The Founder Dependency Audit

What happens to your business if you were unavailable for 6 weeks or you can't get out of bed?

If you want us to review and even have a 5-minute call to provide feedback on your audit,

Click here → Founder Dependency Audit Form

20 questions, 10 minutes, one honest answer

PART 1:

This might be you

It is a Tuesday morning in Port Harcourt.

Ebiere is an event planner who left a big firm 8 months ago to run her own service.

In those 8 months, she has built something real: a client list, a reputation, and an income that sometimes hits ₦1.2 million in a good month.

Then she gets seriously ill.

For twelve days, Ebiere cannot get out of bed.

She cannot answer calls.

She cannot review contracts.

She cannot send invoices.

She cannot follow up on the three deals that were two days away from closing.

After days of battling for her life, she managed to recover a bit; she opened her WhatsApp, and there was the damage.

All three clients went elsewhere and were annoyed.

An average of ₦1.2 million per month became ₦0 earnings that month.

And because she has no system, she has to rebuild from scratch again.

Ebiere is not lazy.

She is not unskilled.

She is TRAPPED, and the trap has a name.

Maybe your version of this story is different.

You are *Adaeze in Abuja*, running a thriving PR consultancy that cannot survive you taking a real holiday.

You are *Kofi in Accra,* turning down orders because you cannot afford to train anyone since nothing is written down.

You are *Fatima in Kano,* whose fashion business only grows as fast as you can personally sew, post, and collect payment.

You are a consultant, a designer, a content creator, a software engineer, a photographer, an accountant, a coach: **skilled, busy, and quietly exhausted.**

The trap is not laziness. It is not the lack of skill.

The trap is that you built a business around yourself instead of building a business that runs with SYSTEMS.

Every task lives in your head.

Every process depends on your presence.

Every naira of income requires your personal effort.

That is not a business. That is a very demanding job!

PART 2:

Why SKILLED people get stuck

If you are good at what you do, there is a reason you have not built systems yet, and it is usually one of three reasons.

1. The Knowledge Trap

All the important information about your business lives in your head:

- Client preferences
- Supplier contacts

- Your pricing logic
- Your delivery steps.

Because nothing is written down (structured), you can't hand it to anyone else or automate it.

2. The Trust Trap

You do not trust anyone to do things as well as you do.

That is understandable; you have probably been let down before.

But the fix for poor help is not to eliminate help.

It is to ***build a system*** that makes it easy for the right helper to do things correctly.

3. The Identity Trap

In Nigeria and across Africa, being 'hands-on' is respected.

The founder who works from 6 am to midnight is seen as dedicated.

This cultural framing keeps skilled people chained to their businesses long after they should have stepped back.

The way out of all three traps is the same: **STOP BEING THE SYSTEM.**

Build one instead.

But before you can build anything, you need to know exactly how deep the problem goes.

PART 3:

The Three Stages Of A Solo Business

Every solo (one-person) business sits at one of three stages.

Most are stuck at Stage One and do not know it.

STAGE ONE: Survivalist (hustle)

The business exists entirely because you exist.

Remove you, and it stops the same day.

- Revenue is irregular,
- There are no written processes, and
- Every month starts from zero.

STAGE TWO: Functional

There is some structure:

- There's a rough process for how things get done, and a team.
- Revenue is more predictable, but it still collapses when you are not available
- The business runs, but only because you are running it.

STAGE THREE: Scalable

1. The business has documented processes and systems.

2. Someone else can follow the process.

3. Clients are served whether or not you are personally present.

4. You could disappear for a week, and the business would still function.
5. You have recurring revenue without your input.

The gap between *Stage One* → *Stage Three* is not talent, and it is not money.

It is system.

The exercise on the next page shows you exactly where you stand and exactly what is quietly costing you the most.

PART 4:

Founder Dependency Audit

This is a 20-question audit that gives you a score between 0 and 20.

The higher your score, the more your business depends on you personally to survive, and the clearer it becomes where to start fixing it.

> **HOW TO DO THIS PROPERLY:**
>
> **Step 1:** Answer honestly, not aspirationally.
>
> **Step 2:** Tick the box for every question where the true answer is <u>YES.</u>
>
> This takes ten minutes and will tell you more about your business than a month of hustling harder.

<u>IMPORTANT NOTE</u>:

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Operation

☐ **1.** If you were unreachable for 5 days, would any client not be served?

☐ **2.** Is your most important business process stored only in your head?

☐ **3.** Do you personally handle routine client messages every day?

☐ **4.** Would a new staff member have nothing written to follow on their first day?

☐ **5.** Do you repeat the same task over and over with no checklist to guide it?

Revenue

☐ **6.** Does your monthly income depend entirely on how hard you work that month?

☐ **7.** Do all your clients pay per project or product, with no recurring arrangement?

☐ **8.** Do new clients come only from your personal network and direct referrals?

☐ **9.** If you stopped posting on social media for 60 days, would all enquiries stop?

- ☐ **10.** Is there no offer you sell that does not require your personal involvement to deliver?

Finance

- ☐ **11.** Do you mix personal and business money in the same account?
- ☐ **12.** Do you not know your exact profit margin right now, today?
- ☐ **13.** Do you price based on feeling rather than a documented calculation?
- ☐ **14.** Do you not have a buffer of at least 2 months of operating expenses saved?
- ☐ **15.** Do you not track income and expenses weekly?

Resilience

- ☐ **16.** Does your business have no backup internet or power plan?
- ☐ **17.** Do you rely on a single payment processor with no backup?
- ☐ **18.** Do you have no plan for what happens to your business if you are sick for 2 weeks?
- ☐ **19.** Do you have fewer than 3 confirmed alternative suppliers for your most critical input?
- ☐ **20.** Is there no one, not even a trusted family member, who could keep the basics running for 48 hours without calling you?

What your score actually means

Count your YES answers. Every YES is one (1) point

Your score: ________ / 20

0–5: Good foundations

If you score 0-5, you already have some real structure in place.

The task now is sharpening what exists, and not starting over.

6–10: Functional but fragile

If you score 6-10, your business works until it doesn't.

One bad month, one illness, one lost phone, and the cracks show.

This is the most dangerous score, because it feels fine until the day it isn't.

11–15: The Founder Trap

If you score 11-15, you are the business.

Every naira, every client relationship, every process runs through you personally.

This is urgent, and it is also completely fixable.

16–20: Total dependency

If you score 16- 20, your business exists entirely because you exist.

This is not a judgment; most skilled solo operators start here.

It is simply the clearest possible signal that it is time to build the system, starting today.

The root cause the score uncovers

Notice what the audit is not asking:

- If you are skilled enough?
- If you work hard enough? or
- If you deserve more clients?

Every single question is really asking one thing: is this business documented, or is it locked inside you?

That is the root cause behind almost every 'stuck' solo business in Nigeria and Africa.

Not a lack of talent.

Not a lack of hustle.

A lack of systems.

Back to Ebiere

4 months after the malaria disaster, Ebiere finally sat down and scored herself on this exact audit.

She landed at **15 out of 20**, deep in the Founder Trap.

She did not hire five people or rebuild her practice overnight.

She picked one process - **Client onboarding:**

She wrote it down as a simple **<u>checklist</u>**:

- ☐ What she sends a new client.

- ☐ What information she collects from the client.
- ☐ How and where they make payment.
- ☐ How the work kicks off.

It took her 90 minutes.

The next time she isn't available, someone else uses the checklist. That way nothing broke.

A few weeks later she documented another process. One process at a time, the business slowly stopped over-relying on her to be present every single hour.

> **The shift is never about working harder.**
>
> It is about moving what is in your head into a document, especially a digital one.
>
> One process at a time, until the business can run a day,
>
> then a week, without you personally holding it up.

Your One Move

You do not need to fix all 20 answers this week.

You need to fix one.

Look back at your audit.

Pick the single YES that scares you most, the one that, if something happened tomorrow, would hurt the most.

That is where you start.

Write it down using this simple format.

It does not need to be formal.

A Note or a Google Doc is enough.

SOP FORMAT FOR ANY TASK

TASK NAME: ________________________________

WHO DOES IT: ________________________________

HOW OFTEN: ________________________________

STEPS:

1. ___________________________________

2. ___________________________________

3. ___________________________________

4. ___________________________________

IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG: ___________________________________

One SOP, written honestly, is worth more than a month of good intentions.

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