STAGE 1

# Doing it all

The owner, with part-time or freelance help

For the owner who is still doing most of it. Here are your checks, and what to do about each one.

YOU ARE HERE

# You are the business

Picture the kitchen table at nine at night, the books open and tomorrow's jobs still to plan. That is not a failing. It is where nearly every company starts. I don't know your business. You do. What I know is how this stage tends to break, and what the next one needs from you.

**What you are carrying**

All of it: the work, every customer, the books, the taxes, and the helpers when they show up.

**What breaks first**

Quality rises and falls with your week. The help comes and goes. Paperwork for the help is loose or missing. Money for taxes gets spent.

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**How it sounds**

"I am the business."

"Some weeks I can't keep up, some weeks it's dead."

"My helper quit and I'm back to doing everything."

"I do the books on Sunday night, when I do them."

> If two or three of these sound like your week, this is your guide. You got here on your own instinct, and that instinct is right to trust. The checks that follow are what keep the work steady while you grow.

# Where this stage sits

A company grows through stages by the number of people it employs. Each stage has one thing that breaks first, and one piece of ground that has to be laid before the next stage can hold. The ground is mostly paper: who does what, how the work is done, how people start, how they are reviewed, who decides what.

| STAGE | NAME | PEOPLE | WHAT BREAKS FIRST | THE GROUND TO LAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **Doing it all You are here** | **The owner, with part-time help** | **Quality rises and falls with your week** | **A checklist for the core job, paperwork for every helper, business money kept apart** |
| 2 | Getting help | 1 to 4 employees | More work than one person can carry | The important tasks written down, and the first two weeks for every new hire |
| 3 | Choosing what matters | 5 to 9 employees | The work is pulled in every direction | The basic rules, a hiring process, one customer record |
| 4 | First managers | 10 to 19 employees | Good doers promoted with no training | Managers who know what they own, one service standard, a budget |
| 5 | Better, not more | 20 to 49 employees | More people have made the work worse | One change at a time, measured performance, an operating rhythm |
| 6 | Sorting it out | 50 to 99 employees | Every system is overloaded | One home and one owner for people, applicants, customers, money and data |
| 7 | A team for each job | 100 to 200 employees | No one person can know every part | Specialist roles, one hiring process, a real performance system |

Before stage 1: the idea, then the first sale. If that’s you, start with the free guide anyway. Past stage 7, at about 200 people, the guides stop. The counts are employees; at the edge of a band, read the work, not the number.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON

# Five things, in this order

None of this costs money. Each one is a page you write yourself, then use.

> Start with the load list. Everything else on this page comes out of it: the lines marked “someone could do this with a checklist” are your first checklist and, later, your first hire.

1. **The load list**
   For one normal week, write down everything you do, as you do it. Not what you should do: what you actually did. Mark each line one of three ways: only I can do this; someone could do this with a checklist; this should stop.

2. **A checklist for the core job**
   Pick the job you do most. Write the steps in order, the way you would explain them to someone on their first day. Use it yourself for two weeks and fix it every time it misses something. The aim is the same result on a hard week as a good one.

3. **Proper paperwork for every helper**
   For each person who helps you, write down what they do, what they are paid, how, and whether they are an employee or a contractor. The label alone does not settle which one they are. If you are not sure, ask an accountant or an employment lawyer before the next payment.

4. **Business money, kept apart**
   A separate business bank account, and tax money moved to its own account every time you are paid. Ask your accountant what share to set aside. Then do the books on the same day each week, not when you find the time.

5. **The first job description**
   Before you hire anyone full time, write the role on one page: what the job is for, the five or six things they do every week, what good looks like after ninety days, and who they answer to. Hire to the page.

Much of this stage's work is also in sales. That is outside Delphine Group's lane, so this guide leaves it out.

SIGNS YOU ARE DOING IT RIGHT

# Here are your checks

Have you done these? Tick only what is true today, not what is planned.

- [ ] You have written down everything you did last week, in one place.
- [ ] Your core job has a written checklist, and you use it.
- [ ] The job comes out the same on a hard week as on a good one.
- [ ] Every helper has proper paperwork, and you know whether each is an employee or a contractor.
- [ ] Business money and personal money are in separate accounts.
- [ ] Tax money is set aside each time you are paid, and you do not touch it.
- [ ] The books are done on a set day each week.
- [ ] The first full-time role is written down before it is posted.

If you ticked them all, the ground for the next stage is laid. If you ticked fewer than half, start at the top and work down. One a week is enough.

**The one I will do first, and when**

HOW YOU KNOW YOU HAVE GRADUATED

## You are ready for stage 2 when

- [ ] The work comes out the same every time, whoever helps you that week.
- [ ] The help is reliable, and every helper is properly papered.
- [ ] Business money is separate, and tax money is set aside.
- [ ] Your first full-time hire is made on a written role.

> One test: hand the core job to your helper for a day with only the checklist. If what comes back is what you would have done, you have graduated.

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WHAT IS NEXT

# Stage 2: Getting help

From 1 to 4 employees. There is now more work than one person can carry, and new hires learn by watching, so they learn half of it. The ground that holds it is the important tasks written down and a plan for every new hire’s first two weeks. The checklist you wrote at this stage is the first of those pages.

# Want this done for your company? Book a free 20-minute call.

**https://calendar.app.google/Bc2S9wSpveFS1b6c6**

Everything in this guide is yours to use on your own. It is complete enough to do without me. If you would rather have it built for your company, with your team, that is what the call is for. If we're not a fit, I'll tell you and give you the path to get there.

Part of the work is coaching you through the load while the ground goes in. It is leadership coaching, not therapy. If what you are carrying is more than that, I will say so and point you to someone who can help.

> Not sure this is your stage? Take the free stage quiz: **https://thedelphinegroup.com/find-your-stage/**

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This guide rests on Delphine Group's stage model, itself a draft. The lines under "How it sounds" are common phrasings, not quotes from anyone. This is general information, not legal, tax or accounting advice; where a page says to ask an accountant or an employment lawyer, do.