

SOLO CREATOR SYSTEM

The 3-Bucket One-Person Business

How a solo content business can run on systems — and pay you even when you're completely off the clock.

I take real trips throughout the year, and my business keeps running without me — it makes money without me. One week in Alaska with my two brothers and my sister, I never once opened my laptop, and nobody noticed I was gone.

That sentence is the whole point of these notes. Not to brag — to show you what's actually possible when you stop trading hours for income and start building a machine that runs on systems instead of on you.

First, a little about me — because context matters

After my divorce, I didn't walk away with assets, a settlement, or child support. I raised my daughter on my own and rebuilt from zero — job hunting, borrowing money, figuring it out. I built the house I live in now from the ground up, as a single woman, from nothing to something.

For 20+ years I'd built businesses the "right" way: teams, leverage, hiring, managing. But around 50, I hit a wall. I was burned out on managing people. What I actually loved was the *creating* — the content, the writing, the marketing. So I made a quiet, terrifying decision: I'd go solo. One person. Just me and my systems. It's the best decision I ever made, and it's why I can take real vacations throughout the year and still grow.

1. Everything I do lives in three buckets

I've always had many income streams. The move that changed everything was sorting all of them into **three buckets**. If a new idea, platform, or shiny project doesn't fill one of these, the answer is a fast, guilt-free no.

BUCKET 1**Affiliate**

Commissions from tools and services I actually use and teach.

BUCKET 2**Publishing**

Anything I earn from creating: writing, ebooks, ad revenue, my newsletter.

BUCKET 3**Coaching**

Webinars, courses, and group coaching.

My filter: "What can I do less of to make more?" If it doesn't drop into a bucket, I don't chase it.

2. Systems, not people

Here's the mindset shift: I'm the only one on payroll. Software runs the day-to-day. I batch my content (two videos on the one day I do hair and makeup), pre-schedule my posts and articles, and let email sequences do the follow-up. When it's all queued and automated, I can disappear for a week and the machine keeps running — because it runs on systems, not on me being present.

3. Only promote what you actually use

My affiliate income isn't brand deals. It's tools I pay for, use daily, and teach — so the recommendation is honest and it keeps earning long after the video goes up. Real usage is what makes it durable. Here's my actual stack:

Heads up: some of the links below are affiliate links — if you sign up through them I may earn a small commission, at no extra cost to you. I only ever share tools I truly use.

QuickBooks	My accounting brain. I set up rules and automation so every dollar auto-files into the right bucket — I always know what's working.
Substack	Where my publishing bucket lives: paid newsletter, notes, and articles I pre-schedule so they go out while I travel.
Kalodata	The data I use to run my Amazon Influencer and TikTok Shop content — what's trending and worth making.
Pinclicks	Pinterest keyword research — real search volume so my pins point at demand, not guesses.
Claude / ChatGPT	I hand it my P&Ls and ask what patterns I'm missing. It's like a strategist that never sleeps.

"It didn't require people. It just required systems."

Come build your version of this with me

The three buckets, the systems underneath them, and the automation that lets it run without you — that's exactly what we build together, every week, inside my group coaching.

Join group coaching at BallenAcademy.com →

About Lori Ballen

Lori Ballen is a digital marketing coach and creator who has spent 20+ years building online businesses — and rebuilt hers from zero after 50. Today she runs a one-person content company on systems, teaching solopreneurs how to build a sustainable, long-term digital marketing business with content, AI, and simple automation. She shares what's working every week — come find her:

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