

The System Is the Solution

WHY EVERY PROBLEM LANDS ON YOUR DESK —
AND HOW TO BUILD A BUSINESS THAT SOLVES ITS OWN

LESSONS FROM THE E-MYTH • FOR SMALL & MEDIUM BUSINESS OWNERS

Doug Constable • Business Advisors • 2026



WELCOME

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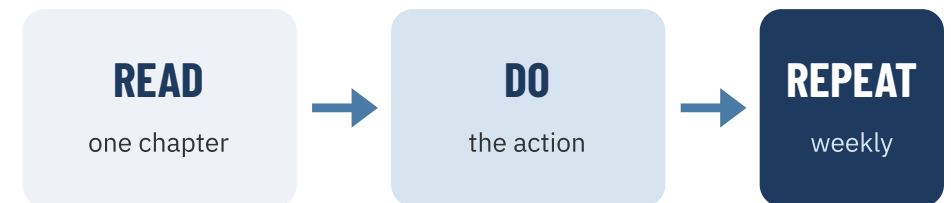
Build it, step by step

The improvement cycle, the seven steps, and your first 30 days

If your phone never stops, your staff can't decide anything without you, and you do the real work after everyone has gone home, this playbook is for you.

It's built on the ideas in Michael E. Gerber's *The E-Myth Revisited*, one of the most useful business books ever written, and on what I've seen in 38 years of working alongside owners of small and medium businesses.

Work through one chapter a week. Each one ends with something to do, not just something to think about.



CHAPTER 01

The “ask the boss” business

Every business has an owner. Some businesses *are* the owner.

You know which one you have when every question, decision and fire ends up on your desk. Staff come to you because you know the answer. Customers ask for you by name. Suppliers wait for your call. And it feels good to be needed — for a while.

Then the day stops being yours. You spend it answering other people's problems, and your own work — pricing, planning, the numbers, the next hire — gets pushed to the evening, the weekend, or never.

If you went away for four weeks, what would happen to the business?

If the honest answer is “it would grind to a halt,” you don't own a business. You own a job — and you're the boss, the worker, the help desk and the night shift.

7:45

Staff member can't find the job sheet

8:10

Customer unhappy with a quote

9:00

Supplier wants a decision on pricing

10:30

Two staff disagree on how to do a job

12:15

“Can you have a quick look at this?”

2:00

New starter needs training

3:30

Urgent job, nobody knows the client

5:30

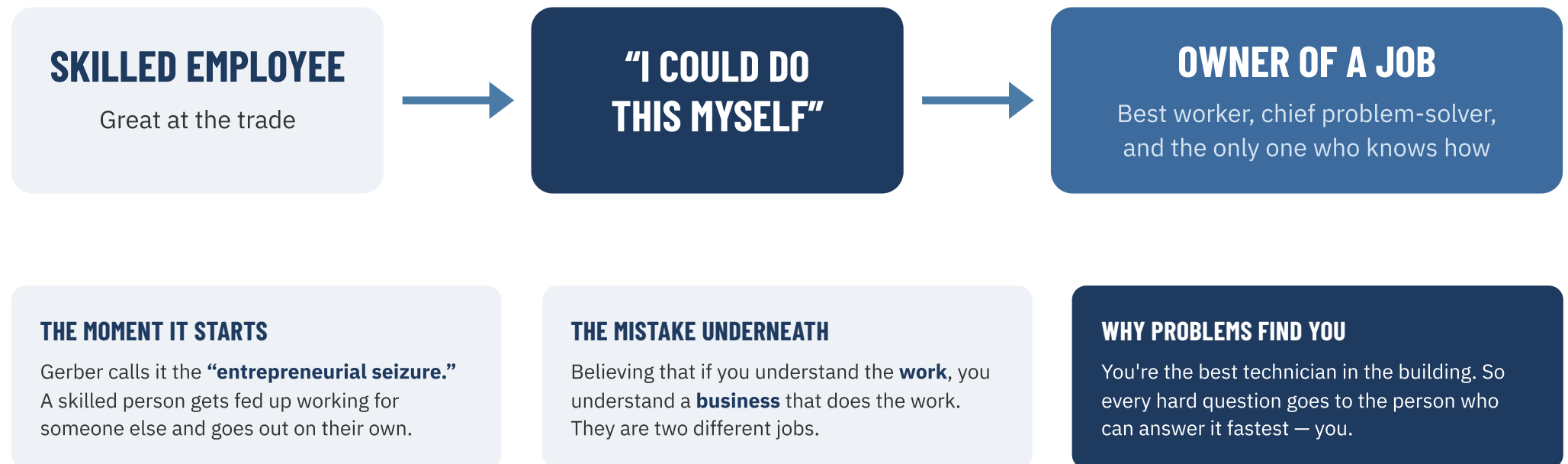
Everyone leaves. Now your work starts.

A typical day for an owner who solves every problem. Darker = it needed you personally.

CHAPTER 02

Why it happens: the technician trap

Gerber's big idea is the E-Myth — the Entrepreneurial Myth. It's the belief that businesses are started by entrepreneurs. Most aren't. They're started by technicians: people who are very good at the work.



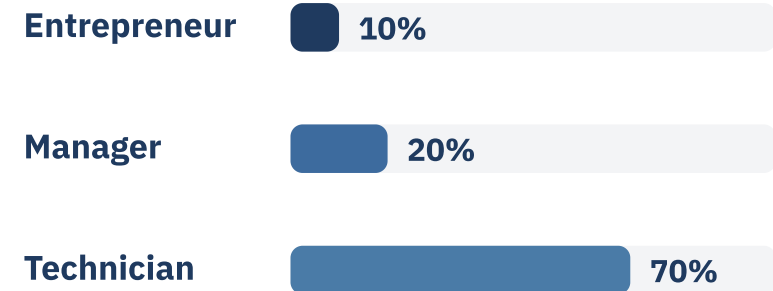
CHAPTER 02

The three people inside every owner



Every owner is three people at once. When a staff member walks in with a problem, the **Technician** grabs it and fixes it. The **Manager** would ask why it keeps happening. The **Entrepreneur** would ask whether the business should be set up so it never reaches you at all.

THE TYPICAL OWNER

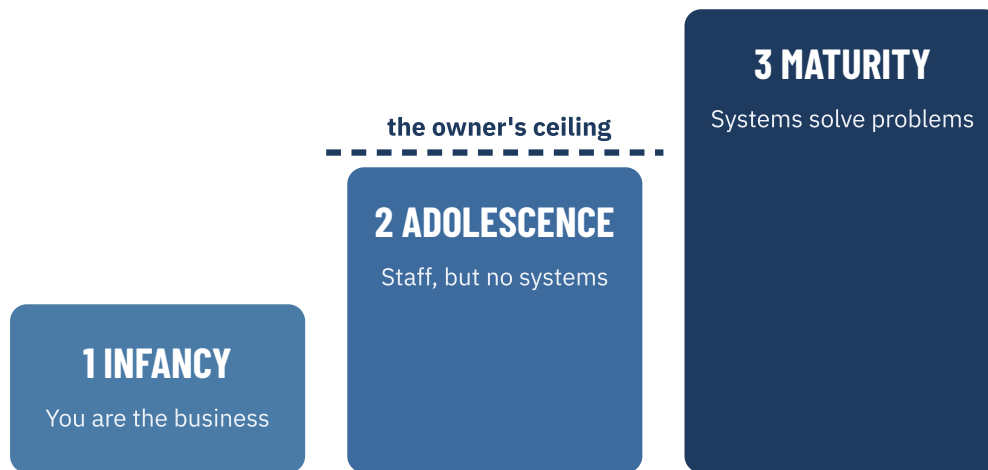


Gerber's estimate of how most small business owners are made up.

Doug's view: the problem-solver owner is the Technician running the whole show. The aim isn't to stop fixing things. It's to make room for the Manager and the Entrepreneur.

CHAPTER 03

How businesses get stuck



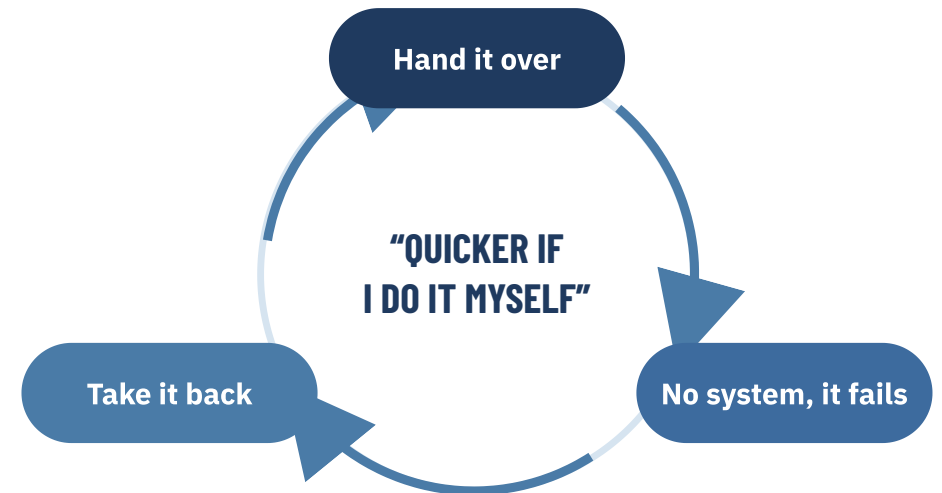
Infancy: you do everything, and that works until you run out of hours.

Adolescence: you hire help, but the help still brings every problem back to you.

Maturity: the business is built so problems are solved by systems and the people who run them.

Most businesses get stuck in adolescence, at the ceiling of what the owner can personally hold together.

THE DELEGATION LOOP

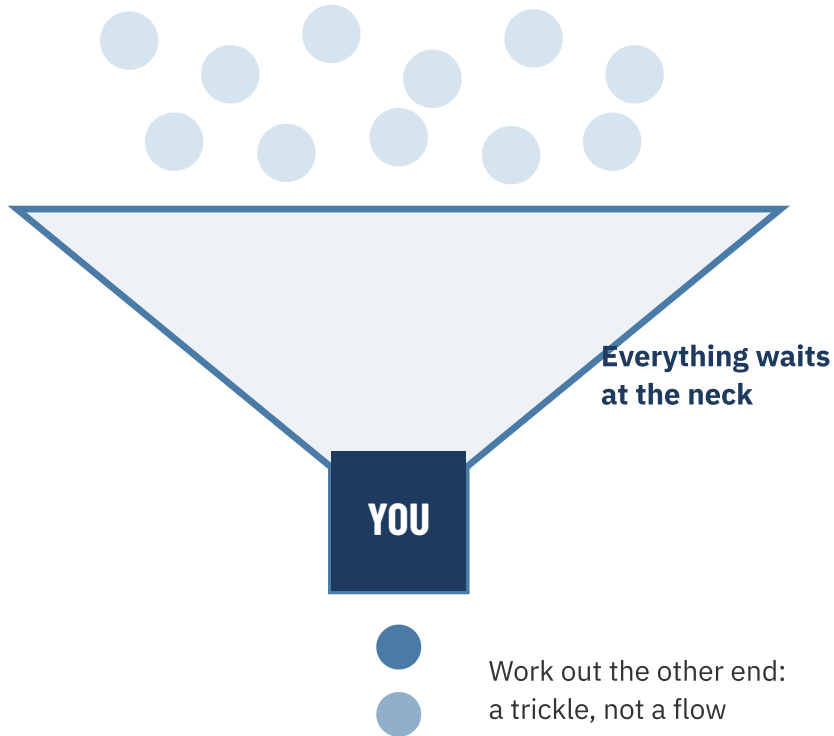


Gerber calls this **management by abdication**: handing work over with no system and no standard, then taking it back when it goes wrong. Each lap teaches you that only you can do it.

CHAPTER 04

What being the answer to everything really costs

Questions, problems, decisions



A business is only as fast as its narrowest point. When every problem goes through you, that point is you.

Slow decisions

Work waits in a queue outside your door.

Staff stop thinking

Why solve it when the boss will?

Growth hits a ceiling

The business can't be bigger than your week.

The numbers get ignored

Pricing, cashflow and tax slip to "later."

Your health and family

Long hours, no holidays, always on call.

A business nobody can buy

If it's all in your head, it's worth very little.

CHAPTER 05

Work on your business, not in it

Your job as owner isn't to be the best problem-solver in the building. It's to design a business that solves its own problems.

Gerber's test: **build the business as though you'll sell it**, or as though you'll have to open 5,000 more just like it. That's what McDonald's did. Ray Kroc's real product wasn't the burger — it was the system that turns out the same burger, every time, run by ordinary people. Gerber calls it the **franchise prototype**. You never have to franchise to use it.

**Systems run the business.
People run the systems.**



CONSISTENT

Customers get the same result every time, whoever does the job.



ORDINARY SKILL

Jobs designed so a capable person, not a genius, can do them well.



ORDERLY

Standards, routines and a look people can rely on.



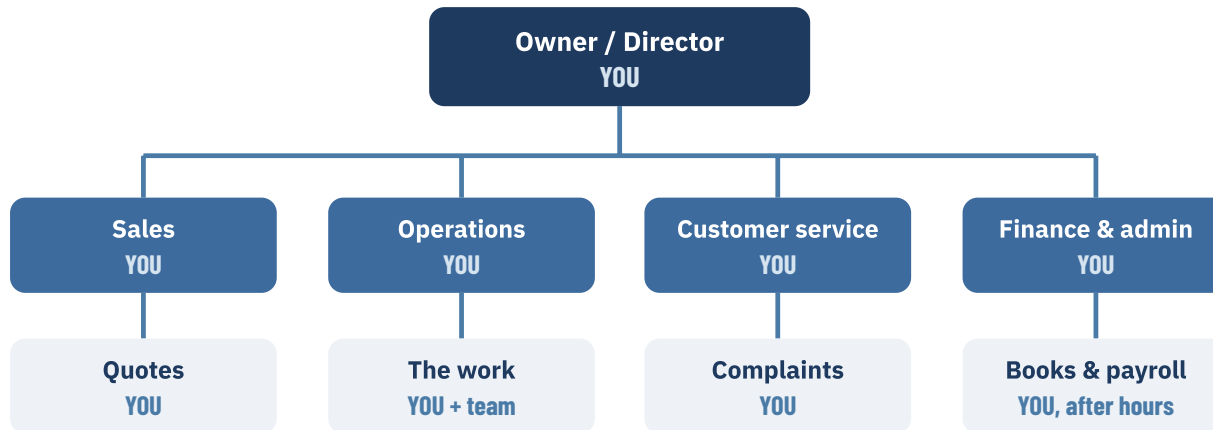
WRITTEN DOWN

Every job in an operations manual: “how we do it here.”

Doug's view: when a staff member brings you a problem, the real question isn't “what's the answer?” It's “why didn't the system answer it?” Every repeat problem is a missing system.

CHAPTER 05

Positions, not people



Every box that says YOU is a job to write down, then hand over.

Draw your business as positions, not people.

Gerber's advice: draw the organisation chart you'd need if the business were finished — then write your own name in every box you currently fill. For most owners it's nearly all of them.

That chart is your map. It shows exactly which problems you're absorbing, and which seat to replace yourself in first.

FOR EACH POSITION, WRITE DOWN

- The result the position is responsible for
- The standards it has to meet
- The problems it is allowed to solve on its own

CHAPTER 06

Route problems, don't absorb them

HOW OFTEN DOES IT COME UP?

Rarely

Often

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

High

YOU DECIDE

Big, one-off calls.
This is what you're for.

BUILD A RULE

Set limits once, e.g. refunds
up to \$500 the team decides.

Low

LET THEM DECIDE

Small and rare. Trust
your people and move on.

WRITE THE SYSTEM

Small and frequent. Document
it so it never reaches you.

Every problem that walks in your door belongs in one of four boxes. Only one of them is yours.

Most of what lands on an owner's desk is small and keeps coming back. That's the bottom-right box. Each one is a system waiting to be written.

THE THREE-QUESTION RULE

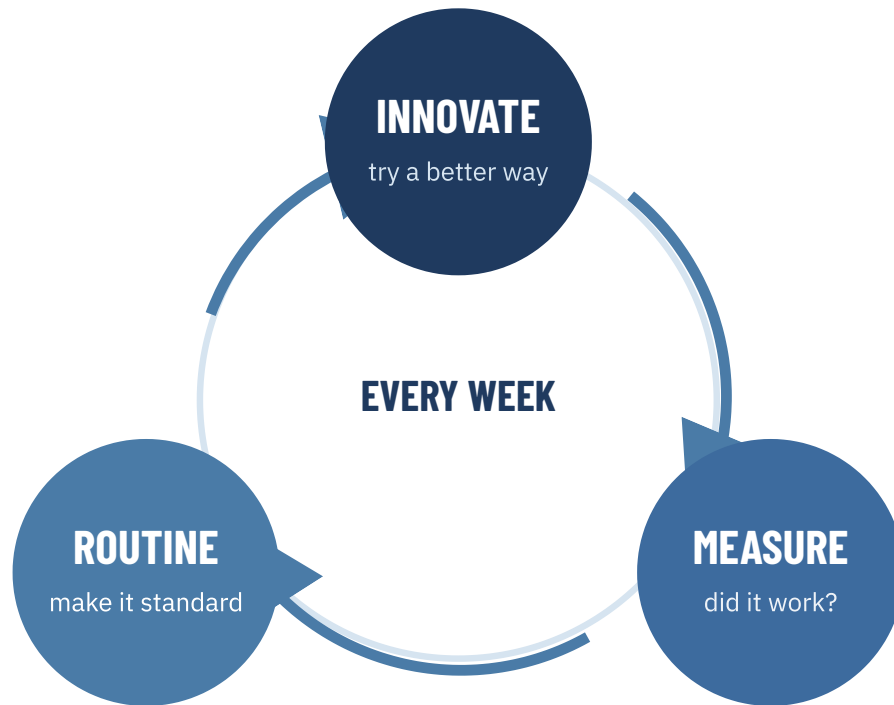
Before anyone brings you a problem, they answer three questions:

1. What's the problem?
2. What are the options?
3. What do you recommend?

Doug's view: within a month, most people start answering the third question themselves — and stop coming in.

CHAPTER 07

Innovate, measure, make it routine



Systems aren't written once and filed. Gerber's cycle keeps improving them.

INNOVATE

Ask: what's the best way to do this, from the customer's point of view? Small changes count — how the phone is answered, how a job is handed over.

MEASURE

Count the effect. Fewer questions to you? Faster jobs? Fewer complaints? Without a number it's a guess.

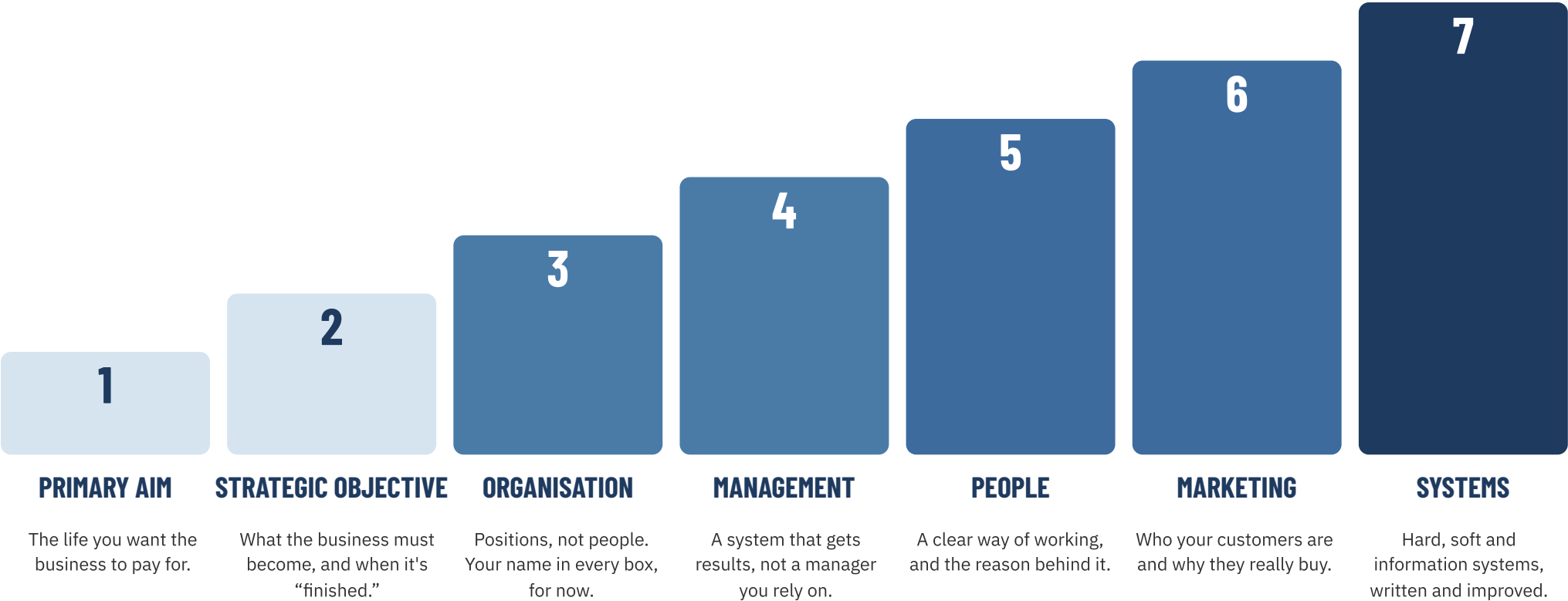
MAKE IT ROUTINE

Once it works, it becomes how everyone does it, every time. Gerber calls this orchestration.

CHAPTER 07

Gerber's seven steps

Gerber's program for turning a business that needs you into one that works without you. Each step builds on the one before — and it starts with you, not the business.



Doug's view: owners always want to start at step 7. Start at step 1. If you don't know what life the business is meant to give you, you won't know which problems are worth letting go of.

CHAPTER 07

Your first 30 days

Block out two hours a week in the diary to work *on* the business. Treat it like a client appointment you can't move.

WEEK 1

See it

- Write your Primary Aim
- Keep a problem log: every question that reaches you, for 5 days
- Draw your org chart with YOU in the boxes

WEEK 2

Sort it

- Put each logged problem in the four boxes
- Pick the 3 most frequent ones
- Set the three-question rule with your team

WEEK 3

Write it

- Write a simple system for each of the 3
- Test: can a new starter follow it without you?
- Set one decision limit (e.g. refunds)

WEEK 4

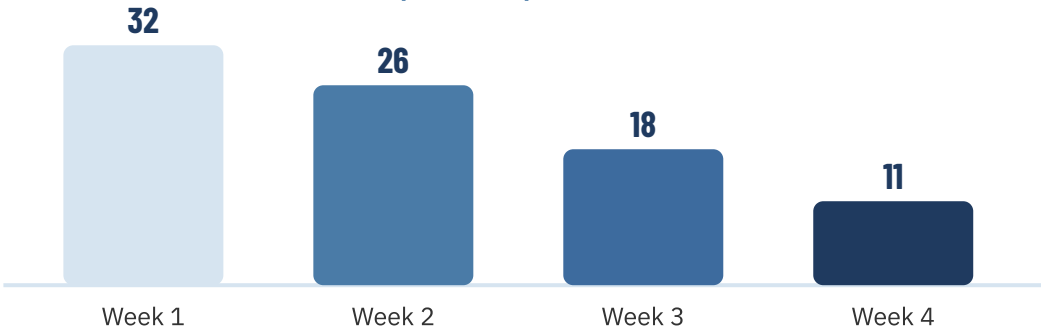
Hand it over

- Hand one position's job to someone, with the standard
- Measure: how many questions still reach you?
- Improve, then repeat with the next 3

The goal for month one: fewer problems reach you on Friday than reached you on Monday.

Keep counting. The problem log from week 1 becomes your scoreboard: if the number isn't falling, the systems aren't working yet.

PROBLEMS REACHING YOU EACH DAY (EXAMPLE)



CHECK YOURSELF

Are you the bottleneck?

Tick each statement that's true for you most weeks.

- ☐ I'm interrupted more than 10 times a day with questions only I can answer
- ☐ I can't take a week off without being called
- ☐ Staff wait for me before making routine decisions
- ☐ How jobs are done mostly lives in my head
- ☐ I do my own work at night or on weekends
- ☐ The same problems keep coming back
- ☐ I check or redo work because it's quicker
- ☐ I haven't looked properly at pricing or the numbers in 3 months

0 - 2

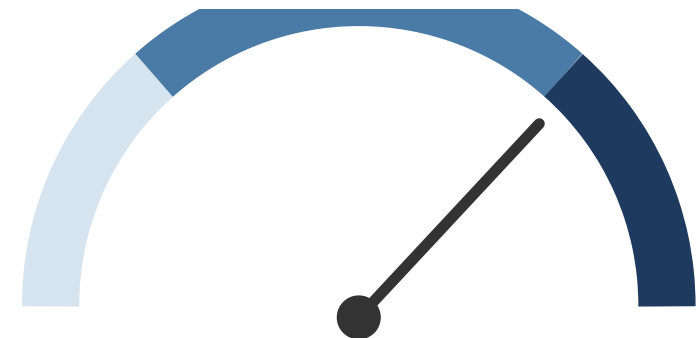
The business runs with you, not through you.

3 - 5

You're the bottleneck in places. Start with week 1.

6 - 8

You ARE the business. Time for a conversation.



BOTTLENECK METER

Doug's view: a high score isn't a criticism. It usually means you built something people depend on. Now build it so they can depend on the business instead.

NEXT STEPS

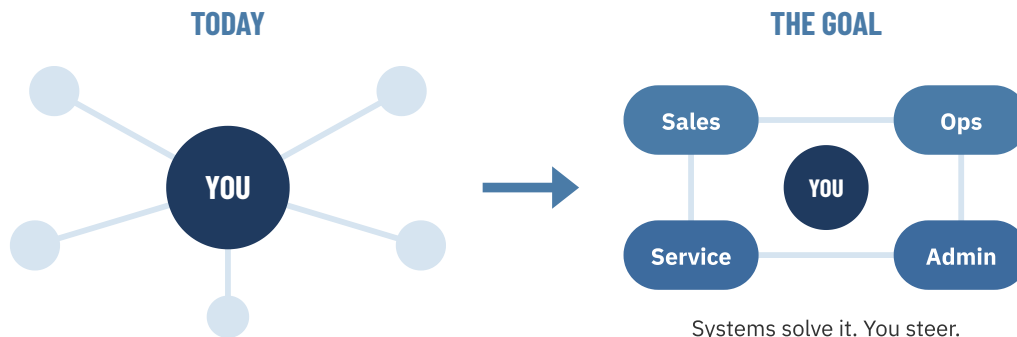
You don't have to be the answer to everything

Most owners are too close to their own business to see where it's stuck. That isn't a failing. It's what happens when you're the one holding it all together.

At Resolve Business Solutions we sit down with owners of small and medium businesses, look at the whole picture, and help set up the structure, systems and people so the business stops running through one person. Where specialist help is needed — an accountant, a lawyer, a bookkeeper — we coordinate the right people for you.

DOUG CONSTABLE · BUSINESS ADVISORS

"In 1988 I was the owner who did everything and solved every problem — and I lost the business. I've spent 38 years since helping owners build businesses that don't depend on them for every answer."



Systems solve it. You steer.



Book a confidential conversation

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This playbook summarises and comments on ideas from *The E-Myth Revisited* by Michael E. Gerber (HarperCollins, 1995). It is independent of, and not endorsed by, the author or publisher; all diagrams are original. We recommend reading the book. Resolve Business Solutions Pty Ltd provides administrative support and coordination and does not provide financial, legal, investment or tax advice. General information only. © 2026 Resolve Business Solutions.