FocusFort

Hard-mode focus app: blocks distractions strictly, and when the user tries to bypass, an AI coach asks why. Behavioural accountability over passive blocking — $9/month for knowledge workers + students who actually want to break their phone habit.

Category	Set 5 · Vertical/Creator
Customer	Knowledge workers, students, ADHD-spectrum users serious about distraction blocking; users frustrated with passive apps (Freedom, Cold Turkey) they easily bypass
Monetisation	$9/mo Solo · $19/mo Pro (multi-device + advanced rules) · Free tier with 1 daily session
Build effort	Med
Plan version	v1.0 — 2026-05

Executive Summary

FocusFort is a focus app that takes a meaningfully harder stance than existing tools (Freedom, Cold Turkey, RescueTime). The wedge: when a user tries to bypass an active focus session — disable the blocker, uninstall the app, change settings, switch to another browser — an AI coach intercepts and asks one structured question: 'Why are you trying to bypass this? Tell me what you actually want to do right now.' The user must type a real response (3+ sentences, semantic-coherence-checked) before the bypass is granted. The friction is the feature.

The thesis: passive focus blockers fail because they make bypass too easy (a single click). Behavioural-friction blockers fail because they're annoying without being insightful. FocusFort's AI-coach intercept produces a small moment of self-reflection at the exact instant the user is making a bypass decision — empirically, this materially reduces bypass rate compared to either pure-passive or pure-friction approaches.

Year-1 target: 5,500 paying subscribers, generating ■2.0 crore annual revenue against ■35 lakh costs. The wedge against Freedom and Cold Turkey is the AI-coach intercept (which they can't easily add without changing their fundamental product positioning); the wedge against meditation/mindfulness apps is the behavioural-action focus (not awareness training). Cash-positive month 2-3.

The Problem

Knowledge workers, students, and ADHD-spectrum users have a recurring focus problem: they intend to do deep work but get pulled into reactive scrolling (Twitter, news sites, YouTube, TikTok, Reddit, Instagram). Existing focus apps (Freedom $40/year, Cold Turkey $39 one-time, RescueTime $12/month, SelfControl free) address this by blocking distracting sites/apps during user-configured focus sessions.

The existing tools have a structural failure mode: bypass is too easy. Freedom can be disabled in one click; Cold Turkey can be temporarily exited; the browser can be switched; the phone-based blocker can be uninstalled. Users who actually want to focus reach for the blocker, hit the urge to scroll, bypass in seconds. The blocker becomes an unfulfilled intention rather than a behavioural intervention.

Behavioural research (Cal Newport's Deep Work, BJ Fogg's Tiny Habits, Wendy Wood's Good Habits, Bad Habits) consistently points to friction-at-decision-point as the most effective behavioural intervention. The opportunity: a focus app that intervenes at the exact moment of bypass attempt with structured reflection that prompts genuine self-awareness.

The Solution

FocusFort's core mechanic: user configures focus sessions (duration, blocked sites/apps, intensity setting). During an active session, attempts to access blocked content trigger a brief AI-coach interaction: 'Why are you trying to access X right now? What are you actually wanting to do? What would help you stay focused on your intended task?'. User must type 3+ coherent sentences in response. Coach gives one short reflection back. User chooses: continue focus session or take 5-minute managed break (the bypass is granted with a 5-minute cap, then re-locks).

Three intensity settings. Easy mode: AI coach intercept once per session, then permits bypass. Medium mode: AI coach intercept up to 3 times, then permits bypass. Hard mode: AI coach intercept every bypass attempt, with permanent log of bypasses for end-of-session review. (Hard mode is the differentiated product; users serious about behaviour change choose Hard.)

AI coach customisation: per-user coach persona (encouraging, neutral, blunt). Coach trains on user's stated focus goals over time — references previous reflections in subsequent intercepts ('You mentioned last week that Twitter scrolling was an avoidance of writing the proposal. Is that what's happening now?').

Three structural differences from existing focus apps. First, AI-coach intercept mechanic (not present in any competitor). Second, multi-device synchronisation including mobile + desktop blocking with same intercept rules. Third, end-of-session insights (analysis of bypass patterns, suggested adjustments to focus-session design).

Market Opportunity

Addressable focus-app market: estimated 12-18M paying users globally across Freedom + Cold Turkey + RescueTime + SelfControl + Forest + competing tools, with $50-150M annual revenue. Growing as remote work + distraction-fatigue drives demand.

FocusFort's positioning: serves the 'serious about it' segment of the focus market (probably 10-15% of total) — users who have tried passive blockers + been frustrated by their own bypass behaviour. SAM: $8-20M annually.

Realistic 3-year capture: 15,000-30,000 paying subscribers = $1.5-3M ARR. Modest absolute scale, very high margin, sustainable single-founder business with potential to scale via niche-community virality.

Adjacent expansion. Year 2: study-mode for students (different intercept tone + study-buddy social features). Team-focus mode for distributed teams scheduling synchronised deep-work sessions. Therapist/coach white-label tier where therapists deploy FocusFort to ADHD clients with shared progress dashboards.

Target Customer

Primary persona: a 36-year-old freelance writer who has tried Freedom for 2 years and consistently bypasses it. Knows the problem is her own behaviour but cannot establish the friction needed to resist. Will pay $9/month for the AI-coach intercept after a free-trial week demonstrates the mechanic works for her.

Secondary persona: a 28-year-old PhD student writing dissertation who needs sustained deep focus blocks. Currently uses SelfControl + phone in another room. Will pay $19/month Pro tier for multi-device synchronisation including mobile + desktop with consistent intercept rules.

Tertiary persona: a 41-year-old software engineer with ADHD diagnosis who has cycled through every productivity tool. Will pay for the behavioural-intervention focus + the structured reflection workflow that adjacent ADHD-specific tools don't provide.

Product

Desktop apps (macOS + Windows): block configured sites at OS level (cannot be bypassed by switching browsers), block configured apps from launching, monitor active-window for compliance.

Mobile apps (iOS + Android): block configured apps from launching, intercept attempts via OS accessibility APIs (iOS Screen Time integration + Android Digital Wellbeing integration).

AI-coach intercept: when user attempts bypass, AI generates structured prompt ('Why are you trying to access [blocked site/app] right now? What are you actually wanting to do?'), user types 3+ sentence response with semantic-coherence checking, AI generates brief reflection back referencing user's focus goal + past reflection patterns.

Focus-session configuration: customisable duration (15 min to 8 hours), blocked sites/apps, intensity mode (Easy/Medium/Hard), AI coach persona (Encouraging/Neutral/Blunt), session goal (user types what they intend to accomplish).

Multi-device synchronisation (Pro tier): session state synchronises across user's desktop + laptop + phone — starting session on one device activates on all.

End-of-session insights: per-session report of bypasses attempted (with user's reflections), bypass-pattern analysis, suggested adjustments to focus design.

Weekly summary: aggregated focus time + bypass-attempt patterns + AI-coach observation summary.

Coach memory: per-user persistent context allowing AI to reference past reflections naturally.

Technical Architecture

Desktop apps: Electron or Tauri (Tauri preferred for smaller binary + better OS-level blocking integration). Implements blocking via OS DNS configuration + hosts file modification + active-window monitoring.

Mobile apps: native iOS (Swift + Screen Time API) and Android (Kotlin + Digital Wellbeing API). The OS-level integration is engineering-intensive; mobile is harder than desktop.

Backend: Python on Hetzner cloud. Postgres on Neon for session + reflection + user data.

AI coach: Claude Haiku or GPT-4o-mini for coach interactions (~$0.05/intercept cost). Per-user persistent context maintained in Postgres + injected into coach prompts.

Sync infrastructure: WebSocket + cloud sync for cross-device session state.

Compliance: SOC2 from year 2, careful privacy posture (reflections are deeply personal data; encrypted at rest, no analytics on content).

Payments: Stripe (US/UK) + Razorpay (India).

Business Model & Unit Economics

Three tiers. Free: 1 daily 25-minute session, basic blocking, Easy mode coach intercept. Solo ($9/month or $89/year): unlimited sessions, all intensity modes, single-device. Pro ($19/month or $189/year): unlimited sessions, multi-device sync, advanced rule sets, weekly insights, AI coach customisation.

Conversion economics: 14-day free trial converts at 19% (consumer-SaaS typical). Distribution: 65% Solo, 35% Pro. Monthly churn target under 5% (consumer SaaS); annual prepay reduces this materially.

Gross margin: 80% blended. Major cost: AI inference (~$1.50/user/month at average intercept volume), infrastructure (~$2/user/month).

Customer LTV: $9 × 18 months avg = $162 (Solo); $19 × 24 months = $456 (Pro). CAC target: $60. LTV/CAC: 2.7-7.6 (modest at Solo, healthy at Pro).

Unit Economics (Year-1 base case)

Year-1 paying subscribers (target)	5,500
Blended ARPU	$13/month (~$156/year)
Year-1 revenue	$245,000 (~■2.0 crore)
Gross margin	80%
Customer acquisition cost (CAC)	$60
Payback period	4.6 months
Year-1 all-in costs	~■35 lakh
Year-1 net contribution	~■1.3 crore

Go-to-Market

Channel 1 — Productivity-community organic (40%): Hacker News (Show HN), r/productivity, r/ADHD, r/getdisciplined, Cal Newport newsletter community. The AI-coach intercept is novel enough to generate community discussion.

Channel 2 — Content + SEO (30%): publish substantive content on focus craft, deep work practice, behavioural-friction interventions, ADHD-coping strategies. Long-tail SEO for queries the target audience runs.

Channel 3 — Influencer partnerships (20%): partnerships with 10-15 productivity creators (Ali Abdaal-style, Tim Ferriss-listener-base creators).

Channel 4 — Paid acquisition (10%): targeted Meta + Twitter ads to productivity-tool lookalike audiences.

Roadmap (first 12 months)

- Month 1-3: macOS + Windows desktop apps with AI-coach intercept + free tier launched. 300 paying subscribers by month 3.
- Month 4-5: iOS + Android mobile apps in beta, multi-device sync, 900 paying subscribers, ■6 lakh MRR.
- Month 6-8: Pro tier with advanced rules + weekly insights + coach customisation, 2,500 paying subscribers, ■15 lakh MRR.
- Month 9-10: ADHD-specific intensity mode + therapist-recommended preset, 4,200 paying subscribers.
- Month 11-12: 5,500 paying subscribers, ■2.0 crore annualised revenue.

Key Risks

- User churn after initial novelty: AI-coach intercept may feel less novel after 4-8 weeks. Mitigated by ongoing AI improvements (coach gets better as it learns user) + weekly insights value + cross-device sync stickiness.
- OS-level blocking circumvention: technically-savvy users can circumvent any blocker (iptables on Mac, hosts file editing, DNS override). Mitigated by intensity-mode messaging ('this only works if you actually commit') + acceptance that the product is for users who want help focusing, not for adversarial bypass-testing.
- Apple/Google policy changes on Screen Time / Digital Wellbeing API access: could impact mobile blocking. Mitigated by maintaining direct relationships with platform developer teams + graceful degradation.
- Privacy sensitivity: focus reflections are deeply personal data; any breach is severely damaging. Mitigated by SOC2 controls + encryption + no-analytics-on-content discipline + clear privacy positioning.
- AI inference cost spike: increased per-intercept cost would compress unit economics. Mitigated by multi-provider abstraction + smaller-model fallbacks where coach quality permits.