STAGE 5

# First managers

10 to 19 employees

For the owner managing managers for the first time, and still the backstop for everything. Here are your checks.

YOU ARE HERE

# Everything still comes back to you

Your best people became managers, and nobody showed them how. Customers get different answers from different people. I don’t know your business. You do. What I know is that new managers do well when they know exactly what they own.

**What you are carrying**

Managing managers for the first time, usually two or three, while still being the backstop for every escalation, every firing, and the budget, which lives in your head.

**What breaks first**

The best doers were promoted to manager with no training. Customers get different answers from different people. Company files live on personal devices and leave with whoever leaves. Someone is let go badly and it costs. Managers are hard to find. Nobody knows how much can be spent on the next hire.

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**How it sounds**

“My best tech became my worst manager.”

“Ask three people here and you get three answers.”

“When she left, the customer list left with her.”

“I let someone go and then got a letter from a lawyer.”

“I don’t know if we can afford another hire.”

“Everything still comes back to me.”

> If two or three of these sound like your week, this is your guide. The good news at this stage: most of what is missing is a page, and the people to write it are already on your team.

# 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 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Doing it all | 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 |
| 3 | 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 |
| 4 | Choosing what matters | 5 to 9 employees | The work is pulled in every direction | The basic rules, a hiring process, one customer record |
| **5** | **First managers You are here** | **10 to 19 employees** | **Good doers promoted with no training** | **Managers who know what they own, one service standard, a budget** |
| 6 | Better, not more | 20 to 49 employees | More people have made the work worse | One change at a time, measured performance, an operating rhythm |
| 7 | Sorting it out | 50 to 99 employees | Every system is overloaded | One home and one owner for people, applicants, customers, money and data |
| 8 | A team for each job | 100 to 249 employees | No one person can know every part | Specialist roles, one hiring process, a real performance system |

Stages 0 and 1 come before steady paying customers and a team, so the stages here start at 2. After stage 8, stage 9 runs from about 250 to 500 people. The counts are employees; at the edge of a band, read the work, not the number.

Stage structure after Alex Hormozi and Leila Hormozi, $100M Scaling Roadmap (acquisition.com). Words and names are Delphine Group's.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON

# Nine pages for a company with managers

Write them in this order. The first three are about your managers; the rest are what they will run.

> Start with the manager job descriptions. Every other page here needs someone who owns it, and this is where the owning is written down. Then set a budget, so the next hire is a decision and not a guess.

1. **A job description for each manager**
   What each manager owns, what they decide, what they bring to you, and how you will know they are doing well. One page each, agreed with them.

2. **The decision rights matrix, second version**
   Add the managers to the matrix from the last stage. For each common decision: who decides, who is asked first, who is told after. Include what each manager can spend without you.

3. **An onboarding plan for a newly promoted manager**
   The first ninety days in the new job: what they stop doing, what they learn, and the weekly check-in with you. Being good at the work is not the same as running it, and the plan says so.

4. **A customer service playbook**
   The written answers to what customers ask most, so every customer gets the same answer from whoever they reach. Train everyone to it.

5. **A starting and leaving checklist**
   Every account, piece of equipment, file and access a person gets on day one, and gives back on their last day. One list, used every time.

6 **A review rhythm**
A short written review every quarter for every person, on dates set at the start of the year, so a review never surprises anyone.

7 **A discipline and termination process**
The steps, in order, from the first concern to the last day, with what is written down at each step. Have an employment lawyer review it before it is ever used.

8 **A system of record for company files**
Company files live in company accounts, owned by the company, not on personal laptops and phones. Move them, and make it the rule.

9 **An internal promotion and staff referral process**
How someone on the team is considered for a step up, and how staff can refer someone they would work beside. Promote from within where you can, and train before you promote.

## Your plan

| THE PAGE | WHO OWNS IT | DONE BY |
|---|---|---|
| A job description for each manager | | |
| The decision rights matrix | | |
| An onboarding plan for a newly promoted manager | | |
| A customer service playbook | | |
| A starting and leaving checklist | | |
| A review rhythm | | |
| A discipline and termination process | | |
| A system of record for company files | | |
| An internal promotion and staff referral process | | |

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.

- [ ] Each manager has a written description of what they own and decide, and agrees with it.
- [ ] Each manager knows what they can spend without asking you.
- [ ] A newly promoted manager has a ninety-day plan and a weekly check-in.
- [ ] Customers get the same answer from whoever they reach.
- [ ] Every start and every exit uses the same checklist, and old access is closed on the last day.
- [ ] Every person has a short written review each quarter.
- [ ] The termination process is written and has been reviewed by an employment lawyer.
- [ ] Company files live in company accounts.
- [ ] There is a written budget, and you know what the next hire can cost.
- [ ] Some escalations now end with a manager instead of with you.

If you ticked them all, the ground for the next stage is laid. If not, start at the top. One a week is enough.

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

HOW YOU KNOW YOU HAVE GRADUATED

## You are ready for stage 6 when

- [ ] Managers are trained, and know what they own.
- [ ] There is one written standard for serving customers, and everyone is trained to it.
- [ ] The company owns its equipment, accounts and files.
- [ ] Letting someone go follows a written process.
- [ ] Good people are promoted from within where they can be.
- [ ] There is a budget.

> One test: a week where a problem was found, handled and closed by a manager, and you heard about it after, in the status report.

If this stage feels hard, look back. The pages from stages 3 and 4, the written procedures, the handbook, the hiring scorecard and the first decision rights, are what managers run. If they were skipped, write them now, before the managers each write their own.

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WHAT IS NEXT

# Stage 6: Better, not more

From 20 to 49 employees. A full team of managers, and the surprise that more people can make the work worse, not better. The ground that holds it is improving the work one change at a time, measuring performance, and an operating rhythm on the calendar. The review rhythm you set here is where it starts.

# 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://tally.so/r/Zj44Ke**

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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.