
THE FOUNDER DEPENDENCY REVIEW

How founder-dependent is your business?

A short, honest self-assessment for established founders who suspect the business leans on them a little too much — and are ready to lead it, not just run it.

20 STATEMENTS • 4 DIMENSIONS • 5 MINUTES

INTRODUCTION

You're not doing anything wrong

If you're reading this, you've already built something that works — a real business, real customers, and a team that looks to you. That's no small thing, and it's worth pausing to acknowledge.

But somewhere along the way, you may have noticed it: the business runs *through* you. Decisions wait for you. Standards depend on you. A week away feels more risky than restful. If any of that lands, you're in exactly the right place.

Here's what I want you to know before you begin. This isn't about failure. The instincts that built your business — being hands-on, holding the bar high, staying close to every detail — were precisely right in the early years. They may simply have outgrown their usefulness.

The habits that helped you build the business are rarely the ones that help you scale it.

Inside this review is scorecard - it's a mirror, not a test. There are no wrong answers — only useful awareness. Answer honestly, and you'll see clearly where your business still leans on you, and where you've quietly already let go.

Let's take an honest look.

HOW TO USE THIS SCORECARD

Three simple steps

01

Rate each statement

Work through all 20 statements across the four areas. Mark how true each feels *today*, from 1 to 5. Go with instinct rather than aspiration.

02

Add up your score

Total your marks for a final score out of 100. Each section also gives a subtotal, so you can see which areas pull hardest.

03

Find your profile

Match your score to one of four founder profiles — each with what's working, your biggest risk, and where to focus next.

THE SCORING SCALE

1

NEVER

2

RARELY

3

SOMETIMES

4

OFTEN

5

ALMOST ALWAYS

A higher score simply means the business currently relies on you more — not that anything is wrong. Awareness is the first, and most valuable, step.



SECTION ONE

01 — 05

Decision making

How much day-to-day momentum still depends on your input and your approval.

	STATEMENT	NEVER	RARELY	SOME-TIMES	OFTEN	ALMOST ALWAYS
01	Important decisions require my approval before action is taken.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
02	Team members often look to me for reassurance or direction before making decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
03	Projects can slow down when I am unavailable.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
04	I am involved in decisions that could potentially sit elsewhere in the business.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
05	My team looks to me for direction more often than I would like.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION SUBTOTAL

/ 25



SECTION TWO

06 — 10

Team capability & accountability

How ready your team is to own outcomes — and hold the standard — without you.

	STATEMENT	NEVER	RARELY	SOME-TIMES	OFTEN	ALMOST ALWAYS
06	I find myself stepping in when things are not being handled the way I would like.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
07	Some team members would struggle without regular input from me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
08	I worry standards might slip if I became less involved.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
09	There are performance conversations I know I need to have.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Team members often bring me problems rather than recommendations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION SUBTOTAL

/ 25



SECTION THREE

11 — 15

Systems & knowledge

How much of how the business runs lives in your head rather than in shared systems.

	STATEMENT	NEVER	RARELY	SOME-TIMES	OFTEN	ALMOST ALWAYS
11	Key processes live mainly in my head rather than written down.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	If I were away for a month, some things would simply have to wait for me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	New team members rely on me, not documentation, to learn how things are done.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Client or supplier relationships depend largely on me personally.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	We rely on informal habits rather than clear, repeatable systems.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION SUBTOTAL

/ 25



SECTION FOUR

16 — 20

Identity & time

How tightly your sense of self, and your hours, are bound to being needed.

	STATEMENT	NEVER	RARELY	SOME-TIMES	OFTEN	ALMOST ALWAYS
16	Much of my identity is tied to being needed by the business.	1	2	3	4	5
17	I find it difficult to switch off, even when I am away from work.	1	2	3	4	5
18	I spend more time working <i>in</i> the business than <i>on</i> it.	1	2	3	4	5
19	Letting go of certain tasks feels uncomfortable, even when I know I should.	1	2	3	4	5
20	The business would feel vulnerable if I stepped back for a meaningful period.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION SUBTOTAL

/ 25

TALLY YOUR RESULTS

Add up your score

Bring across each section subtotal, then add them together for your total out of 100. Note which sections scored highest — that's where your business leans on you most.

S	SECTION	SUBTOTAL
01	Decision making Statements 1–5	
02	Team capability & accountability Statements 6–10	
03	Systems & knowledge Statements 11–15	
04	Identity & time Statements 16–20	
Total score		/100

FIND YOUR BAND

20–40

The Strategic CEO

Leading, not running

41–60

The Developing CEO

On the cusp of letting go

61–80

The Growth Founder

Capable, but central

81–100

The Essential Founder

The business is you

Turn to your profile on the following pages. Whatever your score, it reflects a stage — not a verdict. Every founder profile here has a clear, encouraging next step.

SCORE 20–40

The Strategic CEO

You lead the business – it doesn't lean on you.

You've done the hard, quiet work most founders never get to. The business runs on clear systems, a capable team, and decisions that don't all route through you. Your energy goes into direction and growth rather than daily rescue — and that's exactly where a CEO's attention belongs.



WHAT'S WORKING WELL

- Your team owns outcomes and brings you recommendations, not problems.
- The business can run smoothly when you step away.
- Knowledge lives in systems, not solely in your head.



YOUR BIGGEST RISK

Complacency, and under-using your freedom. With the business no longer needing you in the detail, the risk is drifting without a bold next chapter — or quietly stepping back *in* out of habit. Your leverage now is vision, not involvement.



RECOMMENDED FOCUS AREAS

Set the next vision

Define the ambitious 3-year goal only you can set.

Develop leaders

Grow the people who'll carry the business further than you.

Protect your edge

Reinvest freed-up energy into what makes you distinctive.

A QUESTION TO SIT WITH

If the business no longer needs your hands, what's the most valuable thing it now needs from your mind?

SCORE 41–60

The Developing CEO

You're on the cusp of truly letting go.

You've built real foundations — a team you trust, some systems that hold, and stretches where the business runs well without you. But you're still pulled back into the detail more often than you'd like. You're transitioning from operator to leader, and the next step is conscious, not accidental.



WHAT'S WORKING WELL

- You have capable people you can genuinely rely on.
- Core processes exist, even if a few still live with you.
- You're aware of where you over-involve — awareness is leverage.



YOUR BIGGEST RISK

Stalling at "good enough." It's tempting to stay comfortably half-in — delegating the work but keeping the decisions. Without a deliberate handover of authority, you risk plateauing as the well-supported bottleneck rather than becoming a true CEO.



RECOMMENDED FOCUS AREAS

Delegate decisions

Hand over authority, not just tasks. Name what's now theirs to own.

Document the gaps

Capture the few processes still living only with you.

Protect CEO time

Ring-fence weekly hours for working on the business.

A QUESTION TO SIT WITH

Which decision are you still holding onto that someone on your team is ready to own?

SCORE 61–80

The Growth Founder

Capable and committed – but still the centre of gravity.

You've built a business with real momentum, and you're rightly proud of it. But most roads still lead back to you — decisions, standards, relationships, and a fair amount of the know-how. It's working, yet it's heavy. This is the most common — and most solvable — place for a successful founder to be.



WHAT'S WORKING WELL

- Your drive and standards have created something that genuinely works.
- You have a team in place — the raw material for delegation is there.
- Customers value the quality you personally guarantee.



YOUR BIGGEST RISK

Becoming the ceiling on your own growth. While everything routes through you, the business can only grow as fast as you can personally absorb. It's also the quiet road to burnout — and it makes the business harder to scale, sell, or step away from.



RECOMMENDED FOCUS AREAS

Build the team's bench

Grow capability and confidence so others can carry standards.

Get it out of your head

Turn your know-how into shared, repeatable systems.

Redefine your role

Decide what only you should do — and let the rest go.

A QUESTION TO SIT WITH

If your business could only grow as fast as you can personally keep up — where would that leave it in three years?

SCORE 81–100

The Essential Founder

Right now, the business is you – and that's brave to admit.

Almost everything flows through you: decisions, relationships, knowledge, standards, and the hours that hold it together. That takes extraordinary commitment, and it's why the business exists. But it also means you don't really own a business yet — you own a demanding job. The good news: this is the profile with the most to gain, and a clear way forward.



WHAT'S WORKING WELL

- Your commitment and standards are second to none — nothing slips.
- You know the business intimately — every detail and relationship.
- You took this honestly — the awareness to change starts here.



YOUR BIGGEST RISK

Fragility and exhaustion. A business that depends entirely on one person is vulnerable to illness, burnout, or a single bad month — and it's very hard to scale or sell. The cost isn't only commercial; it's the freedom and headspace you set out to create in the first place.



RECOMMENDED FOCUS AREAS

Start with one handover

Choose a single area to delegate fully and build from there.

Capture what you know

Begin moving critical knowledge out of your head onto paper.

Get support to start

A guide makes the first, hardest steps far less daunting.

A QUESTION TO SIT WITH

If you had to step away for a month tomorrow, what's the very first thing that would fall over — and what would it take to fix that?

— FROM INSIGHT TO ACTION

Knowing your score is only the beginning.

Wherever you landed, the real value isn't the number — it's what you choose to do next. If anything here struck a chord, you don't have to work it out alone. A short, honest conversation is often all it takes to see the path forward clearly.



COMPLIMENTARY · NO OBLIGATION

The Founder Dependency Review

A relaxed, one-to-one conversation with Emma to talk through your results, what they mean for your business, and one or two practical first steps. No pitch, no pressure — just a clearer head and a sense of what's possible.



45 minutes



Online, at a time that suits you

LET'S TALK

Emma Benjafield

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT CONSULTING



hello@thebutterflyeffectconsulting.co.uk



@emma-benjafield01

BOOK YOUR REVIEW →

