



The Aspiration Gap

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Prepared for MarcusHealth
Project Working Weight App

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Introduction

There is always a distance between where someone starts and where they could end up. In consumer health and personal coaching, that distance is rarely physical or logistical. It is emotional. It is the space between a person who has been disappointed before and a person who finally believes that this time the conditions are genuinely different. Mapping that space, understanding exactly what it contains and why it formed, is the work this document describes. We call it the Aspiration Gap: the emotional distance between a user's starting state and the state they need to reach before they can act with confidence. The gap is not a problem to be solved. It is the territory where emotional design does its most important work.

What follows came directly from workshops and structured conversations between the WorkingWeight team and We Are Affective. The starting points, the internal dialogue, the moments that matter, the beliefs that need to shift: none of these are hypothetical. They are what surfaced when the right questions were asked of the people who know this product and its users most intimately. Marcus understands the audience he built WorkingWeight for because he was that audience. That means the emotional reality captured here is grounded in first-hand knowledge, not external assumption. The outputs belong to the process that produced them.

What the document makes visible is this: the professionals arriving at WorkingWeight are not neutral prospects weighing up a new option. They are guarded, often quietly embarrassed, and carrying the accumulated weight of previous attempts that didn't fit the lives they actually lead. The distance between that state and the confidence they need to book a call and mean it is significant, and it is specific. Understanding it in detail, across every dimension where it shows up, is what makes it possible to close.

Where Users Start

People are feeling guarded hope, quiet scepticism, low-level shame, fatigue, reluctant optimism, mild desperation, wariness, self-doubt, resignation, frustration, longing, embarrassment, cynicism, defensiveness, overwhelm.

The professionals who arrive at WorkingWeight are not passively browsing. They are in a specific and recognisable emotional state, one shaped less by the present moment than by the accumulation of everything that has come before it. The fitness industry has failed them in a very particular way: not by being dishonest about the existence of results, but by being dishonest about who those results are for. Every app that assumed a clear Sunday morning for meal prep, every gym plan that required a 6am alarm after a late client dinner, has deposited a small amount of scepticism into an account that now sits very close to full. They arrive already half-expecting to be disappointed again, and they are paying close attention to whether the first few seconds of the experience confirms or challenges that expectation.

What makes this entry point especially charged is the coexistence of two feelings that don't sit easily together. Alongside all the wariness and fatigue, there is still hope. These are high-functioning people who do not give up easily, even when they believe they probably should. The fact that they are on the page at all is evidence of that. Something brought them here, a post, a colleague's offhand comment, a moment of private clarity at the end of a long week, and that something carried enough weight to push past their better judgement. The current page does nothing with that fragile momentum. It meets genuine curiosity with contradictory pricing, invisible humans, and language that could have been written for anyone. Guarded hope is easy to lose. The only thing that sustains it is immediate recognition that this particular thing was built with them specifically in mind.

People are thinking "Who actually made this?", "Is there a real person behind this or is it just a website?", "How is this different from everything else I've tried?", "Does this person actually understand what my days look like?", "What do I actually get for £99 a week?", "How much time is this going to take?", "Will I have to overhaul my entire life to make this work?", "Have people like me actually done this?", "What happens on the strategy call, is it just a sales pitch?", "Why should I trust these results?", "What's the catch?"

These questions carry a distinct shape. They are not the questions of someone idly scrolling; they are the questions of someone who wants to believe but has learned not to. The sheer number of them, arriving in the first few seconds, reflects something true about this audience: they are thorough, professionally trained to identify risk, and deeply aware that their time and trust are finite resources. When they ask "what's the catch?" they are not being cynical for the sake of it. They are protecting themselves with the same rigour they apply to every other significant decision in their working life.

What these questions reveal, collectively, is that the visitors are doing work the page should be doing for them. They are trying to construct a coherent picture of what WorkingWeight actually is, who is behind it, what it involves, and whether it is worth their time. None of those answers should require effort to find. The frustration embedded in this internal dialogue is not primarily about the fitness industry; it is about the experience of landing on a page that seems to be deliberately withholding the information needed to make a sensible decision. These are not disengaged people who have already checked out. They are engaged people who have not yet been given a reason to stay.

Where Users Should End

Users need to feel seen before they feel sold to, recognised before they feel recruited, clear about what they are committing to, safe taking a next step that doesn't feel like losing control, confident the person behind this actually understands their specific life, and genuinely capable of achieving something they have privately stopped expecting to achieve.

The desired destination is precise. It is not enthusiasm, not excitement, and not the temporary lift of a well-designed headline. It is a quieter, more durable shift: the feeling of having finally found the right fit after a long stretch of finding the wrong one. When the experience works, the visitor stops

protecting themselves against disappointment and starts genuinely considering possibility. The defensive posture relaxes. The internal questions stop multiplying. Marcus stops being a stranger making claims and becomes someone whose experience they recognise from the inside. That shift is not gradual. It happens at specific moments, and when it happens, the whole page changes register. What felt like marketing starts to feel like information. What felt like risk starts to feel like a reasonable next step.

The goal is not to convert a sceptic into a believer through persuasion. It is to give someone who already wants to believe a reason to trust what they are feeling. These are professionals who have been right to be cautious. The job of the experience is to demonstrate, concretely and without fanfare, that this time the caution is no longer necessary.

The end beliefs, in users' own words are "The problem was never my discipline, nothing I tried was actually built for my life", "Someone who works like me and lives like me has already done this", "I know exactly what I'm signing up for and it fits around my week", "I can take this call without feeling like I'm walking into a sales pitch", "Being good at my job and looking after my body aren't in competition with each other", "I'm not starting from scratch, I'm just finally starting with the right person."

These are not aspirational statements constructed to make WorkingWeight sound good. They are what users genuinely feel when the experience delivers what it is capable of delivering. They are, in every case, statements about the user rather than the product. That distinction carries real weight. A person who leaves thinking "that was a well-designed page" has been impressed. A person who leaves thinking "I finally found something built for someone like me" has been changed. The first might share a link. The second books the call.

The shift these beliefs represent is from self-doubt to self-recognition. Visitors arrive quietly convinced that their failure to manage their health is evidence of a personal shortcoming. They leave, when the experience works, understanding that the shortcoming was never theirs. The system was wrong. The product was wrong. The assumption built into every previous attempt was wrong. WorkingWeight does not need to claim it is different. It needs to demonstrate it, specifically and without qualification, so the user arrives at that conclusion themselves. Beliefs that are self-generated hold. Beliefs that are sold evaporate the moment the tab closes.

The Gap

Mapping the gap dimension by dimension makes visible what a single-sentence emotional arc cannot: the specific ways a person has to change before action becomes possible. Each dimension below represents a distinct shift that the experience must support.

Dimension	Where users start	Where users should end
Trust	Assuming there is something being hidden, whether the price, the person, or the proof	Confident that what they see is the whole picture, because the whole picture has been shown without being asked for
Identity	Quietly convinced that being serious about their career and managing their weight require incompatible versions of themselves	Clear that these two things have never actually been in conflict, and that someone with the same job and the same pressures has already proved it
Belonging	Feeling like a person the fitness industry has never designed anything for, ignored by every product that assumed free mornings and empty Sundays	Recognising themselves in the page, in Marcus's story, in a named client's job title and outcome, feeling addressed rather than accommodated
Safety	Braced for a sales conversation that will make them feel processed, trapped, or talked into something	Willing to take the next step because the call has been framed as a conversation they are in control of, not a funnel they are entering
Clarity	Unable to answer the most basic questions a buyer needs to answer, what does this actually cost, what does a week inside it look like, who is behind it	Holding a clear picture of the service, the person delivering it, and what they would be committing to before any decision is required
Self-belief	Treating their previous attempts as evidence of personal inadequacy, worn down by the private shame of failing at something they know matters	Understanding that the problem was systemic, that nothing they tried was built for their actual life, and that this time the conditions are genuinely different
Credibility	Scanning for inconsistencies because experience has taught them that the first implausible detail signals a page full of them	Finding every claim specific enough to verify and every number precise enough to believe, which removes the need to keep looking for reasons to leave
Agency	Waiting for a better moment, a quieter week, a version of themselves with more time or more willpower	Ready to act now, not because circumstances have changed, but because the right support has finally made the decision feel safe rather than risky

The Three Critical Moments

The gap does not close gradually. It does not narrow steadily as a visitor moves down the page, accumulating confidence with each scroll. It closes, or fails to close, at specific moments. Three of them. Each one is a threshold, not a transition. What happens at each threshold determines whether

the emotional journey completes or collapses. The sequence matters. The second moment cannot do its work until the first has done its own. The third requires both to have landed. Understanding where these moments sit, what they ask of the experience, and why they carry the weight they do is the most directly actionable output of this process.

Moment 1: The face behind the promise

Everything that happens on this page depends on what happens in the first few seconds. Not the headline, not the price, not the testimonials. The moment a visitor either finds a real human behind the service or doesn't. This is the moment the Aspiration Gap workshop named most consistently and most clearly: "When they read Marcus's story and recognise their own." The job, the hours, the weight creeping up, the failed attempts to fix it around a full calendar. That moment of recognition is not a nice-to-have. It is the door through which everything else must pass.

The reason this moment carries so much weight is not simply that people prefer a face to a logo. It is that the specific audience arriving at WorkingWeight has developed a finely calibrated ability to detect when a product was not built for them. They have seen too many variations of the same template to believe in promises without provenance. When Marcus appears above the fold, named and photographed and briefly accounted for, he does not just make the page feel warmer. He answers the most fundamental question in the visitor's mind before they have consciously formed it: is there a real person behind this who actually understands my life? Without that answer, every subsequent element on the page floats untethered. With it, the wall of scepticism drops enough to make the rest of the journey possible.

The design implication is sequential. Marcus comes before claims. His story comes before testimonials. The human foundation is laid before the evidence is placed on top of it. This order is not instinctive for founders who believe in their results, but it is the correct one. The First 60 Seconds exercise made it explicit: people who book the call say the page felt different from other coaching sites. They do not usually mean the layout. They mean they found a person.

Moment 2: The evidence that removes the last objection

Once a visitor believes in Marcus, they are not yet convinced. They have lowered one wall. Behind it is another, more specific. It belongs to the part of them that has heard a compelling story before, followed it hopefully, and ended up disappointed. This is where social proof carries its full weight, but only the right kind. The Aspiration Gap workshop was precise about what that looks like: not a before and after photograph, not an aggregate statistic, but "a named professional with a specific outcome and a life that looks like theirs." A sentence like "James, senior associate at a law firm in London, lost 11kg in 14 weeks without changing his working hours" does something a five-star review cannot. It makes the abstract personal. It transforms a possibility into a precedent.

This moment is structurally different from the first. Where the first moment creates emotional permission, this one creates intellectual permission. The visitor who found themselves in Marcus now needs to find themselves in a result. Both conditions need to be met. Professional context is not

incidental detail in a testimonial for this audience; it is the claim they are actually evaluating. "Someone like me did this" is the belief that needs to form here, and it will only form if the evidence is specific enough to make "like me" feel genuinely true.

The Heartbreak Scale work established that anxiety in this experience spikes when detail is absent. A testimonial without a job title, without a timeframe, without a real outcome forces the visitor to imagine, and imagination shaped by previous disappointment is not generous. The second moment must do the opposite of leaving gaps. It must be the most concrete thing on the page. When it is, the visitor's internal dialogue shifts register. They stop asking "but would it work for me?" They start asking "how do I find out more?" That shift is the second threshold.

Moment 3: Clarity that makes the next step feel obvious

The third moment is the one that determines whether the journey completes or stalls at the boundary between intention and action. A visitor who believes in Marcus, and believes someone like them has succeeded, still needs one more thing: a clear and honest account of what they are actually signing up for. Not in terms of outcomes, but in terms of what their week would genuinely look like inside the programme. What the price covers. What the strategy call involves. What happens after they book. This is where the experience earns the right to ask for something in return.

The reason this moment is the most strategically important is that it resolves the anxiety the other two moments cannot touch. Trust in a person and evidence of results leave one significant question unanswered: what exactly am I committing to? For professionals who make considered decisions and have been burned by vague promises, the absence of a clear answer here is the final reason to close the tab. The Heartbreak Scale exercise identified pricing confusion as the single most damaging element on the current page precisely because it makes even a motivated visitor feel they are being managed rather than informed. Clarity, shown without being asked for, signals something distinct: confidence in the value of the thing being sold.

What passing this threshold feels like is different from the first two. It is less emotional and more settled. The visitor is not moved or surprised. They are clear. They can picture their own week inside the programme. They understand that the strategy call is a conversation they are in control of. They know what £99 a week includes before they have to ask. That clarity is not the final destination; it is what makes the destination reachable. The Funeral Speech work captured it simply: the page that finally felt honest. The first time a fitness site didn't talk down to them. Knowing exactly what they were signing up for. Those are the words of someone who passed through all three moments intact. The goal is to make that experience reproducible.

Emerging Themes

The patterns that shape this experience do not belong to any single moment on the page. They run underneath everything, from the first glance at the headline to the moment someone decides whether or not to book a call. Four of them account for the majority of the emotional gap. They are

not design failures or copywriting problems. They are structural conditions that determine whether the visitor's journey completes or collapses, regardless of what else the page gets right.

The trust deficit is active, not passive. The professionals arriving at WorkingWeight are not simply cautious in the neutral sense of the word. They are specifically and justifiably armoured against exactly this type of product. The Heartbreak Scale work established that trust is starting at 1. Not 5, not 3. One. That is not a starting point that patience and good intentions will eventually overcome. It is a starting point that requires immediate, concrete evidence to the contrary. The consequence of treating it as passive scepticism is visible in every bounce from the current page: a visitor who arrived with genuine interest, encountered nothing that dismantled their guard, and left with their original beliefs intact. What the Aspiration Gap workshop named as the biggest single risk captures it exactly: never seeing themselves in the page. The emotional cost is not just a lost conversion. It is the reinforcement of a belief these visitors have been trying, quietly, to let go of. That this kind of thing is not for someone like them. When the page confirms that belief rather than challenging it, it does real damage. The solution direction is not to try harder to earn trust. It is to make the trust signals immediate, specific, and impossible to miss, before any claim is made.

The person behind the product is the product. This theme emerged with unusual consistency across the exercises. From the First 60 Seconds to the Identity Shift to The Funeral Speech, the outputs kept returning to the same observation: Marcus is not the face of the service. He is the service. His story does not add credibility to WorkingWeight. It is the credibility. A former corporate finance analyst who lost 22kg while working full-time, who built the programme he needed and could not find, is not a founder anecdote to be included somewhere on the page. He is the answer to every question a suspicious visitor is silently asking. Who made this? Why does it exist? Can it actually work around a life like mine? His absence from the current page does not leave a gap that other content can fill. It removes the single most powerful reason the experience has to convert anyone at all. The Design Principles Builder was direct about this: the fold is a promise, and the scroll is the proof. When Marcus does not appear at the fold, the promise the headline makes is broken before it has a chance to land. The solution direction is not to feature him more prominently. It is to understand that without him, the page has no foundation.

Specificity is the only currency this audience accepts. Across every exercise, the pattern held: vague claims do not just fail to persuade this audience, they actively destroy the credibility everything else on the page depends on. The Heartbreak Scale identified pricing confusion as the single most damaging element currently present. The Write It Wrong work demonstrated, repeatedly, that the difference between copy that earns trust and copy that loses it is almost always the presence or absence of a real number, a real name, a real detail. The reason this matters so much emotionally is that the target audience makes professional decisions for a living. They are trained to identify the gap between a claim and its evidence. When they find that gap on a page like this one, they do not give it the benefit of the doubt. They treat it as confirmation of what they suspected when they arrived. The Aspiration Gap workshop captured the inversion of this clearly: "James, senior associate at a law firm in London, lost 11kg in 14 weeks without changing his working hours"

is not more persuasive than a five-star review because of the format. It is more persuasive because it is specific enough to be checked, and things that can be checked are things that get believed. The solution direction is to treat every vague claim on the page as a liability, not a foundation, and replace it with something real or remove it entirely.

The emotional cost of previous failure is embedded in the decision. The visitors arriving at WorkingWeight are not evaluating WorkingWeight in isolation. They are evaluating it against everything they have already tried. The Identity Shift work described this state clearly: capable in almost every area of their life except this one, quietly convinced they are the problem, privately embarrassed by a gap between how they perform professionally and how they feel physically. That context does not sit passively in the background. It actively shapes how they read every line of copy, every testimonial, every claim. Generic fitness language does not just miss them. It confirms their suspicion that this product was built for a different kind of person. Overconfident outcome promises do not just fail to land. They register as insulting, because these are people who have followed confident promises before and have the unused gym memberships to show for it. The emotional landmine here is not any specific piece of content. It is the cumulative feeling of being invisible to an industry, and the particular pain of arriving somewhere that seemed different and finding the same template underneath. The solution direction is not to avoid the history of failure but to acknowledge it directly and specifically, in a way that removes the shame from the visitor and places it where it belongs: on a fitness industry that was never designed for the lives these people actually lead.

Root Causes

The gap that exists between where these visitors start and where they need to reach is not caused by a weak product. The WorkingWeight programme delivers real results for real people with real jobs. The gap exists because the experience built to represent it has not yet caught up with what the product actually is. Four structural failures account for the distance.

1. The person behind the product is invisible when he should be impossible to miss. Marcus Cole is the single most powerful trust signal WorkingWeight has, and he is absent from the page. Not de-emphasised. Absent. A former corporate finance analyst who lost 22kg while working full-time, who built the programme he needed and could not find, is not a founder detail to be mentioned somewhere in a bio section. He is the answer to every question a suspicious visitor is silently asking before they scroll anywhere. When the page leads with claims and statistics before establishing the human behind them, it asks visitors to believe in results before they have been given a person to believe in. That sequence is wrong and the experience collapses because of it.

2. The pricing contradiction actively destroys the trust the headline creates. The Aspiration Gap workshop identified pricing as the single most damaging element currently on the page, and the reason is structural rather than cosmetic. Two different numbers, in two different currencies, with no explanation, do not read as an oversight to a professional evaluating a £99 per week commitment. They read as a deliberate attempt to obscure something. Confusion about cost carries a specific

emotional signal to this audience: the price is being hidden because it cannot withstand scrutiny. That belief, once formed, cannot be undone by the quality of anything else on the page. The trust the headline earns in three seconds is spent entirely by the pricing contradiction that follows it.

3. Social proof is structured to impress rather than to convince. The current page reaches for scale, "satisfied clients," aggregate numbers, generic five-star reviews, in a way that signals it was built to look credible rather than to actually be it. The audience this product serves are professionals who evaluate evidence for a living. They do not respond to volume. They respond to specificity. A named individual, with a real job title, a precise outcome, and a timeframe is more convincing than any number of anonymous endorsements because it contains something verifiable. When testimonials lack that specificity, they do not simply fail to persuade; they actively reactivate the scepticism the visitor arrived with. The structural failure is not that the proof is missing. It is that the proof has been formatted in the one way this audience is trained to distrust.

4. The programme itself is never made concrete. At the price WorkingWeight charges, a visitor who cannot picture what their week inside the programme actually looks like will not book a call to find out. They will leave. The current page describes outcomes without describing the process, makes promises without explaining the mechanism, and asks for commitment before providing the information that would make commitment feel reasonable. For a busy professional who has been burned by vague promises before, ambiguity does not create curiosity. It creates the assumption that the vagueness is hiding something. A plain, specific account of what the programme involves day to day, written in the language of someone with a full working week, is not supplementary content. It is the structural component the experience is currently missing entirely.

These are solvable problems, every one of them. Collectively, they are the design brief.