STAGE 6

Better, not more

20 to 49 employees

For the owner leading through a full team of managers. The fundamentals you should have, and how to keep them alive.

YOU ARE HERE

More people, and the work got worse

You added people to go faster, and the work got slower. It is the most common surprise at this size, and it has a plain cause: more people doing the same work in more ways. You know your business better than anyone. What I bring is how companies this size tend to break, and what holds them.

What you are carrying

Leading through a full team of managers, but pulled back into every fix. Hiring now reaches past anyone you know. Growth money goes out and growth does not come back.

What breaks first

More people have made the work worse, not better. Each manager runs their area their own way. People start and leave without a proper start or exit, and old accounts stay open. Your network has run dry for hiring, and senior candidates want benefits the company does not offer. Customers drift away and nobody can say which or why.

How it sounds

“We doubled the team and I’m busier than ever.”

“We keep hiring and nothing gets faster.”

“Every manager does it their own way.”

“Someone left three months ago and still has the passwords.”

“I can’t hire from people I know any more.”

“Revenue’s up and I’m taking home less.”

> If two or three of these sound like your quarter, this is your guide. A company here does not need more. It needs the work it already does, done better, one change at a time.

THE STAGES

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	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 You are here**	**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 that improves

These are the fundamentals at this size. If one is missing, write it first. If it exists, the work is keeping it true.

> Start with the operating rhythm. It is the calendar every other page runs on, and the place where you will see which fundamentals are alive.

1. **An operating rhythm**
   The weekly leadership meeting, the monthly numbers and the quarterly reviews, on the calendar for the year, with a set agenda for each. The company checks itself without you chasing it.

2. **A weekly status report from every manager**
   The same format from everyone: what got done, what is stuck, what needs a decision, who owns each item. Read before the weekly meeting, not in it.

3. **A review rhythm with performance measures for every role**
   Each role has two to four written measures of good work. Reviews happen on set dates, and the check-ins between them mean a review never surprises anyone.

4. **Onboarding for every role, and an exit checklist**
   The first two weeks and the first ninety days, written for every role. Every exit follows the same steps, and every account is closed on the last day.

5. **Written procedures for the core work, each with a named owner**
   One person owns each procedure and answers for it being right. When the work changes, the owner changes the page.

6 **A hiring scorecard for every role, and an interview plan with several steps**
Each step tests a different skill, and every candidate goes through the same steps. Your network has run dry; the process replaces it.

7 **A benefits outline**
What the company offers, written plainly, so senior candidates can see it before they ask. Set it with your accountant or a benefits adviser.

8 **The runs-without-the-owner list, tested**
Not a list any more: a test. Pick two weeks, step out of the daily work, and write down everything that came back to you. Each item gets an owner.

9 **An improvement log**
One change at a time: what was tried, why, what happened, and whether it held. The log is how the company stops adding and starts improving.

Your plan

THE PAGE	WHO OWNS IT	DONE BY
An operating rhythm		
A weekly status report from every manager		
A review rhythm with performance measures for every role		
Onboarding for every role		
Written procedures for the core work		
A hiring scorecard for every role		
A benefits outline		
The runs-without-the-owner list		
An improvement log		

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

Do these exist, and are they alive?

You should have these fundamentals. If one does not exist, fix that first. If it does, the question is how it is kept alive. Tick each column honestly.

THE FUNDAMENTAL	IT EXISTS WHEN	IT IS KEPT ALIVE WHEN
Performance management	☐ Every role has written measures, and reviews are on the calendar	☐ Reviews happen on the dates set, and nobody is surprised by one
Written procedures	☐ The core work is written down, and each procedure has a named owner	☐ Each has been changed by its owner since the work last changed
How requests come in and get answered	☐ There is one way to ask each team for something	☐ Requests are answered in a set time, and you can see the ones that are not
The few numbers that matter	☐ Five or so numbers, on a set day, in one place	☐ A number changed a decision this month
The system of record	☐ One home for customers, people and files	☐ Nobody keeps a private copy, and someone who left last month has no access

For this stage

- ☐ The operating rhythm is on the calendar for the year, and the meetings happen.
- ☐ Every start and every exit follows the same steps.
- ☐ Every candidate for a role goes through the same steps.
- ☐ One improvement is being worked at a time, and it is in the log.

A tick in the first column and not the second is the most common finding at this size. The fix is an owner and a date: who keeps it true, and when it is next checked.

HOW YOU KNOW YOU HAVE GRADUATED

You are ready for stage 7 when

- [ ] The core work is improved one change at a time, written down and trained.
- [ ] Performance is measured.
- [ ] Every start and every exit follows the same steps.
- [ ] Hiring has several steps, each testing a different skill.
- [ ] Benefits are set.
- [ ] The main numbers are watched on a schedule.

> One test: two weeks out of the daily work, and the list of what came back to you is shorter than last time.

If this feels hard, look back. A company of thirty most often rushed past the first hires and the first team: nothing important written down, no handbook, no scorecard, no decision rights. There is nothing to improve when there is no written version to start from. Going back for that paper is the way forward, not a step back.

WHAT IS NEXT

Stage 7: Sorting it out

From 50 to 99 employees, with three layers of leadership. Every system is overloaded, and nobody can find anything. The ground that holds it is one home and one owner for people, applicants, customers, money and data. The procedures and owners you set here are what it sorts.

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.

The work is built to end: set it up, stay a few months to make sure it holds, then your company runs it without me. Every engagement says how it ends before it starts.

> 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.