

Building a growth engine with AI

tl;dr: Ascend's COO Omar Ismail scaled ARR 38% in six months with no dedicated growth hire, by sequencing ICP research, brand repositioning, and programmatic execution through Claude Code.

#1 - Growth is a sequencing problem, not a headcount problem.

The three stages: ICP, brand, execution, only work in order. Teams that skip to paid ads and outbound without a precise customer profile are spending against the wrong audience. Do the data work first, or the execution work is wasted.

#2 - Your best growth insight is already in your data.

Before building any acquisition motion, analyze your existing customers. Ascend found that 75% of revenue came from a single customer type (EAs at PE and VC firms) hiding in 4,582 bookings they already had. The ICP was there. It just hadn't been discovered yet.

#3 - ICP research doesn't just tell you who to target. It tells you if your brand is wrong.

That's the harder finding, and the more valuable one. The founders who extract the most from ICP work are the ones willing to let it challenge their positioning, not just confirm it. Ascend discovered they were selling discounts to customers who cared about reliability, status, and provable ROI.

#4 - Brand repositioning is a growth lever.

Once Ascend fixed the gap between how they were positioned and who they actually served, every downstream channel, paid, outbound, CRM, became more effective. Messaging built on real customer language converts. Messaging built on internal assumptions doesn't.

#5 - Meta and LinkedIn need completely different playbooks.

On Meta, creative does the targeting—broad audiences, strong creative, let the algorithm self-select. On LinkedIn, identity does the work—job title, seniority, firm type, with precision Meta can't match. Running the same strategy on both platforms leaves significant money on the table.

#6 - Attribution is infrastructure, not a reporting task.

Most teams treat attribution as something to set up once growth is working. Ascend built it first: a 22-branch rules engine achieving near-100% contact attribution across every channel. That decision made every subsequent channel decision faster, cheaper, and more defensible.

#7 - AI can run what used to require a dedicated team.

ICP research, paid campaigns, outbound sequences, CRM automation: Ascend's entire growth stack was built and operated through Claude Code with zero growth hires. Growth ops ran as daily slash commands: /daily-ad-review, /weekly-growth-report, /new-campaign. The operational knowledge compounds with every session.