



# How Dan Quit His 9-to-5 to Become a 6-Figure AI Consultant

A Case Study from The AI Consultancy Project by Innovating with AI

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I want to tell you about Dan Mowinski, because his story is one of the best examples I've seen of what's possible when someone fully commits to this path—even when they don't have a tech background.

Dan didn't get lucky or have some unfair advantage. He worked nights from 9:30 to midnight, six days a week, while holding down his day job and raising his family. And about a year after joining The AI Consultancy Project, he walked away from his 9-to-5 and stepped into a six-figure AI consulting business he'd built from scratch.

Here's how it happened.

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## Where Dan Started

When I first met Dan in late 2024, he was working full-time as a Customer Success Manager at a software company. He was good at his job and liked his coworkers. But he'd basically been told by his higher-ups that there wasn't a real path to significant salary growth at that company, for reasons that had nothing to do with his performance. He'd hit a ceiling.

At the same time, Dan had fallen in love with AI. He'd been playing around with ChatGPT since early 2023, right after the public launch of GPT-3.5. He was subscribed to every AI newsletter he could find and took all the free courses. He was deep in the hobby of it.



But that's all it was: a hobby. As Dan put it in his own words, "I really loved AI, but I wasn't quite sure exactly what to do with it."

He wasn't technical and had never started his own business. He had some sales experience from his career, but no system for turning AI knowledge into income. What he did have was a gut feeling that AI was going to change the world, and a growing realization—from talking to friends, family, and coworkers—that he actually knew a lot more about AI than most people around him.

That gap between what he knew and what the average business owner knew was an opportunity.

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## Why He Chose This Program

Dan was getting pitched from every direction. If you're in the AI space, you know the landscape: webinars promising you'll make a million dollars in six months, influencers selling you on their proprietary software, and slick presentations from people who look more like motivational speakers than practitioners.

Dan saw through all of it. Here's what he told us about why he chose The AI Consultancy Project:

"What I really liked about Rob's program is that he wasn't a rah-rah cheerleader up on stage with a thousand people saying you're gonna make a million dollars over the next year. He's like a normal dude, just learning about AI and doing some really cool things. Instead of trying to sell me on buying his thing, he's teaching us how to build the programs, how to do it ourselves and actually be a consultant."

That meant a lot to me, honestly. Because that's exactly what I set out to build: a program where I teach people *how* to fish, not *sell* them a fish. Dan could relate to me because I'm not some untouchable tech influencer. I'm a guy who built a successful web development business, saw where AI was heading, and decided to help other people get there too.

Dan also did his homework. He looked into my background, my businesses, and my track record. He wasn't impulsive about it. He watched the emails, read the blog posts, and waited until the timing felt right before joining our second cohort.

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## The Early Months: Stumbles, Lessons, and Building Momentum

I want to be honest about this part, because Dan was honest about it, and I think it's the most valuable part of his story for anyone reading this.

Dan joined in late 2024, but didn't land his first paying client until June 2025. That's roughly *seven months* of grinding before real money came in.

And some of that delay was self-inflicted; Dan will tell you that himself. When he first got into the program, he got excited and went off-script. He skipped ahead in the curriculum, built his website before he needed one, set up his Stripe account, and started doing all the "business-looking" stuff instead of following the steps in the order I laid them out.

"I thought that I knew better," Dan said. "And I didn't. Why would I know better?"

Once he came back to the curriculum and started following the progression—learning how to talk to prospects, how to position his services, how to structure a discovery call—that's when things started to click.

But even then, it wasn't a straight line. His first real discovery call was with the owner of his daughter's gymnastics gym. He went in too big, pushed for too big a proposal too fast, and got a hard no. The owner told him to call back in a year.

His second attempt, with the owner of his daughter's swim school, went better. He'd learned from the first failure: he came in with a tighter, more realistic proposal, starting small instead of promising the moon. She seemed interested... and then ghosted him.

Two swings, two misses. That's the reality of starting a consulting business. But Dan kept going.

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## The Turning Point: From Hobby to Real Business

The shift happened when Dan stopped speaking in generalities and started showing people something specific.

Through the AICP, Dan built a tangible deliverable—something he could demonstrate to a prospect in a meeting, not just describe in the abstract. Instead of saying "I can create automations for you," or "I can help with AI," he could pull something up and say, "This is what I built. Can you see how something like this would help your business?"

That changed everything.

His first paying gig was with a family member, which is exactly in line with my recommendation to work with your “warm network” first. Get paid to learn. Build confidence. Dan created a custom GPT to manage Instagram content for a small business – something he'd never done before. It didn't pay much, but it was a client giving him money, and he learned an entirely new skill in the process. He ran that engagement for about five months.

The first time a stranger—someone who had no idea who Dan was before that conversation—said “yes” and handed over money, it rewired his brain. As he described it:

“When somebody you don't know gives you money, it all of a sudden is a real business. They don't know your nine-to-five job. They don't know you as a person. They know you as an AI consultant. And that's when my mindset changed—this is real.”

But the moment that really kicked things off was when a fellow student in our community, Deborah, introduced Dan to a gym owner she knew. Dan had a discovery call on Friday, sent a proposal on Saturday, and got a yes with payment on Monday.

**Three days** from introduction to signed deal. That's what happens when you have the right system, the right community, and the right preparation.

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## Scaling Up: The Power of Community

One of the things I'm proudest of in this program is the community we've built, and Dan's story is a perfect example of why.

Dan didn't build his business alone. He collaborated with other students constantly, and even turned a random cold call about one of his investment properties into a potential client lead—the caller didn't want to buy the property, but after a few minutes of conversation, Dan discovered the guy owned a business and needed help generating leads. That's the sales instinct the program helped him sharpen.

Here's a Slack message to our community that Dan posted on one particularly big day:

“Big Big day!! A huge reason is the people in this community!! I'm working with Yakruthik on getting a client in India... I had a call with Thiago about helping a real estate agent... Deborah wants to partner up on a live presentation here in Denver... I'm launching Meta Ads for a client tomorrow, finished a newsletter in about 20 minutes with AI... and I got a cold call today from a business owner who now wants to talk to me about getting him more leads. WHAT A DAY!!”

That's not a fluke day. That's what momentum looks like when you've been putting in the work for months and the flywheel starts spinning.

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## **Finding His Niche: GymLaunch.ai**

About a year into the program, Dan did something I always encourage but that a lot of consultants resist: he found his niche.

Dan had been working with a few gym clients and getting great results. While on a trip to Fiji, the founder of the company he was traveling with suggested he look into specializing—essentially building the "Gym Launch" model, but powered by AI.

Dan grabbed the domain GymLaunch.ai for less than \$250, and suddenly he wasn't just "an AI consultant." He was The Gym AI Guy.

He's now offering gym owners a full stack of AI-powered services: voice agents, lead generation, marketing automation, realistic trainer videos for social media, Google review management, website optimization, and more. He set a goal of helping 500 small gym businesses with AI in 2026.

As one of our team members put it when Dan announced his niche: "Niching down can bring up a lot of concerns for people—worrying you won't have enough clients, that you'll alienate people. But it actually has the opposite effect. You're setting yourself apart from a sea of sameness."

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## **The Big Leap: Quitting the 9-to-5**

About a year after joining, Dan and I had a conversation where he told me things were going great—but he didn't have time for all the clients coming in. I told him straight out: "Dan, keeping your job, even at 30 hours a week, is actually holding you back from increasing your income."

That landed.

Dan went to his employer and had a conversation. He negotiated a transition with a plan to fully separate a couple months down the road. His employer even explored having him consult for them, essentially turning his old boss into a client.

Here's what Dan posted in our Slack community that day:

"Taking Rob's advice—I had a call with my boss today and told her I wanted to go part time and fully quit sometime in Q1. She asked me to stay till January full time, then I will consult with them. This is bananas. 12 months ago I just liked playing with AI and had an idea that I could help businesses. Now I'm looking to do this full time in a max of 2 months."

Dan's last day at his full-time job was January 30th, 2026. That following Monday, he was a full-time AI consultant. Within days, he'd hired his first independent contractor—a personal trainer and self-described "gym rat"—to help him with outreach to gyms in the Denver area.

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## Where Dan Is Now

Dan went from zero clients and zero business experience to running his own AI consultancy, landing a Fractional Chief AI Officer retainer worth \$50,000–\$70,000 per year with a multi-location gym—and that's just one client. He has multiple active engagements, a growing team, a defined niche, a real brand, and a pipeline that keeps filling.

His family now has the flexibility they never had before. They're considering moving to the beach, making decisions based on what they *want* their life to look like, not based on what a salary ceiling will allow.

And Dan is now one of the most active, generous members of our community. He helps newer students, collaborates on deals with fellow consultants, shares his wins and his failures openly, and mentors others who are right where he was a year ago.

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## What Dan's Story Means for You

I'm not going to pretend that everyone who joins The AI Consultancy Project will have Dan's exact results. Dan worked incredibly hard. He showed up to nearly every coaching call. He followed the system (eventually 😊). He leaned into the community. He pushed through months of "no" before he started hearing "yes."

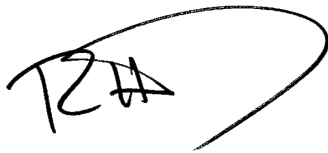
But here's what I want you to take from Dan's story:

He wasn't technical. He'd never run a business. He had a full-time job and three young kids. He started from zero. And within about a year, he replaced his salary, gained complete control over his schedule, and built something that's only growing bigger.

The AI consulting opportunity is real. The window is still open. Most business owners think "using AI" means asking ChatGPT a couple of questions. They don't know what's possible. And the people who can show them—who can walk into a meeting with a specific solution and say "this is what I built, and here's how it helps your business"—those people are going to do incredibly well.

Dan is living proof.

If his story resonates with you, and you want to learn more about The AI Consultancy Project, I'd love to hear from you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R Howard", enclosed within a large, hand-drawn oval shape.

— Rob Howard, CEO of [Innovating with AI](#)