



Delegate as your team grows: the full report

Example: a 40-person software agency in Cluj-Napoca whose founder still wrote every estimate. All six stages, from the guided tour.

The playbook at a glance

- 1** Who can do what today?
Only you do **Hiring interviews** well, and nobody else is close
- 2** What should you hand off, and to whom?
Handing over 5 tasks and stopping 1 frees 44 of your 50 hours a fortnight
- 3** Who decides what?
Every decision has one owner, and you hold 1 A of 7
- 4** Will people raise problems early?
Better than the last check. Problems reach the owners early; still seen now and then: questions skipping the owner
- 5** What should people deliver?
Each new owner has outcomes to aim at: 3 objectives with 7 key results
- 6** Who steps up next?
No one could step into **Estimates and scope changes** yet

Who can do what today?

Only you do **Hiring interviews** well, and nobody else is close

Only you do it well: **Hiring interviews** (nobody else above 1)

One other person does it well: **Client estimates (Delivery manager), Release sign-off (Tech lead), Client escalations (Account manager)**

Covered by two or more besides you: **Architecture calls**

Most skills done well, after you: **Tech lead: 2 of 5**

What this may mean

The skills only you do well are the tasks stuck in your inbox. Where nobody else is close, don't hand the task over yet: have someone sit in on the next few, then hand it over. Delegating work nobody can do sets that person up to fail. Where one other person does it well, the task can go to them now.

Investigate next

Start someone sitting in on **Hiring interviews** now. Then, in stage 2, sort everything you do by importance and by the skill of the best person, and say how much authority goes with each handover.

The scale: 0 none, 1 aware, 2 can do it unaided, 3 does it well, 4 can teach it. A skill counts as done well at 3 or 4.

"Only you" means you are the only person rated 3 or 4. "You and one other" means one more person is. "Only one person" means one person other than you holds it.

Team size: 40. Run the playbook again when the team has grown by about half, to about 60 people: the tasks right to keep now are often the ones to hand over then.

What should you hand off, and to whom?

Handing over 5 tasks and stopping 1 frees 44 of your 50 hours a fortnight

Delegate fully: **Client estimates, Release sign-off, Architecture calls and Client escalations**

Delegate with check-ins: **Weekly client status reports**

Keep for now, and train someone: **Hiring interviews**

Stop doing: **Approving every expense under EUR 100**

Your hours a fortnight: **44 of 50 hours leave your desk (88%); 6 hours stay while someone learns**

What this may mean

The important work is going to people who do it well, with the authority to decide. That is where a leader's time comes back. The tasks you keep are not failures: someone sits in on them now, so they can go next time. Stopping a task frees the most time of all, and nobody has to learn it. You can hand over the work and the decision; you still answer for the result.

Investigate next

Tell each new owner in person: the task, the authority, and how you will check in. Then, in stage 3, settle who decides what, now that the work is spread out: one accountable owner for every decision.

The quadrants: important and someone skilled, delegate fully; important and nobody skilled yet, keep it for now and train someone; less important and someone skilled, delegate with check-ins; less important and nobody skilled, stop doing it.

Skill comes from stage 1 when the person was rated on that skill (3 or 4 counts as skilled); otherwise from your own answer.

Who decides what?

Every decision has one owner, and you hold 1 A of 7

One clear owner: **7 of 7 decisions**

A's held: **Founder 1, Tech lead 2, Delivery manager 2, Account manager 2**

What this may mean

Each decision has one person who answers for it and can say no. When a row is argued over later, ask whose judgment is questioned if it goes wrong: that person is the A.

Investigate next

Share the chart with the team and bring it to the meeting where something is stuck. Then, 4 to 6 weeks after the handovers, check in stage 4 whether problems reach the new owners early or stay hidden.

R does the work, A owns the decision and answers for it, C is asked for a view before it is made, I is told after. Every decision gets exactly one A; where the A also does the work, only A is shown.

A row counts as crowded at 3 or more C's. "Kept the A" means stage 2 handed the task over (fully or with check-ins) but the A here is the leader.

Will people raise problems early?

Better than the last check. Problems reach the owners early; still seen now and then: questions skipping the owner

Bad news arrives late: **No**

Decisions taken back: **No**

Questions skip the owner: **Sometimes; a habit is agreed**

The last three mistakes: **2 raised by the person who made it; 1 by someone else on the team**

Survey score: **5.7 out of 7, from 9 people**

Since the last check: **better: bad news arrives late and decisions taken back; mistakes found by a client or by accident 2 → 0**

What this may mean

Bad news mostly reaches the owners in time, and decisions stay with them. What is still seen is worth a habit, kept visible for the next few weeks.

Investigate next

Go on to stage 5: turn each owner's tasks into outcomes, an objective and two to four key results. Keep the habits, and check again after a quarter.

The three warning signs come from the playbook. "Yes, often" for bad news arriving late or decisions taken back, two or more mistakes found by a client or by accident, or a survey score under 4 means problems are still hidden.

The survey uses seven statements on the themes of Amy Edmondson's measure, in our own words; three are worded the other way and scored in reverse. The bands (under 4 low, 5.5 and over high) are a rough guide, not a published standard.

This is check 2. The trend compares it with the one before.

What should people deliver?

Each new owner has outcomes to aim at: 3 objectives with 7 key results

OKRs: 3 owners, 7 key results

What this may mean

A task handed over as a task comes back as questions; an outcome handed over comes back as a result. Each key result is a number to reach, describing a change the owner influences but does not control. Keep OKRs separate from pay, or people set ones they know they will hit.

Investigate next

Agree each OKR with its owner, and score them at the end of the quarter. Then, in stage 6, name who steps up next for the roles these handovers created.

The checklist test: could someone complete the key result by working through a checklist? If yes, it is a task, not a result. The tool suggests an answer when a key result has no number, or starts with a task word such as "review", "send" or "handle"; your own answer replaces it.

One OKR per person, not per responsibility: the change that matters most this quarter. A score is how far a key result moved from its start towards its target, from 0 to 1; 1 means it landed in full.

Who steps up next?

Stage 6 diagnosis

No one could step into **Estimates and scope changes** yet

Ready in 1 to 2 years: **Release sign-off and architecture calls (Senior developer), Client escalations and status reports (Delivery manager), Hiring decisions (the founder today) (Tech lead)**

No one yet: **Estimates and scope changes**

What this may mean

A role nobody could step into is the useful answer: it tells you whom to hire or develop next. Until then, if the person leaves, the work lands back on your desk overnight. Naming a successor has a cost too: a strong runner-up who learns they are second may leave. Develop a few people, not one heir per role.

Investigate next

Put **Estimates and scope changes** into the hiring plan, or pick someone to develop, with a first step and a date. Then book the 90-day review below.

Readiness bands are judgments, not measurements: ready now, ready in a year or two, or no one yet. Treat each as a statement about what development is owed.

In the playbook, the key roles start from the work, not the people: each decision someone owns in stage 3, the tasks you kept in stage 2 while someone learns, and skills only one person holds in stage 1. A successor is named for each role; several roles of one person can go to the same successor.

The key roles

KEY ROLE	READY NOW	READY IN 1 TO 2 YEARS	THE GAP, AND THE NEXT STEP
Release sign-off and architecture calls Held by Tech lead	–	Senior developer	Has never made the architecture calls: takes them on one client project, with the tech lead reviewing, by April 18, 2027
Estimates and scope changes Held by Delivery manager	–	–	No one yet. Nobody else estimates or plans delivery: hire a second delivery manager next, by December 19, 2026
Client escalations and status reports Held by Account manager	–	Delivery manager	Has handled escalations only alongside the account manager: takes the next three, with the account manager on the call, by January 18, 2027

KEY ROLE	READY NOW	READY IN 1 TO 2 YEARS	THE GAP, AND THE NEXT STEP
Hiring decisions (the founder today) Held by Founder	–	Tech lead	Has never led a hiring decision: sitting in on interviews since stage 2, leads the next two hires with the founder present, by April 18, 2027

DECISION POINT

Plan who to hire or develop for Estimates and scope changes

No one could step in yet. That is the useful answer: it says whom to hire or develop next. Until then, if the person leaves, the work lands back on your desk overnight.

Keeping it working

Book a review on **January 18, 2027**, 90 days from October 20, 2026, the day you started this stage (kept in your progress file, so it stays fixed). Check three things:

- 1. Has your time actually changed?** Stage 2 planned 44 of your 50 hours a fortnight to leave your desk. Compare with how your fortnight looks then. If not, go back to stage 2.
- 2. Are decisions landing with their owners?** 7 of 7 decisions have one owner in stage 3. If they drift back to you, go back to stage 3.
- 3. Are the OKRs being met?** Score the 7 key results from stage 5 at the end of the quarter. If they slip, go back to stage 5.

Run the playbook again when the team reaches about **60 people** (it is 40 now): the tasks right to keep now are often the ones to hand over then.

Made with the free Succession Planning Tool at whichframework.org/tools/succession-planning.html. Figures are from your data; the diagnosis describes what such patterns often point to, not proven causes.