone six months ahead of you

might have capital from their first few flips and be looking to deploy it. Someone six months behind you might need your deal-finding skills. Partnerships form naturally when people are in the same ecosystem.

The common thread: you need to be able to present a clear, professional opportunity. Not “Hey, want to invest in land?” but “I’ve identified a property in Navajo County, Arizona. The purchase price is \$8,000. Comparable sales support a resale value of \$18,000-\$22,000. I’ve completed due diligence - clean title, no liens, no HOA, taxes current. I’m looking for a capital partner to fund the acquisition. I’ll handle all operations through sale. Proposed split is 50/50 on net profit.”

That’s a pitch someone can say yes to. The other one gets you a polite smile and a subject change.

OPM - Other People’s Money (Beyond JVs)

Joint ventures are one form of using other people’s money. But they’re not the only form. Here are other ways capital flows into land deals:

Private lending. Instead of a JV partner who shares profits, you borrow money from a private individual at a fixed interest rate. They get their money back plus interest. You keep all the profit above that. This is better for you when the profit margin is large - why

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

give up 50% of a \$20,000 profit when you could borrow \$10,000 at 12% annual interest (\$1,200) and keep the other \$18,800? The trade-off: you owe the money back regardless of how the deal goes. If it loses money, you still owe. That's the risk you take for keeping more of the upside.

Lines of credit and HELOCs. If you own a home with equity, a home equity line of credit can be a low-interest source of capital for land deals. You're essentially borrowing against your home to fund land acquisitions. The interest rates are typically lower than private lending - often in the 7-10% range. But you're putting your home on the line, so this should only be used by experienced investors who understand their risk and have a track record of successful deals. This is not a strategy for your first deal.

Business credit. As your land business grows, you may qualify for business lines of credit or credit cards with 0% introductory rates. Some investors use these strategically for short-term deal funding - buy a property on a 0% credit card, flip it within 6-12 months, pay off the balance before interest kicks in. It works, but it requires discipline and deal flow confidence. Miss the window and you're paying 20%+ interest.

Crowdfunding and syndication. For larger deals or portfolios of deals, some investors raise capital from multiple smaller investors through formal

syndication structures. This is more complex, may trigger securities regulations, and typically requires legal guidance. It's beyond the scope of most beginners and the cost structure can be prohibitive, but worth knowing exists as you scale.

The key principle across all OPM strategies: you're trading a portion of your return (whether through profit splits, interest payments, or equity sharing) for the ability to do deals you couldn't do alone. The math either works or it doesn't. Run the numbers before you commit. If you're giving up 50% of your profit to a JV partner on a deal that only nets \$3,000, that \$1,500 might not be worth the work. If you're giving up 50% on a deal that nets \$30,000, that \$15,000 plus the experience and track record might be very much worth it.

The Compound Effect of One Good Partnership

Here's what most people miss about JVs: the first deal isn't just about the first deal.

When you successfully partner with someone, close a deal, and both walk away profitable and satisfied, you've built something more valuable than that one profit check. You've built trust. You've built a track record. You've built a relationship that can fund your

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

next ten deals. Taking a ‘thinner’ cut on an initial deal may very well be worth it for lining up future deals.

Capital partners talk to each other. “I did a deal with this operator, bought for \$12K, sold for \$36K, we split it. Clean, professional, everything went smooth.” That kind of word-of-mouth is worth more than any marketing you could do. One successful JV deal can open the door to multiple partners, larger deals, and a reputation as someone who performs.

And the reverse is true too. One sloppy deal - poor communication, missed timelines, unexpected expenses that weren’t disclosed - can close doors permanently. In a relationship business, your reputation is your most valuable asset. Protect it.

The Mindset Shift

For many people reading this book, the biggest obstacle to JVs isn’t finding a partner. It’s believing you deserve one.

There’s a voice in your head that says, “Who am I to ask someone for money? I haven’t done a deal yet. I don’t have a track record. Why would anyone trust me?”

That voice is normal. We all hear it. And it’s worth acknowledging it before pushing through.

Here's the reframe: you're not asking for charity. You're not begging for a favor. You're proposing a business arrangement where both parties benefit. The capital partner needs deal flow, knowledge, and execution. You need capital. That's a trade, not a handout.

The mechanics of any business are straightforward. It's when our minds get in the way that we face doubt.

Start with one deal. Find one partner. Execute flawlessly. Let the results build your confidence and your reputation. Crawl, walk, run.

Capital at a Glance

Best Fit For: Investors who have developed deal-finding and operational skills (through bird dogging, assisting, or completing a few small deals) but lack the capital for larger or more frequent acquisitions.

Typical Economics: Profit splits vary (50/50 most common), so your per-deal take is smaller than if you funded it yourself. But your volume increases because you're not limited by your own capital. Over time, JV profits fund your ability to do solo deals.

Risk Profile: Moderate for operations partner (your time is at risk, not your money). Low to moderate for capital partner (money is at risk, but property serves

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

as collateral). Both mitigated by written agreements, clear communication, and thorough due diligence.

JVs and OPM aren't a crutch. They're a tool. Every major real estate firm in the world uses other people's money. The question isn't whether it's a legitimate strategy. The question is whether you're ready to present yourself as someone worth partnering with. If you've been following the progression in this book - from bird dogging to assignments to wholesaling to creative structures - you're closer than you think.

In the next chapter, we'll tie all of these models and strategies together into a practical roadmap for going from zero to momentum. One deal funding the next. The capital snowball in motion.

Chapter 11: From Zero to Momentum - Reinvesting Your First Profits

You closed your first deal. Maybe it was a bird dog fee. Maybe a wholesale assignment. Maybe a small cash flip. Whatever it was, there's money in your account that wasn't there before - money you earned from flipping dirt.

Now what?

This is where a lot of land investing education stops. They teach you how to get into deals, maybe even how to close them. But they don't talk about what happens after. How one deal becomes two. How two become ten. How a business emerges from what started as a single transaction.

This chapter is the engine. It's the compounding snowball that turns a first deal into a real business. And it's built on a deceptively simple principle: put your profits back to work.

The Reinvestment Ladder

Every model we've covered in this book generates a different type and size of profit. Those profits aren't just income. They're fuel for the next rung on the ladder.

Here's how the progression typically works:

A bird dog fee (\$500-\$2,000) gives you seed money. It's not enough to buy a property outright, but it's enough to fund a small direct mail campaign. Say you take a \$1,000 bird dog fee and spend \$500 of it on mailers - letters to property owners in a county you've researched. Those mailers generate responses. Some of those responses become deals you can wholesale.

A wholesale assignment fee (\$2,000-\$5,000) gives you enough capital to close on a small property yourself. Instead of assigning the next deal, you buy it. You've just moved from zero-capital models to capital-required models - funded entirely by your earlier work.

A cash flip profit (\$3,000-\$15,000 on smaller deals) gives you serious reinvestment power. You can fund multiple acquisitions, expand into new counties, increase your mail volume, or start building a note portfolio through owner-financed sales.

And an owner-financed sale generates both a down payment (immediate capital to reinvest) and a

monthly income stream that covers your operating expenses while you grow.

Each rung funds the next. Bird dog fees fund your first wholesale marketing. Wholesale fees fund your first purchase. Flip profits fund your portfolio. This is the crawl, walk, run progression in financial terms.

The mistake beginners make? They skip rungs. They try to jump from “I have no money” to “I’m going to buy a \$20,000 property” without building the skills and capital along the way. The ladder exists for a reason. Climb it.

Our Compounding Journey

Ligia and I lived this progression firsthand - though I’ll admit, ours didn’t feel as clean and linear as it looks on paper.

After five months of grinding - two of us working 40+ hours a week, exploring multiple counties, sending out hundreds of offers, performing due diligence on dozens of properties - we finally got our first sale. It was a small property in Texas. Not a huge moneymaker. But it was the proof of concept we needed. That sale confirmed that our efforts and learning were worth it. We celebrated big time.

But the celebration was short-lived because we had a more pressing concern: our savings were draining.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

Having left the corporate world and W-2s behind, without alternative sources of income, we were living on savings and watching it reduce month over month as we ramped up the land business. It was anxiety-inducing, to say the least.

Having built a career in Operations, I did what came naturally - I set up a series of goals along the way to our larger goal of financial freedom. A dashboard of key performance indicators, metrics, and progressive milestones. The operations mindset that had served me in corporate America was now serving me in building a business.

The next milestone after that first sale was getting our finances to the breakeven point. Stop the bleeding. Stop dipping into savings each month.

Here's the thing most people don't talk about: getting to breakeven isn't just about making more money. It's about spending less. We worked both sides of the equation. Revenue on top, expenses on the bottom. We downsized where we could. Tightened our belts. Got rid of unnecessary expenses. Every dollar we didn't spend was a dollar closer to breakeven.

That discipline wasn't glamorous. Nobody posts about cutting their cable bill or downsizing their car on Instagram. But for us, it was the difference between running out of runway and having enough time for the business to take off.

The Note Portfolio Decision

As our deal flow improved and we gained competency across the processes, we faced a strategic decision that would define the trajectory of our business: cash flips or owner financing?

Cash flips are simple. You buy a property, sell it for more, pocket the profit. The money comes back fast. You can reinvest it immediately. If you need capital to grow, cash flips are the engine.

Owner financing is different. You sell the property on terms - a down payment and monthly installments. You get less cash upfront, but you get more money over time. And critically, you build a portfolio of monthly recurring income. Each note is like a small paycheck that shows up whether you worked that month or not.

We needed both.

Cash flips gave us the capital to keep buying properties. They kept the machine fed. But owner financing gave us something cash flips couldn't: stability. Predictable income. A safety net.

We focused specifically on building a note portfolio - clients paying us over time for their land purchases, like a car payment. This approach allowed us to build a stream of income that wasn't dependent on our daily efforts. These payment terms were five years on average. If something happened in our day-to-day

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

lives or if we wanted to take some time off, money would continue to come in month over month.

And that safety net equaled stress-free living.

It was methodical and steady progress. Each owner-financed deal added another layer of security. Sure, there were challenges - buyers defaulting (which is actually a benefit to the profit margins, since you keep the down payment and the land, which you can remarket and sell again), slowly stacking up note payments, and the occasional headache of clients wanting to renegotiate. But every note added to our portfolio was a step closer to the freedom we sought.

Over time, our note portfolio grew, and with it, our confidence. We were no longer just flipping dirt. We were building a sustainable, income-generating machine.

Cash Isn't King. Cash FLOW Is King.

There's a popular saying in finance: "Cash is king." And while having cash on hand has its advantages, it's not the ultimate key to freedom. The true ruler of financial independence is cash flow - a consistent, steady stream of income that doesn't rely on selling assets or depleting savings.

Think about it this way. Cash is finite. You spend it and it's gone. You might earn 1% interest in a savings account, but that's not keeping up with the cost of

living. Once you've depleted it, you're back to square one.

Cash flow is recurring income. It's the paycheck that keeps coming in, month after month, regardless of whether you're actively working or not. When you have reliable cash flow, you don't live with constant fear of running out of money. You can make decisions with confidence that more income is coming.

This is the shift. From worrying about running out of money to knowing you have a dependable source of income. That security changes how you think, how you take risks, and how you live.

In the context of this book - and this chapter specifically - the reinvestment strategy isn't just about growing your deal volume. It's about building a business that generates cash flow. A mix of cash flips (for capital) and owner-financed sales (for monthly income) is the formula that creates both growth and stability.

The Milestone Framework

One of the things that kept us moving forward during the hard months was having clear milestones. Not a vague goal of "financial freedom" sitting out there in the distance, but specific, measurable markers along the way.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

Here's a framework for thinking about your own milestones:

Milestone 1: First Profitable Deal. This is your proof of concept. It doesn't matter if it's a \$500 bird dog fee or a \$5,000 flip profit. You did a deal. It worked. The model is real. Celebrate this one. You earned it.

Milestone 2: Breakeven. Your land business income covers your land business expenses. You're no longer spending more than you're earning on the business itself. This doesn't mean you're covering personal living expenses yet - it means the business is self-sustaining. Mailers, closing costs, taxes, and operating expenses are covered by deal profits.

Milestone 3: \$1,000/month in recurring income. This is the first meaningful note portfolio milestone. Whether it comes from one note or three, you now have \$1,000 a month coming in that doesn't require active work. For most people, this covers a car payment, a utility bill, or groceries. It's real. It's tangible. And it compounds - because you keep adding notes.

Milestone 4: \$5,000/month in recurring income. Now you're covering a significant portion of most people's living expenses. For many reading this book, \$5,000 a month in passive income is the threshold where the golden handcuffs start to loosen. You might not be ready to leave your W-2 yet, but you can see the path. The fear starts to fade.

Milestone 5: \$10,000/month. This is W-2 replacement territory for many professionals. When your land business generates \$10,000 a month in combined cash flip profits and note income, you have a real business. One that could support your family. One that gives you options.

Beyond. The milestones don't stop. \$25,000/month. \$50,000/month. Scaling into larger deals. Building a team. Diversifying into other asset classes. But the beauty of the milestone framework is that each one is achievable from the last. You don't need to see Milestone 5 from Milestone 1. You just need to see Milestone 2.

Focus on how far you've come - the gain - rather than how far you still need to go. That's a principle from Dan Sullivan that Ligia and I came back to again and again during the early months. When you're grinding and the savings account is shrinking, it's easy to focus on the gap between where you are and where you want to be. But the gain - the progress, the deals closed, the skills built - that's what keeps you moving.

The Reinvestment Formula

So how much of your profit should you reinvest versus take home?

There's no universal answer, but here's a practical framework:

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

Early stage (Milestones 1-2): Reinvest as much as possible. This is the growth phase. Every dollar you put back into marketing, deal acquisition, and systems accelerates your path to Milestone 3. If you can cover your living expenses from your W-2 or savings, put 80-100% of your land profits back into the business.

Growth stage (Milestones 2-3): Start taking a small draw from the business - enough to feel rewarded for your work and to build personal financial breathing room. But keep the majority (60-80%) working for you. This is where most people make the mistake of taking too much out too soon. The business needs fuel to grow.

Scale stage (Milestones 3-5): You can begin to balance reinvestment with income. Many operators settle into a 50/50 split - half goes back into the business, half goes into your personal finances (savings, investments, lifestyle). The note portfolio is doing some of the heavy lifting at this point, generating income while you focus cash flip profits on growth.

Freedom stage (Beyond Milestone 5): The business is mature. Your note portfolio generates significant monthly income. Cash flips are gravy. You can take more out, reinvest less, or redirect profits into other ventures. This is the "life on your terms" phase. You've built the machine. Now it works for you.

The key through all stages: never starve the business. A land business with no marketing budget has no deal flow. A business with no deal flow has no income. The pipeline must always be fed. Even when you're taking profits, make sure the machine has fuel.

What the Snowball Looks Like in Practice

Let's walk through a realistic example of how reinvestment compounds over the first twelve months.

Months 1-2: You bird dog two deals and earn \$1,500 in total fees. You spend \$600 on your first mailer campaign (~700 letters to property owners in a target county).

Month 3: Your mailers generate three seller responses. One is a viable deal. You wholesale it via assignment for a \$3,000 fee. You now have \$3,900 in your business account ($\$1,500 + \$3,000 - \$600$). You send another round of mailers (\$600) and start building a second county's list.

Month 4: You find another deal from your expanded mailers. This one, you decide to buy yourself for \$2,500. You close on it and immediately begin marketing it for sale.

Month 5: You sell the property for \$7,500 cash. Profit after closing costs: roughly \$4,500. Your business

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

account is growing. You reinvest by sending mailers in a third county and increasing volume to 500 letters per campaign.

Month 6: Two deals come in. You wholesale one (\$2,500 fee) and buy the other for \$3,500. You decide to sell this one on owner-financing terms: \$9,500 sale price, \$1,500 down, \$250/month for 36 months.

Month 7 onward: You now have \$250/month coming in from your first note. You continue flipping for cash and adding notes. By Month 12, you might have 3-4 notes generating \$700-\$1,000/month in recurring income, plus whatever cash flip profits you've earned along the way.

This isn't a guarantee. It's not a projection. Markets vary. Deal flow varies. Your hustle varies. But the mechanics are real. This is how the snowball works. Small profits fund bigger deals. Bigger deals fund a portfolio. The portfolio funds your freedom.

Client Proof: The Snowball in Action

Our coaching client Cody is the kind of example that makes this chapter real.

Cody came into our program as a W-2 professional with four kids and 3-6 hours a week to spare. He wasn't chasing a grand slam. He wanted a path. "Best case scenario in 12 months," he told us, "is I either am on the path towards breaking free from my W-2 or I

Mike Deaton

see it a bit more clearly.” His top goals: time and financial freedom.

His first insight was about leverage. “It’s the same amount of work to flip a \$500 property as it is a \$15,000 one,” he said. So he aimed for the sweet spot - \$5,000-\$15,000 acquisitions - where the profit margins justified his limited time.

In October, Cody sent out about 1,000 letters to an Oregon county and another 800 to a Colorado county. Smart move - diversifying his first campaign across two markets to see what stuck. Oregon responded (2% response rate). Colorado was nearly silent. The data told him where to focus.

Over the next few weeks, he narrowed his pipeline, learning the hard way that some of his list contained agricultural land - a hard sell in his market. He weeded those out, declined some overpriced large lots, and zeroed in on a property owned by a family since the early 1900s. They were easy to work with and ready to sell.

He closed the acquisition in December. All in: \$5,935 (purchase price of \$4,400 plus \$1,535 in closing costs). Market value of the land: \$15,250.

Then he listed it on Zillow and Facebook Marketplace. His strategy was deliberate: price it to move quickly rather than squeeze out every dollar. “Since I believed I had a fat margin in the deal,” Cody explained, “I wanted to complete my first deal and

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

get some cash back.” He listed at \$9,998 cash or about \$13,000 with seller financing.

Within three weeks, he had interest from four buyers. Three on Facebook Marketplace, one from Zillow. He closed with a buyer who chose the owner-financed option and didn’t negotiate the price.

The terms: \$1,000 down payment. \$335 per month over 36 months. All-in sale price: \$13,048.

Cody will make back his entire investment in 15 months. He’ll make back just the cost of the land in one year. And over the life of the note, he’ll have more than doubled his money.

“To be honest, I’m pretty excited about how easy it was to get a deal done,” he wrote. “I put very minimal effort into marketing this property and received enough interest to close it within two months after I listed it. I thought it would for sure take six-plus months.”

That’s the snowball. His first deal is now generating \$335/month in passive income while he works on the next one. One deal feeding the next, feeding the next.

Randy’s story runs a similar pattern from a different angle. The \$12,000 property he partnered with us on sold for \$36,000. That profit funded his expanding pipeline in Apache and Navajo counties. “Those monthly profits are funding this,” he said. One JV

deal creating the capital for the next phase of his business.

Each of these clients started with limited resources. Each one used early profits - or in some cases, early partnership deals - to fund the next phase. None of them had a pile of cash on day one. They all built it, deal by deal.

The Three Gears

As your business matures, think about your revenue in three gears:

Gear 1: Active income (cash flips and wholesale fees). This is your working capital engine. It requires active deal-finding and selling. It's lumpy - some months are big, some are lean. But it generates the largest chunks of immediate profit and fuels your growth.

Gear 2: Semi-passive income (note portfolio). This is your stability engine. Monthly payments from owner-financed sales. It grows slowly but consistently. Each note you add increases your monthly baseline. Over time, this becomes the foundation of your financial freedom.

Gear 3: Passive income (note income exceeding expenses). This is the goal. When your note portfolio generates more monthly income than your personal

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

and business expenses combined, you've achieved financial independence. You can still flip for fun and growth, but you don't have to.

Most beginners focus exclusively on Gear 1. They want the big cash flips. And that's fine for generating capital. But the real game is building Gear 2 so that eventually Gear 3 kicks in. Cash flips fund the machine. Notes are the machine.

Protecting the Snowball

A few words of caution as you build momentum:

Don't over-leverage. It's tempting to take on debt or commit to large JV obligations when deals are flowing. But one bad market shift or a string of slow sales can cascade fast if you're overextended. Keep reserves. At minimum, maintain a three-to-six-month expense cushion in your business account.

Don't neglect due diligence because you're busy. Speed is great, but not at the expense of thoroughness. One bad deal - a property with hidden liens, a zoning issue, or back taxes that eat your profit - can set you back months. Every deal gets the full due diligence process. Every single one.

Don't pull too much profit too early. The temptation is real. You close a \$15,000 flip and want to reward yourself. And you should - in moderation. But if you strip the business of working capital during the

growth phase, you stall the snowball. Reinvest first. Reward second.

Don't forget the tax man. As your income grows, so does your tax liability. Set aside money for taxes from every deal - 25-30% of profit as a rule of thumb, adjusted for your specific tax situation. Work with a CPA who understands real estate investing. This isn't optional. It's the difference between building wealth and building a headache.

The Emotional Arc

There's an emotional component to all of this that deserves acknowledgment.

The early stages are hard. You're working long hours, spending money on mailers that might not produce results, and wondering if this is really going to work. There's a voice that says you're crazy. That you should go back to the safe thing. That this is too good to be true.

We heard that voice. For five months, we heard it every day.

And then the first sale happened. And the math worked. And we realized we weren't crazy - we were just early. The business hadn't caught up to the effort yet. But it was catching up.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

That's the emotional arc of building a land business: doubt, frustration, breakthrough, momentum, confidence. It's not linear. Some weeks you slide back. Some weeks you leap forward. But the overall trajectory - if you keep reinvesting, keep mailing, keep doing the work - is up.

This didn't happen overnight. We crawled before we walked, and walked before we ran.

You're somewhere on that path right now. Wherever you are, keep going. The snowball is building. You just can't always see it yet.

Best Fit For: Every reader of this book. This chapter isn't about a specific model - it's about the mindset and mechanics of compounding your way from a first deal to a real business.

The Bridge Forward

Part III has given you the creative capital structures - seller financing, JVs, and now the reinvestment engine - that turn limited capital into growing momentum.

By now you understand something most people never figure out: the first deal isn't the finish line. It's the starting block. The reinvestment ladder turns one deal into momentum, momentum into systems, and systems into freedom.

The tools that accelerate this are waiting for you.

On The Flip Side (<https://flippingdirt.us/theflipside>), you'll find Deal Analysis tools and the enhanced Due Diligence Checklist - the same checklist format we use on every deal. Free to download.

In The Implementation System companion training program, I walk through real deal breakdowns with full numbers, show you how to run due diligence on an actual property, and demonstrate the closing process for each model. It's built to get you from reading to doing.

And when you're ready for the complete system - every training module, every template, every tool we've built over 8+ years of running this business, plus full access to our private community of active land investors - that's **Launchpad**. You can learn more at <https://flippingdirt.us/launchpad>

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

No pressure on any of this. The book you're holding has everything you need to get started. These are just ways to move faster if that's what you want.

Next up: Part IV shifts gears entirely.

We're done with theory. We're done with models and structures.

Now it's about execution. Your first deal. Where to find it, how to evaluate it, and how to close it - even if you're starting from scratch.

Two more chapters. Let's finish strong.

PART IV: EXECUTION - YOUR FIRST DEAL

Theory is over. Models are learned. Capital strategies are in your toolkit.

Now it's time to do the thing.

These final chapters walk you from finding deals without spending a dime on mailers or paid lists, to building your first deal plan from model selection through closing, to looking beyond that first transaction at the freedom waiting on the other side.

Everything in this book has been building to this moment.

You have the knowledge. You have the tools. Now let's put them to work.

Chapter 12: Deal Flow Without Mailers or Paid Lists

Early in our land journey, Ligia and I made every beginner mistake in the book when it came to finding deals. We spent hours buried in East Texas county records, running down properties that looked promising on paper but fell apart under scrutiny. One deal in particular stands out.

We'd received an accepted offer on a property in an East Texas county. The numbers looked solid. The acreage was right. The owner was motivated. We were excited. This was going to be the one.

Then we started our due diligence.

The first phone call was to the county tax office. Turns out the property had over \$1,000 in accumulated back taxes. It was almost as much as the actual offer we'd made on it! That alone didn't kill the deal (we could have worked a deal to pay off the taxes and give the owner \$100 or so), but it changed the math significantly. The second call was to the county planning office. That's when we learned the property had zoning restrictions that would limit what any buyer could do with it. But the big revelation was the neighborhood had a POA (Property Owners

Association). And once we tracked that down and made a call to the POA office, we discovered years of accumulated back dues. And those dues would not be waived to any new owner - they'd transfer and become the responsibility of said new owner. So now, taking into account the tax burden, back dues, and the zoning issues, the deal went from promising to problematic in the span of a few phone calls.

Three phone calls. That's all it took.

Looking back, those phone calls taught us more about deal flow than any course module could. They taught us that finding deals is only half the equation. Finding the *right* deals is what matters. And finding those right deals doesn't require a big direct mail budget. It requires resourcefulness, persistence, and a system.

If you're reading this book, there's a good chance you don't have thousands of dollars to spend on direct mail campaigns or paid list subscriptions. That's okay. Some of our best coaching students have generated their first deals without spending a dime on mailers. They used free tools, free platforms, and good old-fashioned hustle.

Let's dig in.

Your Free Data Goldmine: County Records

Every county in the United States maintains public records about property ownership, taxes, and land use. This is your starting point, and it costs you nothing.

Here's what to look for:

County Assessor and Tax Records. Most counties have online portals where you can search property ownership, assessed values, and tax payment status. You're looking for owners who owe back taxes, own multiple vacant parcels, or have out-of-state addresses. These are signals of motivation to sell.

County GIS Mapping Systems. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) maps let you see property boundaries, topography, road access, and surrounding land use without ever leaving your laptop. Google Earth is another incredible free tool that lets you virtually visit properties. You can assess the land, the surroundings, and the access from your kitchen table.

Delinquent Tax Lists. Many counties publish lists of properties with delinquent taxes. Some post them online. Others will provide them if you call and ask. Not every county will cooperate, but enough do that it's worth the effort. We learned this the hard way in East Texas. Some counties didn't even know what we were talking about when we asked for the tax roll.

Others handed it right over. You won't know until you ask.

Pro Tip: When you call county offices, be friendly. Be patient. Remember, these are people doing their jobs. A polite caller who knows what they're asking for stands out. You'd be surprised how much helpful information a county clerk will share when you approach them respectfully.

The Digital Hustle: Free Platforms for Deal Finding

The internet has democratized deal finding in ways that weren't possible even five years ago. AI tools have accelerated this even further. What used to require expensive software or hours of manual research can now be accomplished with a laptop, an internet connection, and some creative searching. Here are the free and low-cost platforms every zero-budget investor should be working.

Facebook Marketplace and Groups. Facebook is hands-down one of the most powerful free platforms for both finding and selling land. Join local buy/sell groups, land investing groups, and county-specific groups. Post that you're looking to buy vacant land. You'll be surprised at the responses. People inherit land, forget about land, or simply want to unload a parcel they've been paying taxes on for years.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

But don't just post and wait. Be proactive. Scroll through listings. When you see someone selling land in your target area, reach out even if their asking price is too high. Starting a conversation is the first step. Many sellers are more flexible than their listing price suggests, especially if their property has been sitting for weeks or months without a buyer.

Craigslist. Don't overlook it. Craigslist still generates deal flow. Search the "real estate for sale by owner" section in your target markets. You can also post "land wanted" ads. It's free, it's simple, and it works. Refresh your posts regularly to keep them near the top of search results.

LandWatch, Zillow, and Land.com. These platforms show you what's listed in your target markets. While listed properties are already priced at retail, they serve two critical purposes. First, they help you understand market pricing and comparable sales. What's the price per acre in your target county? What's actually selling versus just sitting? This is your free education in market dynamics.

Second, you can sometimes find motivated sellers who've been sitting on a listing for months with no takers. A direct offer below their asking price can turn a stale listing into a deal. Listings that have been active for 90+ days are signals that the seller may be ready to negotiate. Also look at these platforms for another angle: identifying active land investors who might welcome bird dog leads from you. If you see

the same buyer name appearing across multiple recent sales, that's someone who buys frequently and might appreciate a deal finder.

Auction Sites and Tax Sale Lists. Some counties auction tax-delinquent properties online. Others post upcoming tax sale lists. While you may need some capital to participate in auctions, the research is free and tells you exactly which properties are distressed. Even if you can't buy at auction yourself, knowing which properties are heading to tax sale gives you a lead list of motivated owners you can contact before the auction date.

Dead Leads Are Not Dead

Here's something most beginners don't realize: other investors' rejected leads can be your opportunity.

Land investors who run large direct mail campaigns get hundreds of responses. They cherry-pick the best deals and move on. The leads they pass on aren't necessarily bad. They might be too small for a large operation, in a market the investor doesn't focus on, or priced at a level that doesn't fit their model.

But those same properties could be perfect for you. Especially if you're running a capital-light model like bird dogging, assignments, or wholesaling.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

How do you access these dead leads? Network. Join online communities where land investors hang out. Facebook groups, BiggerPockets forums, local real estate meetups. Build relationships. Let people know what you're looking for. Position yourself as someone who can take action on properties others pass on.

Remember what we talked about in the earlier chapters on bird dogging? The same networking principles apply here. You're not asking for charity. You're offering to take a problem off someone's plate.

Cold Outreach: The Zero-Budget Direct Approach

You don't need a mail house to reach property owners. You have a phone, an email account, and access to public records.

Skip Tracing on a Budget. Once you've identified properties through county records or online platforms, you need to find the owners. Some county records include mailing addresses. For others, there are free or low-cost skip-tracing tools online. A simple search engine query with the owner's name and county can sometimes turn up contact information.

Cold Calling. It's not glamorous. Most people won't be interested. But the ones who are can lead to incredible deals. Your script is simple: *"Hi, my name is [name]. I noticed you own a vacant parcel in [county]. I'm*

looking to purchase land in that area. Any chance you'd be open to discussing a potential sale?"

Short. Respectful. Direct.

Texting. Similar approach, similar script. Be mindful of compliance requirements around unsolicited texts, but for small-scale outreach, a well-crafted text message can open doors.

Email Outreach. If you can find email addresses through county records or online searches, a professional email expressing interest in purchasing can be effective. Keep it personal, not spammy.

Your 30-Day Zero-Budget Lead Generation Plan

If I were starting from scratch today with zero marketing budget, here's exactly what I'd do in the first 30 days.

Week 1: Market Selection and Research

Pick one or two target counties. Use LandWatch and county GIS maps to identify areas with active sales and plenty of vacant parcels. Spend time getting to know the county website. Can you access the assessor records? The GIS system? Tax records? How friendly is the county to work with?

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

Research comparable sales so you understand the pricing landscape. What are properties selling for? What's the typical acreage? What does "a good deal" look like in this market?

We used to be overly analytical in trying to pick a market. We've relaxed over the years. Here's the truth: you don't need the perfect market. You need a market with activity, inventory, and pricing you can work with. Don't let this step become a bottleneck. We wasted months in East Texas trying to find the ideal county. When we finally pivoted to West Texas and just started taking action, that's when things started moving.

Once you've selected your market, go a level deeper. Think about submarkets - the specific neighborhoods, regions, or micro-areas within your county. Not every part of a county performs the same way. Some areas have strong buyer demand and fast sales. Others sit for months. Today we use AI to do deep research on our markets to identify the best-performing submarkets: looking at sales patterns, price-per-acre trends, buyer demographics, and development activity by area. Being more targeted and precise maximizes your efforts and any dollars spent - whether you're making phone calls or eventually running mailers. Fish where the fish are.

Week 2: Build Your First Lead List

Using county records and free online tools, build a list of property owners who might be motivated to sell. Look for: delinquent taxes, out-of-state owners, multiple parcels owned by the same person, and properties that have been listed for sale for a long time without selling.

Aim for at least 50-100 potential contacts. This is your starter pipeline. It might feel small compared to the 1,000-letter direct mail campaigns you've heard about, but remember: you're operating on a zero budget. Quality outreach to 50 motivated sellers can generate more results than 1,000 mass-mailed letters to random owners. Each person on your list should have at least one motivation signal. Don't just build a list for volume's sake.

Week 3: Start Outreach

Begin contacting owners on your list through whatever channels are available. Phone calls, emails, text messages, or even driving for dollars if properties are local. Track everything in a simple spreadsheet. Who did you contact? When? What was their response? What follow-up is needed? When is the follow-up scheduled?

This tracking discipline matters more than you think. Deals often come from the second or third follow-up, not the first contact. If you're not tracking, you're losing opportunities.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

Post in Facebook groups and on Craigslist that you're looking to buy vacant land in your target area. Join at least five relevant groups and be active in them. Not spammy. Genuinely engage with posts, answer questions when you can, and let people know you're a buyer.

Week 4: Qualify and Evaluate

By now, you should have some responses. Some will be immediate no's. Some will be maybe's. And hopefully, a few will be interested in hearing an offer.

For the interested sellers, run your initial screening. Check ownership, access, taxes, and zoning. Use the two-phase due diligence process to evaluate each property quickly and thoroughly.

The goal isn't to close a deal in 30 days. The goal is to build a pipeline. Deals come from pipelines. Pipelines come from consistent action.

Qualifying Your Leads

Not every lead is a deal. Not every deal is a good deal. Here's how to quickly qualify the leads that come in.

Ownership Verification. Is the person who responded actually the legal owner? Check county assessor records to confirm. Watch for multi-

ownership situations, deceased spouses, or trust complications.

Property Access. Does the property have legal road access? Landlocked properties can be a nightmare unless you have a specific plan to address the access issue. Check the county GIS map first.

Financial Red Flags. Back taxes, HOA dues, and liens can erode your profit margin or kill a deal entirely. Get the numbers early. We've seen deals where the accumulated HOA dues exceeded the property's value. That's a quick pass.

Market Demand. Is there buyer demand in this area? Look at recent sales on LandWatch, Zillow, and Land.com. If properties in the area are selling regularly, that's a green light. If nothing has sold in months, proceed with caution.

The East Texas Lesson Revisited

Here's the thing. No matter how prepared you think you are, some deals will fall apart. That East Texas property taught us something we now teach every coaching student: the cost of a few phone calls is always cheaper than the cost of a bad deal.

Due diligence isn't just a step in the process. It's your armor. And when you're operating with little to no capital, that armor is even more important. You can't

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

afford a bad deal financially or emotionally. A bad first deal doesn't just cost money. It costs confidence. And confidence is the fuel that keeps you moving forward.

So be thorough. Be patient. Make the calls. Check the records. Ask the questions.

And when a deal doesn't work out, don't see it as a failure. See it as a few-phone-call lesson that just saved you thousands of dollars and weeks of headache. Then move on to the next one.

This didn't happen overnight for us. We crawled before we walked. We made mistakes, learned lessons, and kept grinding. You will too. The difference between the people who make it in this business and the people who don't isn't talent or luck. It's persistence.

In the next chapter, we'll take everything you've learned in this book and build it into a step-by-step first deal plan. From choosing your model to closing your first transaction. Let's turn knowledge into action.

Chapter 13: Your First Deal Plan - From Model to Money

Dan had been in our coaching program for about six weeks when he hit the wall.

He'd done his homework. He'd studied the models. He understood assignments, options, wholesaling, and LandARB. He'd selected a market, pulled a list, and started making offers. Five hundred offers, to be exact.

And then he froze.

Twelve responses were sitting in his inbox. Twelve accepted offers from his first outreach campaign! He should have been celebrating. Instead, he was paralyzed.

"I don't know which one to move on first," he told me. "What if I pick the wrong one? What if I mess up the due diligence? What if I'm reading the comps wrong?"

Sound familiar?

Dan was stuck in what I call the "accepted-offer overwhelm." He had more opportunity in front of

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

him than he'd envisioned, and instead of clarity, he felt chaos. Every property looked like it could be the one. And every property looked like it could be a mistake.

Here's what we did. We built a simple ranking matrix. Nothing fancy. Just a spreadsheet with five columns: estimated profit margin, due diligence complexity, time to close, capital required, and confidence level. The confidence level assumption was his quick assessment on the likelihood of closing at the offer price after his initial communication with the seller. He scored each property on a scale of one to five in each category, totaled the scores, and the answer became obvious.

The property with the highest combined score wasn't the biggest potential payday. It was a modest deal. A small parcel with clean title, no back taxes, clear road access, and strong recent comparable sales. The profit margin was solid but not spectacular. What made it the right first deal was its simplicity. Low risk. High confidence. Fast close.

Dan closed that deal within three weeks. The profit funded his next two acquisitions. And more importantly, the confidence he gained from that first closed transaction changed everything about how he approached the business from that point forward.

Cody had a similar experience. He came in with about eight offers and the same overwhelm. Same matrix

approach. Same result. Clarity from structure. Confidence from action.

You don't need the perfect first deal. You need a completed first deal. And to get to that completed first deal, it helps to have a solid system. Weed through the noise, take an informed decision, and act. Get that feedback, learn and continue.

Choosing Your Model

By now you've read through every capital-light model in this book. Bird dogging, assignments, options, wholesaling, LandARB, novation, double close, seller financing on the buy side, and joint ventures. That's a full toolkit. But you don't need the full toolkit for your first deal. You need one model.

Here's how to choose.

If you have zero capital and zero experience, start with bird dogging. Find deals for other investors. Earn referral fees. Learn the market. Build relationships. There's no risk except your time, and the education alone is worth the effort. Bird dog until you've banked enough to fund your next step.

If you have minimal capital (under \$1,000) and want to control deals, look at assignments or options. You can tie up properties with a small earnest money deposit or option consideration fee and find buyers

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

before you ever take ownership. Your risk is limited to that small upfront amount.

If you have \$1,000-\$5,000 and want higher profit potential, wholesaling or LandARB could be your path. These require a bit more financial commitment but offer significantly higher returns per deal.

If you have a network but no money, joint ventures let you bring the hustle and the deal-finding skills while a partner brings the capital. Randy's story from Chapter 10 is proof that this model works when structured correctly.

If you're still not sure, that's okay. Pick the model that feels most manageable for your current situation. You can always evolve. Remember: crawl, walk, run. No one expects you to run a double close on day one.

Choosing Your Market

Market selection trips up more beginners than almost anything else. We certainly struggled with it ourselves. We spent months in East Texas before pivoting to West Texas and striking paydirt. But then we found an even better market in Colorado where we spent years scaling higher and higher.

Here's what we tell our coaching students: don't overthink this. You're looking for three things.

Active sales volume. Is land actually selling in this area? Check county sales records, LandWatch, Zillow, and Land.com. If you see regular recent sales, that's a sign of demand. If the listings have been sitting for months, that's a signal to look elsewhere.

Plenty of parcels. You need enough inventory to make offers at volume. One or two available properties in a county isn't enough. You need dozens or hundreds. That gives you the numbers you need for this to work.

Fits your capital level. If you have \$2,000 to invest, don't target a market where the average property costs \$20,000. Match your market to your available capital and your chosen model.

Beyond those three basics, look at county-friendliness factors. How easy is their website to navigate? Can you access assessor records, GIS maps, and tax information online? Can you file transactions digitally through a service like SimpliFile? Some counties make your life easy. Others feel like they're still operating in the 1990s. All else being equal, choose the county that makes your research and transactions smoother.

Don't spend more than a week on market selection. Pick one. Test it. If it doesn't work after a reasonable effort, adjust and move on. That's exactly what we did when East Texas didn't pan out.

Dr. Helen Langer's research on mindfulness tells us that the illusion of certainty is more dangerous than uncertainty itself. Waiting for the "perfect" market is a trap. There is no perfect market. But there are "best fit markets and submarkets", relative to your strategy, that reward action.

Building Your List

Once you've selected a market, you need a list of property owners to contact. In Chapter 12, we covered free data sources in detail. Here's the distilled version for your first campaign.

Step 1: Access the county assessor records. Download or manually compile a list of vacant land owners in your target area.

Step 2: Filter for motivation signals. Out-of-state owners. Delinquent taxes. Multiple parcels. Long-term ownership without any development activity.

Step 3: Build your contact list. Names, mailing addresses, property details. If you can find phone numbers or emails through public records or basic online searches, add those too.

Step 4: Organize your list in a simple spreadsheet. Columns: owner name, property address or APN (Assessor's Parcel Number), acreage, assessed value, estimated market value, tax status, owner mailing address, contact information, and notes.

Aim for 50-100 contacts for your first outreach campaign. That's a manageable number that gives you enough volume to generate responses without overwhelming you. And then - keep going!

Finding the Deal

With your list built, start reaching out. Whether you're sending handwritten letters, making phone calls, sending emails, or posting on Facebook groups, the goal is the same: get in front of property owners who are open to selling.

Most of them won't be interested. That's normal. Direct mail response rates in this industry are typically 0.5-3%. And until you've spent time in a market, you just don't know where yours will land. But the ones who do respond are your pipeline.

When a seller responds with interest, here's your process.

Initial Conversation. Find out why they're selling. How long have they owned the property? What's their ideal price? Are they flexible? The more you understand their motivation, the better you can structure a deal that works for both of you.

Run Your Comps. Check recent sales in the area. What have similar properties sold for? This tells you the maximum resale value. Remember the core

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

principle: You DON'T make your money on the buy. You DO setup the profit margin on the buy. Money only comes after the sale.

Be careful with comps. Not all sales are created equal. In some markets, you'll see flipper-traded sales where investors bought and sold to each other at inflated prices. Those aren't real comps. Look for arm's-length transactions between unrelated buyers and sellers to get a true sense of market value.

Make Your Offer. Base it on your comps analysis and your target profit margin. For traditional flips, we aim to buy at 30-50% of market value. For assignments or wholesaling, your numbers will look different since your profit comes from the assignment fee or the spread to your end buyer.

Due Diligence. If the seller accepts your offer, run through the two-phase due diligence process from *Flipping Dirt*. Initial screening first: ownership, access, taxes, and zoning. If it passes, move to final due diligence: confirm all details, verify there are no hidden liens or encumbrances, and make sure the property is what the seller says it is.

Closing the Deal

How you close depends on your model. And the good news is, none of these require you to be a legal expert or have a real estate license. They just require

you to understand the mechanics and work with the right people.

Bird Dogging: You don't close. You refer the deal to your investor and collect your fee when they close. Keep it simple. Your value was finding the deal and connecting the dots. Make sure you have a written agreement for your referral fee before the investor closes.

Assignments: You sign a purchase agreement with the seller, assign that contract to your end buyer, and collect your assignment fee at closing. A title company familiar with assignments can facilitate this. Not every title company understands assignment deals, so ask upfront. "Do you handle assignment transactions?" If they look confused, find a different title company. This is an area where building a relationship with one or two investor-friendly title companies pays off enormously. They become part of your team.

Wholesaling: You buy the property and resell it to another investor. This can be done as a double close (same day or within days) or as a traditional buy-and-resell with a short holding period. For double closes, you'll need a title company that understands simultaneous closings. Some states and some title companies won't do them, so confirm this before you get deep into a deal.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

Options: You exercise your option, close on the property, and then market and sell it. Or you assign the option contract itself to an end buyer for a fee. The key advantage here is that if you can't find a buyer within your option period, you walk away. You lose the option consideration fee but nothing else.

LandARB: Follow the A-side/B-side structure. The A-side investor provides the deal under terms. You market, find buyers, and manage the transaction for your share of the profit. The closing mechanics depend on how the A-side/B-side agreement is structured. This is where having clear agreements from the start prevents confusion at the finish line.

JV Deals: Close in whatever structure you and your partner agreed to. One of you provides the capital. The other manages the deal. Profits split according to your JV agreement. This is why the written agreement we covered in Chapter 10 matters so much. At closing, everyone should know exactly what they're getting and why.

Regardless of your model, use a title company whenever possible. They handle the legal transfer, verify clear title, and protect both parties. For smaller deals where title company costs don't make economic sense, SimpliFile allows you to file deeds directly with the county. We've used both approaches, and both work. The deciding factor is usually deal size. On a \$2,000 transaction, a \$500 title company fee eats a significant chunk of your margin. On a \$15,000

transaction, it's money well spent for the protection and peace of mind.

Market and Sell

For models where you take ownership (even briefly), you need to sell the property. Chapter 12 in the original *Flipping Dirt* book covers marketing channels in depth. Here's the quick reference for your first deal.

Free Channels First. Facebook Marketplace and targeted Facebook buy/sell groups generate the fastest buyer responses. We've seen properties get inquiries within hours of being posted. Craigslist remains effective for land in many markets, especially rural and recreational properties. Zillow gets significant traffic and adds credibility to your listing. These three should be your starting lineup.

Reach Out to Neighbors. Properties adjacent to the one you own are natural buyers. A simple letter or phone call letting them know you own the neighboring parcel and are offering it for sale can lead to a quick transaction. We've both bought and sold properties this way. Neighbor sales are often the fastest closes because the buyer already knows the area and has a built-in reason to buy. This can be a quick and easy sale in some instances. On the flip side, we've also picked up additional properties from

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

neighbors because we reached out. It works both ways.

Consider the Wholesale Market. There's a robust wholesale market among land flippers. You can sell to another investor at a wholesale price. It's a fast and effective way to maintain momentum. Depending on the deal you made on the buy side, you can quickly earn a tidy profit. You won't net as much as you would in the open market, but it cuts out a lot of marketing time and buyer interactions.

Consider Owner Financing. Offering buyer financing 10x's your buyer pool. Not everyone has cash to buy land outright. But many buyers will jump at the opportunity to put \$99 or \$199 down and make monthly payments. This is how we built our note portfolio and passive income stream. It's also a powerful selling tool for your first deal because it opens the door to buyers who otherwise couldn't afford the property.

There's a beautiful synergy here for the capital-light investor: you buy the property using creative structures (seller financing, assignment, JV), and then you sell it on terms to your buyer. Minimal cash of your own in the deal. Monthly payments flowing into your account. That's the model we've been building toward throughout this entire book.

Price It Right. Your first deal isn't about squeezing out maximum profit. It's about getting the transaction

done, building confidence, and generating capital for the next one. Price competitively based on your comps. If you have a solid margin, you can afford to be aggressive on the sale price to move the property quickly. Speed beats perfection in the early days. A property that sells in two weeks at slightly less profit builds more momentum than a property that sits for three months waiting for a premium buyer.

Pro Tip: Build a VIP Buyers List from day one. Every person who inquires about your property, whether they buy or not, goes into your database. This list becomes incredibly valuable over time. When your next property hits the market, you have a ready-made audience of warm leads. We focused heavily on this to build up and leverage our own buyer community as a first option when selling or even pre-selling properties.

Reinvest and Repeat

Your first deal's profit isn't spending money. It's seed capital.

If you earned a \$500 bird dog fee, that's enough to fund a small assignment deposit on your next deal.

If you wholesaled a property for a \$3,000 profit, that's marketing budget for your next direct mail campaign.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

If you closed a flip and netted \$8,000, you can now acquire inventory in higher-value markets with better margins.

The reinvestment ladder from Chapter 11 starts here. Bird dog fees become assignment capital. Assignment fees become wholesale seed money. Wholesale profits become flip capital. Flip profits build your portfolio.

This is the compounding snowball. Every deal funds the next one. Every success builds confidence for a bigger move.

The Ranking Matrix: Your Decision-Making Tool

Before we close this chapter, let me give you the same simple tool we gave Dan and Cody. When you have multiple opportunities in front of you and you're not sure which to pursue first, score each one on these five criteria using a 1-5 scale.

Estimated Profit Margin. Higher margin = higher score.

Due Diligence Complexity. Simpler DD = higher score. You want your first deal to be clean.

Time to Close. Faster close = higher score. Momentum matters early on.

Capital Required. Less capital = higher score when you're starting with limited funds.

Confidence Level. How confident are you in the comps, the seller's motivation, and your ability to execute? Higher confidence = higher score.

Total the scores. Pursue the highest-scoring deal first.

This isn't about finding the biggest payday. It's about finding the highest-probability win. In the early days, completed deals build more value than big dreams about deals that never close.

"The mechanics of any business are straightforward. It's when our minds get in the way that we face doubt."

Your mind might tell you to wait for a bigger opportunity. Your mind might tell you the numbers aren't quite right. Your mind might tell you that you're not ready.

Do the deal anyway. Do the work. Trust the process. Because on the other side of your first closed transaction is a version of you who knows, not just believes, that this business works.

In our final chapter, we look beyond the first deal. What comes next? How does one deal become a business? How does a business become freedom? Let's close this thing out.

Chapter 14: The Dirt Road Ahead - From First Deal to Freedom

Remember mile 47?

Ligia was shut down. I wasn't far behind. The race event was being broken down and packed up by the time we death marched across the finish line. No cheering crowds. No cameras. Just two wrecked humans, a look that said *oh my God, we actually did it*, a hug, and medals placed around our necks in near-silence.

I've thought about that moment a lot since we started this business.

Not the pain. Not the death march. Not the fact that we'd trained in Dallas-Fort Worth heat and showed up completely unprepared for what running at elevation would do to us.

What I keep coming back to is what happened the next morning.

We crawled out of a tent. No showers. No celebration. We packed our gear, drove home, and started the next chapter of our lives. That quiet morning after was more important than the finish line itself. Because

crossing a finish line is a moment. What you do the next day is a decision.

And that's exactly where you are right now.

You've read this book. You understand the models. You know how to find deals, structure transactions, and close with little to no capital. You've crossed a kind of finish line just by getting here. But the real question isn't whether you can absorb information. It's what you do tomorrow morning.

That's what this chapter is about. Not the first deal. The dirt road that stretches out beyond it.

Where We Are Today

Ligia and I started this journey in 2016 from our dining room table in Plano, Texas. Two people who'd just been laid off on the same day, staring at each other wondering what the hell we were going to do next.

We spent \$50,000 on our initial coaching investment. I barely slept the night we committed to it. That was a lot of money for two people with no income and a very real fear that we were making a huge mistake.

We ground through five months of work before our first sale. Five months of offers, rejections, due diligence dead ends, and mounting doubt. There

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

were moments when I wondered if we'd made the worst financial decision of our lives.

But we kept moving.

Our first sale was a small Texas property. It wasn't a windfall. But it was proof of concept. It told us the model worked.

From there, the milestones started stacking. \$1,000 a month in note income. Then \$6,000 a month passive. Then a \$12,000 month. Then \$30,000 months. Then \$100,000 years. Then \$200,000+ years.

We sold our house in Plano, downsized, and moved to Colorado. Not because we had to. Because we chose to. Because the numbers finally supported the lifestyle we'd been working toward. Because our core values told us: live your life now, not someday.

Today, we operate our land business from the mountains. We've transacted hundreds of deals. Our average annual ROI over 8+ years is above 150%. We run ultramarathons (well...I do anyway); travel when, where and for however long we want; and have built something that provides not just income, but genuine freedom.

And now we teach others to do the same thing. Not because we have all the answers. Because we've walked the path. We've made the mistakes. And we've proven that this works for real people with real challenges and real doubts.

Pat's Story

Pat came to us with a dream that might sound familiar. He wanted to retire his wife from her corporate career so they could live more of life on their own terms.

Two incomes. Full schedules. Kids with activities. Underperforming traditional investments. The classic squeeze of a family that's doing well on paper but feels like it's running on a treadmill going nowhere.

Pat didn't need convincing that land flipping worked. He needed a system to make it work for his specific situation. How to fit a business into the margins of an already-packed life. How to deploy capital efficiently. How to accelerate results without sacrificing his family's stability.

Within six months, Pat had purchased 14 properties across five different markets. He'd sold seven of them. His top flip delivered a 550% ROI, a \$4,000 acquisition he sold for \$22,000.

But here's what mattered more than the numbers. Pat's wife started to see a path. The "someday" that had always felt abstract started to look like an actual plan with actual milestones and actual results behind it.

That's what a first deal leads to. Not just profit. Possibility.

Keith's Full Circle

You met Keith back in Chapter 7. He started with LandARB, using someone else's inventory and capital to learn the business with minimal financial risk.

Keith didn't stay in LandARB forever. As his confidence grew and his deal-finding skills sharpened, he transitioned into traditional acquisitions. He bought parcels outright, found buyers through his own marketing, and started building his own pipeline.

One deal stands out. Keith acquired a property through his own outreach, one he'd found by applying the same market research skills he'd developed through LandARB. He bought it for around \$2,500 and sold it for \$5,500 to a cash buyer. He did this multiple times. And then came the deal that changed his trajectory. A property he purchased and sold for \$36,000 in just three weeks.

Keith's journey mirrors the progression this book is built around. He crawled with LandARB. He walked with small traditional deals. And then he ran.

That's the power of starting with what you have. Keith didn't wait until he had the capital for traditional flipping. He entered through the door that was open, built skills and confidence, and then

moved into bigger opportunities as his foundation grew.

The Milestone Timeline

Whether you start with bird dogging, assignments, LandARB, or any other model in this book, here's a realistic progression to keep in mind.

Months 1-2: The Learning Phase. You're selecting markets, building lists, making your first offers, and learning the rhythm of the business. You might earn your first bird dog fee or assignment fee. Or you might still be grinding toward that first closed deal. Either way, this is where the education happens. Embrace the grind.

Months 3-4: First Deal Territory. Most committed students close their first deal somewhere in this window. It might be small. That's fine. The purpose is proof of concept and confidence building. This is where Will's story lives. He bought a property for \$1,250 and sold it for \$5,500 in six weeks. Not a life-changing number. But a life-changing experience.

Months 4-12: Building Momentum. With one or two deals under your belt, you start to see patterns. You know which markets respond well. Your due diligence gets faster. Your offers get sharper. You start reinvesting profits into higher-margin deals or building a small note portfolio for passive income.

FLIPPING DIRT: WITH LITTLE TO NO MONEY

Year 1-2: The Compounding Phase. This is where the reinvestment ladder really kicks in. Bird dog fees became assignment capital. Assignment profits funded wholesaling. Wholesale profits funded traditional flips. And owner-financed sales started generating monthly recurring income that didn't depend on closing the next deal.

Year 2+: Designing Your Freedom. With consistent systems producing reliable income, you start making bigger decisions. Can I reduce my W-2 hours? Can I transition fully? Where do I want to live? How do I want to spend my time?

These milestones aren't guarantees. They're benchmarks based on what we've seen across years of coaching and hundreds of student outcomes. Your timeline will be your own. The constants are effort, consistency, and persistence.

The Transformation Arc

At the beginning of this book, I told you that the biggest obstacle to starting a land business with little to no money isn't actually the money. It's the mindset.

By now, you've moved through a transformation that many people never experience.

You were Confused. You knew something needed to change but didn't know what. You'd heard about

land investing but couldn't picture how it worked. The whole thing seemed too good to be true.

You became Curious. You started reading, researching, asking questions. Something about the simplicity of the model resonated. No tenants. No toilets. No renos. The math started to make sense.

You gained Clarity. You understood the models. You saw how capital-light strategies could get you in the door. You stopped asking "can I do this?" and started asking "which model fits my situation?"

You built Capability. You learned market selection, due diligence, deal analysis, and negotiation. You built a real skill set. Not theory. Actual competence in a real business.

You became Confident. You closed your first deal. You saw real numbers in your bank account from a transaction you found, evaluated, and executed yourself.

You became a Confident Land Investor. You started seeing opportunity everywhere. The hesitation faded. The systems you built started producing consistent results.

You became a Freedom Earner. This is where the business transcends money. It's where the income supports the life you actually want to live. Where "someday" becomes "today."

That arc is available to you. Not because I'm promising it. Because it's been walked by real people with real constraints who chose to take the first step.

Ligia's Perspective

I can't close this book without Ligia's voice.

Ligia grew up in Communist Romania. And not just under Communism, but under one of the worst dictators the world has seen. She didn't have the luxury of many choices in her life. Housing, careers, even having to stand in a line with flags as the dictator was paraded by were all dictated. Freedom wasn't a concept she grew up with. It came in the form of a revolution by the people when she was a teenager. It was a concept she had to build from the ground up, along with her family and country, fighting for it.

When we were both laid off in 2016, Ligia didn't panic the way you might expect. She'd been through worse. She'd rebuilt her life before, from scratch. She'd also chosen to broaden her horizons as a young adult in a new country with a new language and a new culture.

What Ligia brought to our partnership wasn't just resilience. It was perspective. She understood that freedom isn't something you find. It's something you create. Something you fight for. And she understood that creating it requires the courage to let go of what's

comfortable and the discipline to build something new.

Her journey from Romania to Texas to Colorado to building a land business is a transformation story that goes far beyond real estate. It's about designing a life on purpose. And that's what we want for you too.

A Core Values Exercise

Before I let you go, I want to leave you with one exercise. It's one we did ourselves during the most uncertain period of our transition.

Write down what matters most to you. Not what you think should matter. What actually matters. Family? Adventure? Financial security? Creative expression? Health? Service? Time with the people you love? These are best expressed as your values - your core values.

Now rank them. Force yourself to put them in order. This is hard. But it's clarifying.

Then look at your current life and ask: does how I spend my time align with what I say matters most?

For most people, the answer is no. Most of us rush from the school system to the workforce, quickly building a life that traps us into more of the same. But that gap between what you value and how you live is

the source of the restlessness that brought you to this book. Land flipping isn't the answer to everything. But it can be the vehicle that closes that gap. It can give you the income, the time, and the control to build a life that actually reflects your priorities.

The Dirt Road Ahead

There's a trail outside my door in the Pikes Peak National Forest that climbs steeply through pine trees before opening up to a ridgeline view of Pikes Peak and the surrounding mountains. Every time I run it, the first quarter mile is the hardest. My legs are heavy. My lungs are resisting. The grade is steep and my body is protesting.

But I know from experience that if I just keep moving through that first stretch, through the initial resistance, my body accommodates and the trail levels out. My breathing steadies. My legs find their rhythm. And the view from the top is always worth the effort.

Your first deal is that first quarter mile.

It's going to be hard. You're going to doubt yourself. You're going to have moments where the smart play seems like going back to what's familiar.

Keep moving.

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Because what's ahead of you is bigger than one deal. It's the freedom to wake up on a Tuesday morning and choose how you spend your day. It's the security of income that doesn't depend on a single employer's decision. It's the satisfaction of building something real with your own hands and your own mind.

That's what this business gave us. And it's what it can give you, if you're willing to do the work.

Life is too short to put your dreams on hold.

Make TODAY your someday.

Where to Go From Here

This book gave you the models and the mindset to start a land business with little to no capital. But a book is a starting point, not a destination.

Here's what's available to you depending on where you are and what you need.

Start here (free): Join The Flip Side, our community of Flipping Dirt book owners and aspiring land investors. Download the editable tools, connect with others on the same path, and get access to bonus resources we'll keep updating over time. <https://flippingdirt.us/theflipside>

Ready to implement: *Flipping Dirt with Little to No Money: The Implementation System* is the action course built around this book. Video walkthroughs of market selection, list building, due diligence, and closing - with me on screen showing you how it's done. Plus expanded templates and a dedicated community space. Access details in the community.

Want the complete system: **Launchpad** is our full on-demand training program. Everything in the book and the course, plus the complete operational playbook - advanced market selection, the full template library (contracts, offer letters, calculators, and tools we use daily), owner financing systems, and membership in our private Flipping Dirt community of active investors. This is the system that builds the business. <https://flippingdirt.us/launchpad>

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Want a coach in your corner: Our **Accelerator** program is 16 weeks of live group coaching where you build your land business in real time with expert guidance, accountability, and a cohort of people on the same journey. And our **Business Builder** program provides a year of personal one-on-one coaching with Ligia and me, tailored to your specific situation, goals, and timeline. If you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together.
<https://flippingdirt.us/coaching>

Whichever path you choose, know this: the hardest part is already behind you. You showed up. You read the book. You understand the models. Now it's about taking the next step - whatever that looks like for you.

There's an African proverb that says: "If you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together."

We've been alone. We've been together. Together is better. Every time.

Flip the script. Live life: elevated.

Appendix: Capital-Light Toolkit

This appendix is your quick-reference companion to the strategies and systems covered throughout the book. Keep it bookmarked. Come back to it often. These are the templates, scripts, checklists, and resources that turn knowledge into action.

A. Model Selection Decision Tree

Not sure which model fits your situation? Start here.

What's your available capital?

\$0 - No financial capital at all → Bird Dogging (Chapter 4). Find deals for other investors. Earn referral fees. Build knowledge and relationships. Your only investment is time.

\$0-\$500 - Enough for a small deposit → Contract Assignments (Chapter 5). Lock deals with minimal earnest money. Assign to end buyers. Collect assignment fees at closing.

\$0-\$500 with an A-side partner → LandARB (Chapter 7). Leverage another investor's inventory and capital. You market, find buyers, and manage transactions for a share of the profit.

\$500-\$2,000 - Some operational capital → Options (Chapter 5) or Wholesaling (Chapter 6). Options let you control property with a small consideration fee. Wholesaling means buying at a discount and reselling to another investor.

\$2,000-\$5,000+ → Wholesaling (Chapter 6) or your first traditional flip. At this level, you have enough to cover acquisition costs on lower-priced properties and start building real equity.

\$0 but strong network → Joint Ventures (Chapter 10). Bring the hustle. Let your partner bring the capital. Split the profits.

Any capital level with a motivated seller → Seller Financing on the Buy Side (Chapter 9). Negotiate terms that reduce or eliminate upfront cash requirements.

B. Five Capitals Assessment Worksheet

Before pursuing any deal, assess your readiness across all five capital types. Rate each 1-5 (1 = very low, 5 = very strong).

Financial Capital: Cash or credit available for acquisition, marketing, and closing costs. Your score:

—

Human Capital: Your knowledge, skills, and experience in land investing, negotiation, and deal analysis. Your score: —

Social Capital: Your network of investors, buyers, mentors, title companies, and industry contacts. Your score: —

Intellectual Capital: Your understanding of markets, comps, due diligence processes, and deal structures. Your score: —

Sweat Equity: Your available time, energy, and willingness to put in the work. Your score: —

How to Interpret Your Scores:

If Financial Capital is your weakest area, focus on models that require minimal financial investment: bird dogging, assignments, LandARB, or JVs.

If Human or Intellectual Capital is low, invest time in education first. Read *Flipping Dirt*. Take the

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Launchpad training. Join a coaching program. The investment in knowledge pays dividends forever.

If Social Capital is low, start building relationships immediately. Join Facebook groups. Attend local meetups. Connect with other investors. Your network is your net worth in this business.

If Sweat Equity is low (limited time available), be honest about your capacity. Choose a model that matches the hours you can realistically commit per week. Five focused hours beats twenty scattered ones.

C. Due Diligence Framework

Due diligence is the safety net between a good deal and a costly mistake. Every property, every time. No shortcuts.

The framework follows two phases. Phase 1 is your initial screening for deal-breakers: ownership verification, authority to sell, property access, back taxes, HOA/LOA dues, zoning, liens or encumbrances, and environmental issues. If a property can't clear these basics, you walk away before investing any more time.

Phase 2 is your final due diligence for deal-makers: comparable sales confirmation, property boundaries, utilities and infrastructure, title search, closing method selection, and a full cost calculation to confirm the margin still works.

The cost of a few phone calls is always cheaper than the cost of a bad deal. Call the county tax office. Call the planning department. These calls can save you thousands of dollars and weeks of frustration.

For the complete Due Diligence Checklist with every line item, download the editable version on The Flip Side at <https://flippingdirt.us/theflipside>. Want to watch me walk through a full DD process on a real property? That's in The Implementation System companion course.

D. Deal Ranking Matrix

When you have multiple opportunities and need to prioritize, use this simple scoring system.

Rate each deal on a 1-5 scale for each criterion. Total the scores. Pursue the highest-scoring deal first.

Estimated Profit Margin: Higher expected profit = higher score.

Ownership Complexity: Clean, straightforward ownership (single owner, clear title) = higher score. Filter for signals of messy ownership: multiple persons on the deed, property in probate, recent life events like a divorce or deceased owner. You won't know the full DD picture yet, but ownership complexity is something you can assess early.

Time to Close: Faster expected close = higher score.

Capital Required: Less capital needed = higher score.

Confidence Level: How confident are you in comps, seller motivation, sub-market demand signals, and your ability to execute? Higher confidence = higher score.

Maximum possible score per deal: 25

Scoring guidance: 20-25 = strong candidate for your next deal. 15-19 = solid but may need more evaluation. Below 15 = either pass or revisit after gaining more experience.

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Download the editable Deal Ranking Matrix spreadsheet on The Flip Side at <https://flippingdirt.us/theflipside>

E. Seller Outreach Scripts

Cold Call Script (Direct to Owner):

“Hi [Name], my name is [Your Name]. I noticed you own a vacant parcel in [County/Area]. I’m an investor looking to purchase land in that area. I was wondering if you’d be open to discussing a potential sale? No pressure at all. I just wanted to reach out and see if there’s any interest.”

Follow-Up if They Express Interest:

“Great. Can I ask a few quick questions? How long have you owned the property? Have you thought about what you’d like to get for it? Is there anything about the property I should know, like any taxes owed or access issues?”

Voicemail Script:

“Hi [Name], this is [Your Name]. I’m looking to buy vacant land in [County/Area] and I noticed you own a parcel there. If you’d ever consider selling, I’d love to chat. You can reach me at [Phone Number] or text me anytime. Thanks, and have a great day.”

Text Message Script:

“Hi [Name], my name is [Your Name]. I’m looking to purchase vacant land in [County]. I saw you own a parcel in that area. Would you be open to a quick chat about a potential sale? No pressure. Thanks!”

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Email Script:

Subject: Interested in Purchasing Your Property in [County]

“Hi [Name], my name is [Your Name] and I’m a land investor looking to acquire vacant properties in [County/Area]. I came across your parcel during my research and wanted to reach out to see if you’d be open to discussing a potential sale. I purchase properties directly from owners, and I can close quickly and handle the paperwork. If this is something you’d consider, I’d welcome the chance to chat. No obligations. You can reach me at [Phone/Email]. Thanks for your time.”

All scripts above are available as copy-paste ready templates on The Flip Side at <https://flippingdirt.us/theflipside>. In The Implementation System, I walk through why each script works and how to adapt them for your specific market and model.

F. Bird Dog Pitch Template

Use this when approaching established investors about a bird dogging arrangement.

“Hi [Investor Name], my name is [Your Name]. I’m getting started in land investing and I’m actively researching [County/Market]. I know you’re active in this space, and I wanted to see if you’d be open to a referral arrangement. I’m putting in the legwork to find potential deals. Properties with motivated sellers, clean title, and solid margins. If I bring you a deal that fits your criteria, would you be open to paying a referral fee? I’m not looking to waste your time. I just want to learn the business while adding value to yours.”

Download the copy-paste ready version on The Flip Side at <https://flippingdirt.us/theflipside>

G. JV Partnership Discussion Checklist

Before entering any joint venture, both partners should align on these items. Put it in writing.

Roles and Responsibilities: Who finds deals? Who provides capital? Who handles DD? Who handles marketing? Who handles closing?

Decision Authority: Who has final say on offer price, sale price, and cash vs. terms decisions? How are conflicts going to be resolved (arbitration, 3rd party, ro sham bo?)

Profit Split: Agreed percentage or structure. Common splits: 50/50, 60/40 (capital partner gets more), or fee + percentage hybrid.

Timeline Expectations: How long will you hold the property before selling? What triggers a price reduction?

Exit Scenarios: What happens if the deal takes longer than expected? What if one partner wants out? What if the property doesn't sell?

Communication Cadence: How often will you check in? Weekly calls? Shared tracking spreadsheet?

Written Agreement: Signed JV agreement covering all of the above. Keep it simple but get it in writing.

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Download the editable JV Discussion Checklist and a sample JV Agreement Template on The Flip Side at <https://flippingdirt.us/theflipside>

H. Free and Low-Cost Resource Map

The tools and platforms listed here are current as of publication. For the latest updates, recommended tools, and new resources as they become available, visit <https://flippingdirt.us/resources>.

Market Research (Free): LandWatch.com - Browse listings, comps, and market activity Zillow.com - Property values, recent sales, listing history Land.com / LandFlip.com - Specialized land marketplaces County GIS Maps - Property boundaries, topography, access Google Earth - Virtual site visits County Assessor Websites - Ownership, assessed values, tax status

List Building (Free to Low-Cost): County Tax Rolls - Request from county (some free, some charge a nominal fee) Delinquent Tax Lists - Many counties publish online Zamplo - List building and management tool

Outreach (Free): Phone/Text - Direct outreach to owners Email - Professional inquiry letters Facebook Groups - Post “wanted to buy” ads Craigslist - Post in real estate sections

Marketing Your Properties (Free): Facebook Marketplace - Fastest response rates for land sales Facebook Buy/Sell Groups - Target local and land-specific groups Craigslist - Free real estate listings Zillow - Property listings (some limitations for FSBO)

Closing: SimpliFile - Digital deed filing direct with counties
Local Title Companies - Handle closings, verify title, manage funds

AI Tools: ChatGPT / Claude - Draft offer letters, listing descriptions, marketing copy, comp analysis
County record interpretation, zoning research assistance

Learning and Community: BiggerPockets Forums - Real estate investing community
Facebook Land Investing Groups - Connect with other investors
Flipping Dirt YouTube (@flippingdirt) - Free educational content
Flipping Dirt: Get Filthy Rich Playing with Dirt by Mike Deaton - Complete operational playbook

The tools and platforms listed here are current as of publication. For the latest updates, recommended tools, and new resources as they become available, join us on The Flip Side at <https://flippingdirt.us/theflipside> - we keep the resource list current so you don't have to wonder if something's changed.

I. The Core Principles (Bookmark This Page)

These are the principles that have guided our business for 8+ years. They work.

Structure every deal to protect your margin. Whether your profit comes from a bird dog fee, an assignment spread, a wholesale markup, or a flip - know your numbers before you commit. If the margin isn't there, the deal isn't there.

Your profit model determines your process. An assignment doesn't close like a wholesale deal. A JV doesn't close like a bird dog referral. Know the mechanics of YOUR model and execute accordingly.

Crawl, walk, run. Start with the simplest model for your situation. Build skills and capital before leveling up.

Systems create predictable income. This isn't a lottery. It's a repeatable process.

Prep meets opportunity. Lucky breaks happen to people who are prepared to capitalize on them.

Owner financing 10x's your buyer pool and creates passive income through monthly note payments.

Direct mail to off-market sellers is the primary deal engine. But it's not the only one. Especially when you're starting with zero budget.

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The cost of two phone calls is always cheaper than the cost of a bad deal. Always do your due diligence.

Focus on your ROT (Return on Time), not just your ROI. A smaller deal that takes five hours beats a bigger deal that consumes your life.

Failure is not the end result. It's feedback. Every deal that falls through teaches you something. Use it.

Your network is your net worth. Build relationships with other investors, title companies, buyers, and mentors from day one. The deals, partnerships, and opportunities that come through your network will compound over time.

"Life is too short to put your dreams on hold. Make TODAY your someday."

For more resources, training, and coaching: visit **<https://flippingdirt.us>**

About the Authors

Mike and Ligia Deaton are land investors, coaches, and the founders of Flipping Dirt.

In 2016, they were both laid off from corporate careers on the same day. With no income and a lot of uncertainty, they made a decision that changed everything: they would build a business together, on their own terms, buying and selling vacant land.

It wasn't easy. They spent five months grinding before their first sale. They made mistakes. They pivoted markets. They invested in coaching when their bank account said they probably shouldn't. And they kept moving forward - through doubt, through setbacks, through the kind of exhaustion that only comes from building something real.

Over 8+ years, Mike and Ligia have completed hundreds of land transactions, generating over \$8.2 million in revenue with an average annual ROI above 150%. They operate their business from their home in Colorado's Pikes Peak National Forest, where Mike runs ultramarathons on the trails outside their door and Ligia designs the life they both fought to create.

Mike holds an MBA, is a Tony Robbins-certified coach trained in strategic intervention, and is the author of *Flipping Dirt: Get Filthy Rich Playing with Dirt*. He's also a self-described personal development junkie who still gets fired up by a good book and a long trail run.

Mike Deaton

Ligia grew up in Communist Romania under one of the worst dictatorships the world has seen. She and her family lived through a revolution to earn their freedom. That perspective shapes everything she brings to the business and to coaching: freedom isn't something to take for granted. It's something you create and fight to keep.

Together, they coach aspiring land investors through coaching programs fit for all budgets, goals and dreams, with a mission to transform over 150 lives in 2026 - their 10th anniversary year.

Connect with Mike & Ligia:

Website: <https://flippingdirt.us>

YouTube: [@flippingdirt](https://www.youtube.com/@flippingdirt)

Join The Flip Side (free community):

<https://flippingdirt.us/theflipside>

Coaching programs: <https://flippingdirt.us/coaching>

"Life is too short to put your dreams on hold. Make TODAY your someday."

Also by Mike Deaton

Flipping Dirt: Get Filthy Rich Playing with Dirt The complete operational playbook for building a profitable land flipping business. From market selection to due diligence to marketing, profits, and scaling - this is where it all started.