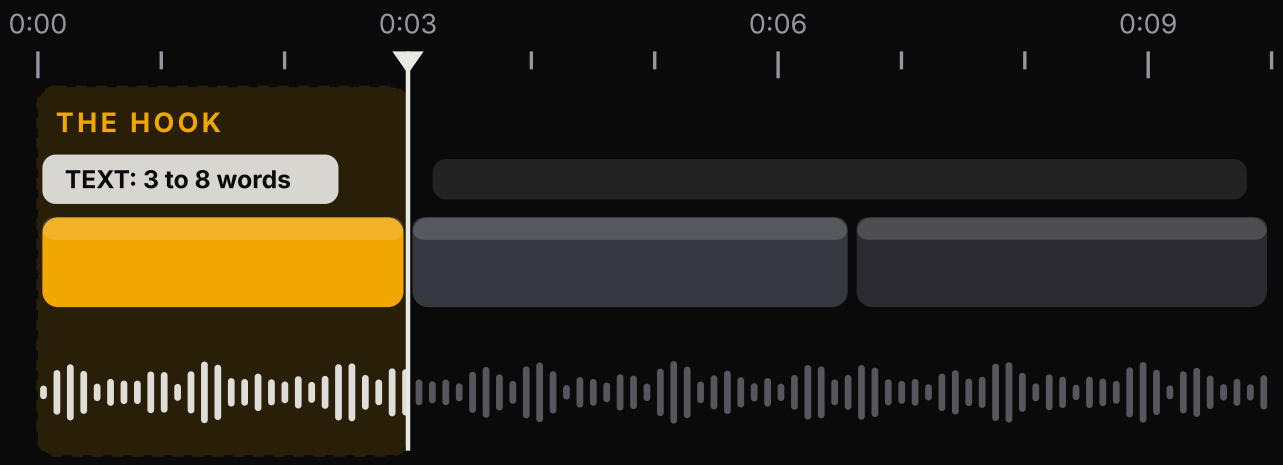


FREE GUIDE

7 hooks that make founder videos GET WATCHED

Formulas, examples and the edit behind each one.

WHAT'S INSIDE

01 **7 hook formulas**
From the call-out to the insider take

02 **The 3 layers of a hook**
What you say, show and write on screen

03 **Openings of 47 reels**
How working creators actually start

04 **The 30-second check**
Run it before you post

Pulkit Bhardwaj
Video editor for founders, coaches and brands

50M+ organic views edited
50+ clients, incl. Invideo, Herbalife, Rio

PULKIT EDITING

7 hooks that make founder videos GET WATCHED

Formulas, examples and the edit behind each one.

Why the first 3 seconds decide everything

Your hook is the first 1 to 3 seconds of a video: what people hear, see and read before they decide to stay or scroll. If it misses, the rest of the video never gets watched, no matter how good it is.

The platforms measure this directly, and it shapes who sees your next post:

- **YouTube** shows a "Stayed to watch" number for every Short: the share of viewers who watched past the first few seconds (YouTube Help).
- **Facebook and Nielsen** found that people who watched a video ad for under 3 seconds still had a 47% lift in ad recall. The opening does work even on people who scroll on (Marketing Dive, 2015).
- **LinkedIn** says 79% of videos in its feed are watched with the sound off (LinkedIn Marketing Blog).
- **Verizon Media and Publicis Media** surveyed 5,616 US adults in 2019: 69% watch video with the sound off in public (Streaming Media).

So a founder's hook has to work twice: once for people listening, and once for people reading the screen on mute. This guide gives you 7 hooks that do both, with the edit that makes each one land.

The three layers of every hook

A hook is three things happening at once in the first 3 seconds. The best ones have all three saying the same thing.

LAYER	WHAT IT IS	WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE
Spoken	The first sentence you say	Names the topic or the viewer in under 10 words. No greeting, no name, no "in today's video".
Visual	What is on screen in the first frame	You, already mid-sentence, framed close. Or the thing you are talking about: a screen, a product, a result.
Text	The headline burned onto the video	3 to 8 words that make sense on mute, placed where the app's buttons and caption won't cover it.

I went through the openings of 47 short-form reels from three education creators to see how working creators actually do this. Not one opened with a greeting or an introduction. All 47 named the topic, or the person it was for, in the very first sentence.

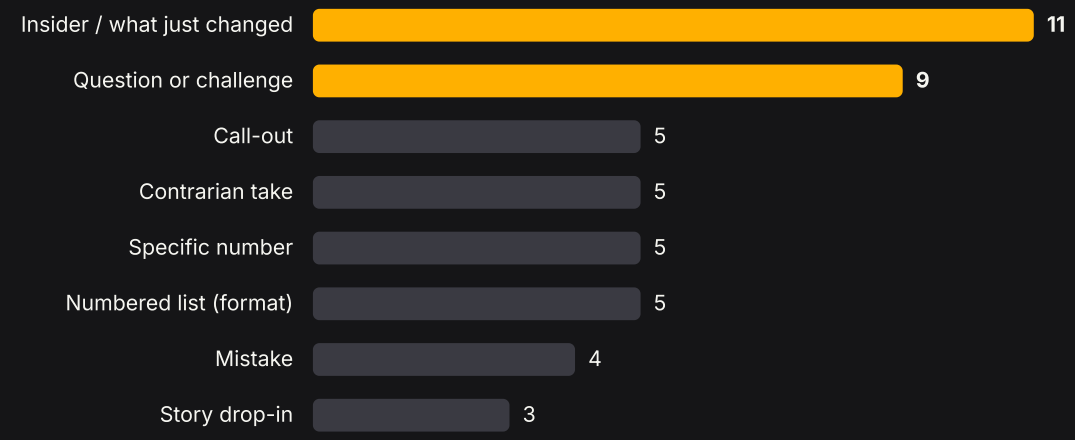
That is the bar. Every hook below follows it.

The 7 hooks

Each hook has a fill-in formula, two examples for founders and coaches, when to use it, why it works, and the edit that makes it land. Swap anything in [brackets] for your own real numbers. The chart below shows how often each one opened the 47 reels.

Insider and question hooks opened 20 of the 47 reels

Opening hook type across 47 reels; no single type opened more than 23% of them



Opening lines of 47 Instagram reels from Brainblast, PeakPrep and Niceville Tutoring, sorted by hook type, October 2026.

Working creators mix their hooks. Pick the one that fits the point of your video, not the one that's trending.

1 The call-out

> **FORMULA** "If you're a [specific person] who [specific situation], [what they get]."

- *"If you're a founder still writing every post yourself, this will save you [5] hours a week."*
- *"Coaches charging under [$2,000]: this is why your sales calls don't close."*

Use it when your audience is narrow and you want the right people to stop and everyone else to scroll.

Why it works: people notice things that are about them even when their attention is elsewhere, the same way you hear your own name across a noisy room (selective attention research).

Edit it like this: put the label on screen in frame one, big and centred: "FOUNDERS WHO SELL ON CALLS". The right viewer reads themselves before you finish the sentence.

2 The mistake

> **FORMULA** "Most [people like you] get [thing] wrong. Here's the fix."

- *"Stop opening sales calls with 'tell me about your business'."*
- *"You're losing deals on the first call because of one question you never ask."*

Use it when you can name a specific, common error and show the fix inside the video.

Why it works: bad news and threats get more attention, and are processed more thoroughly, than good news (Baumeister et al., 2001). A mistake the viewer might be making feels urgent.

Edit it like this: show the wrong way for one second with a red "DON'T" on screen, then hard cut to you explaining the fix.

3 The contrarian take

> **FORMULA** "[Common advice] is wrong. Do this instead."

- *"Posting every day is the worst advice I ever took on LinkedIn."*
- *"I stopped doing discovery calls. Our close rate went up."*

Use it when you genuinely disagree with popular advice and can back it up in the next 20 seconds. A take you can't defend costs you trust.

Why it works: it clashes with something the viewer already believes, so they stay to find out whether you're right.

Edit it like this: open on the boldest line with a hard cut, no music build-up. Put the claim on screen in quotation marks.

4 The question or challenge

> **FORMULA** "Why does [surprising thing] happen?" or "Can you spot what's wrong with this [pitch, ad, email]?"

- *"Why do some founders get [50] inbound leads from one post and others get none?"*
- *"This cold email booked [12] calls in a week. Can you spot why?"*

Use it when the answer is genuinely interesting and you deliver it in the same video. Never ask a yes/no question viewers answer in their head, like "Want more clients?"

Why it works: curiosity is the uncomfortable feeling of a gap in what you know, and people act to close it (Loewenstein, 1994).

Edit it like this: put the question on screen word for word, and push in slowly on your face as you finish it.

5 The specific number

> **FORMULA** "[Exact number] [result] in [time]. Here's what did it."

- *"We went from [3] to [41] inbound calls a month without running ads."*
- *"[$18,400] in sales from one LinkedIn post. Here's the post."*

Use it when you have a real result you can show on screen.

Why it works: sharp numbers like 18,400 make people assume the claim is based on research, so they believe it more than a round 20K (Schindler and Yalch, 2006).

Edit it like this: animate the number counting up in the first second, then show the proof (a dashboard, an invoice, a screenshot) by second three.

6 The story drop-in

> **FORMULA** Start in the middle of the moment. "[When], [what went wrong]."

- *"Last Tuesday a client fired us over one email."*
- *"Two years ago I had [$400] in the bank and payroll due on Friday."*

Use it when the lesson came from something that actually happened to you or a client. Skip the backstory and start at the tense moment; context can come later.

Why it works: the more absorbed people get in a story, the more they take on its beliefs and warm to its main character (Green and Brock, 2000).

Edit it like this: open on a photo or clip from that moment, not on your face. Add a subtle sound hit on the first cut.

7 The insider or "what just changed"

> **FORMULA** "Nobody tells you this about [X]." or "[Platform or market] just changed [thing]. Here's what to do this week."

- *"What investors actually look at in the first 30 seconds of your deck."*
- *"[Platform] just changed [feature]. Here's what it means for your next post."*

Use it when you have real inside knowledge or fresh news your audience will act on.

Why it works: news is only useful if you act on it now, which gives people a reason to watch now instead of later.

Edit it like this: open on a screenshot of the news or the document, with you cut out in the corner talking over it.

A numbered list ("3 mistakes that...") also shows up in the chart. Treat it as a format, not a hook: pair it with any of the seven above.

Hook mistakes I fix most often

Most weak founder videos fail in the same few ways, and each one has a quick fix in the script or the edit.

MISTAKE	WHY IT HURTS	FIX
Opening with a greeting: "Hi, I'm [name], founder of [company]"	Your name is already on the post. The first 3 seconds go to something the viewer didn't ask for.	Start on the hook. Introduce yourself later, or never.
A logo animation or branded intro	It delays the point, and on mute it says nothing.	Cut it. Put the logo in the last frame if you want it at all.
Context before the point: "So I was thinking about..."	Viewers decide before you get to the interesting part.	Say the conclusion first, then explain how you got there.
A hook that only works with sound	79% of LinkedIn feed video is watched on mute.	Burn the hook onto the screen as text in frame one.
On-screen text that is too long or in the wrong place	Nobody reads 20 words in 2 seconds, and the app's buttons cover the bottom and right edge.	3 to 8 words, in the upper-middle of the frame.
Dead air: walking into frame, "um", a breath before the first word	Half a second of nothing reads as "nothing is happening".	Trim so the video starts on your first word.
A hook the video doesn't pay off	People leave early, and that early drop-off is exactly what platforms measure.	Only promise what the next 30 seconds deliver.

The last one matters most. A clickbait hook gets the first 3 seconds, but the platform also tracks how long people stay, and a broken promise shows up there.

Before you post: the 30-second hook check

Run every video through these seven checks before it goes live.

- [ ] The first word I say is part of the hook, not a greeting or my name.
- [ ] The hook names the topic or the person it's for in under 10 words.
- [ ] Frame one shows me mid-sentence or shows the thing I'm talking about.
- [ ] The hook is burned on screen as 3 to 8 words, clear of the app's buttons.
- [ ] It makes sense with the sound off.
- [ ] Any number in the hook is real, specific, and shown as proof by second 3.
- [ ] The video delivers what the hook promised within 30 seconds.

Tip: record 3 versions of your hook at the end of each shoot. It takes a minute, and your editor can test which one opens the video.

Want a second pair of eyes?

I'm Pulkit. I edit short-form and talking-head videos for founders, coaches and brands, with 50M+ organic views across 50+ clients including Invideo, Herbalife, Rio and RiteBite.

If you'd like me to look at your hooks, DM me the word **EDIT** on LinkedIn. I'll go through your latest video and tell you what I'd change. It's free, and there's no pressure to hire me after.

Book a call | **See my work at pulkitediting.com**

Sources

- Understand your YouTube content performance, YouTube Help (the "Stayed to watch" metric for Shorts)
- Brand lift happens in less than 1 second of video, study finds, Marketing Dive, March 2015 (Facebook and Nielsen)
- 4 tips for better video ads on LinkedIn, LinkedIn Marketing Blog (79% sound-off)
- 80% of video caption users aren't hearing impaired, Streaming Media (Verizon Media and Publicis Media, 2019)
- Selective attention, Introduction to Psychology, UPEI
- Bad is stronger than good, Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer and Vohs, Review of General Psychology, 2001
- The psychology of curiosity: a review and reinterpretation, Loewenstein, Psychological Bulletin, 1994
- Round numbers, sharp numbers, and their perceived credibility, on Schindler and Yalch, Advances in Consumer Research, 2006
- Transportation into narrative worlds, OnFiction, on Green and Brock, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2000
- Reel study: the opening line of 47 Instagram reels from Brainblast, PeakPrep and Niceville Tutoring, transcribed and sorted by hook type, October 2026