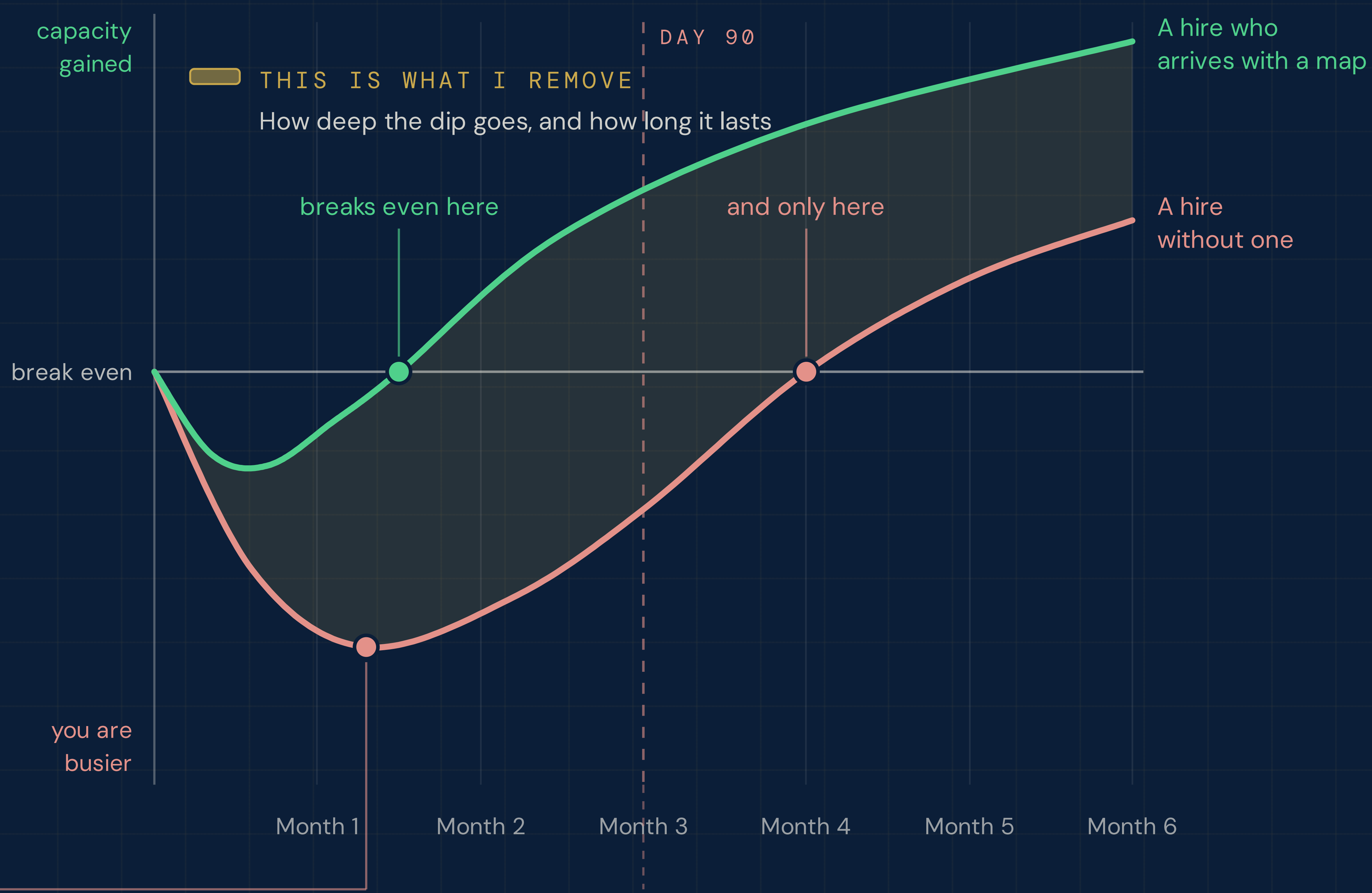
A SHORT BRIEF FOR FOUNDERS AND AGENCY OWNERS

# The Delegation Gap

Why your last hire made you busier before they made you lighter, what the arithmetic actually says, and how to change the shape of the curve.




Month one: the hire runs at roughly 25% capacity
and you do the explaining

By here about 3 in 10 hires have already left. The reason most give is that the role was not what they were told.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THE FINDING ALMOST NOBODY ACTS ON

# The highest-leverage skill a founder can have is the one most do not.

Both halves of this come from the same research body, which is what makes it uncomfortable. Delegation is not a soft skill. It is measurable, and it shows up in revenue.

**33%**
more revenue generated by CEOs with high delegator talent, against those with low or limited levels of it
Gallup

**1 in 4**
employer entrepreneurs actually have high delegator talent
Gallup

**49%**
of managers report being uncomfortable delegating work at all
Harvard Business Review

SO

**Three quarters of founders are weakest at the thing that most moves the number**

That is not a character flaw. Founders are selected for doing, not for handing off. The skill was never required until the business outgrew one person.

AND

**Roughly 19 to 30 percent of managers rate their own delegation as strong**

Where it has been studied, the barriers are consistently psychological rather than logistical. Not enough time is the reason given. It is rarely the reason.

THE TRAP THIS CREATES

You are too busy to delegate properly, and you are busy because you have not. Nothing about that loop breaks from the inside.

WHAT A HIRE ACTUALLY COSTS

# You budgeted for the salary. That is the small half.

Most small businesses track the portion of a hire that appears on a receipt. The research is consistent that this is the minority of the real cost.

### What you counted

Salary. Equipment and software. Recruiting fees. Visible, forecastable, and roughly 30 to 40 percent of what the hire will actually cost you before it pays back.

### What you did not

Your hours explaining the work. Ramp time at partial output. Rework and correction. Early attrition risk. Roughly 60 to 70 percent of the total, and none of it lands on an invoice.

MONTH ONE

**A new hire runs at roughly 25 percent capacity**

You are paying a full salary for a quarter of an output, while the person best placed to teach them is you, and your hour is the most expensive one in the building.

RAMP

**8 to 26 weeks to full productivity is the common range**

Mid-complexity roles run 3 to 6 months. Senior roles 6 to 12. Small businesses sit at the longer end, because training is improvised rather than documented, so each hire takes longer than the last.

IF IT FAILS

**A mis-hire is commonly costed at 25 to 30 percent of first-year salary**

Some estimates run far higher once rehiring, retraining and team disruption are counted. The number varies. The direction does not.

READ THAT AGAIN

The expensive part of a hire is not their salary. It is your time, spent teaching a job that was never written down.

WHY THE FAILURE IS STRUCTURAL, NOT BAD LUCK

# They did not leave because you hired the wrong person.

This is the part that reframes everything. Put two well-established findings next to each other and the conclusion is uncomfortable.

**~30%**

of new hires leave within the first 90 days

Widely reported across sources

**43%**

of those cite the day-to-day role not being what they expected, the leading single reason

Jobvite; echoed in later surveys

**20%**

of all turnover happens inside the first 45 days

SHRM

NOW JOIN THEM UP

If most of the job lives in your head and was never written down, then the role cannot be described accurately. The expectation gap is not an accident of hiring. It is built in before anyone applies.

CONSEQUENCE 01

### The job advert is a guess

Written from memory, under time pressure, describing the work as you imagine it rather than as it runs. Candidates answer the guess.

CONSEQUENCE 02

### Onboarding is improvised

Each new person learns by interrupting you, and learns a slightly different version. Nothing compounds, because nothing was written.

CONSEQUENCE 03

### You blame the hire

The obvious conclusion is that this one was not good enough. So you hire again, into the same undocumented role, and repeat the curve.

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS ACTUALLY WORKS

# Structure is the only lever with numbers behind it.

Not better interviewing, not a more senior hire, not trying harder. The measurable difference comes from whether the work was defined before the person arrived.

**30 to 50%**

reduction in time to productivity from structured onboarding versus unstructured

Brandon Hall Group

**60 to 70%**

of onboarding cost sits in the indirect half that structure directly attacks

Industry benchmark data

**90 days**

is the window where the outcome is decided, for retention and for ramp

Multiple sources

> The founder is normally asked to do the hardest possible version of delegation: define a job that has never been written down, while too busy to write it down.
>
> So invert it. The hire does the defining, and you do the correcting.

STEP 01

### Observe, do not ask

Read what already exists. Charters, trackers, past threads, client files. Watch how the work actually runs rather than requesting a briefing you do not have time to give.

STEP 02

### Draft, then hand it back

Produce the written version of the role and its recurring work. Writing an SOP from nothing is a project. Correcting a drafted one is a ten minute job.

STEP 03

### Offer a menu, not a blank page

Come back with a ranked shortlist of what to hand over first, ordered by how much of your time it returns. You choose. You do not scope.

HOW I WORK IT, WITH SOMETHING TO INSPECT AT EACH STAGE

# Ninety days, and a way to check it worked.

Each phase produces an artefact you can read. You are never guessing whether the hire is paying for itself, and you are never the one writing the plan.

DAYS 1-30

### Take the load, map the ground

Calendar and inbox move to me in week one. I read everything that exists and come back with one consolidated question list, once, rather than a stream of interruptions. Every recurring task mapped with its current owner and where it lives.

**You can inspect: the map, plus a week where fewer things reached you.**

DAYS 31-60

### Put the cadence in

Stand-ups, weekly status and escalation rules running. The three worst manual workflows drafted as SOPs from observed reality, sent to you for correction, then handed to the team so the knowledge stops living in one head.

**You can inspect: three SOPs with your edits in them, and status arriving unrequested.**

DAYS 61-90

### Automate the top of the list

The two highest-frequency workflows automated. Reporting generated rather than assembled. Third-party coordination, schedules, trackers and follow-ups running without passing through you.

**You can inspect: hours returned, and a week where nobody asked you a question you had already answered.**

WHAT THE CURVE LOOKS LIKE BY THEN

Fewer status meetings. Nothing overdue that nobody noticed. And a week where you were not the bottleneck for a single decision that was never yours to make.

EVIDENCE, NOT ADJECTIVES

# What I have actually built.

Designed, built and maintained by me in a live agency, supporting senior leadership across many concurrent client accounts.

GENERATED

### Work that creates itself

A new engagement scaffolds in one click: an epic plus 28 child tickets, phases, components and due dates, identical every time. Recurring sets open two weeks before they are due.

ENFORCED

### Standards the system applies

QA checklists attach on ticket creation and reset when work reopens. Incomplete tickets flagged by name to whoever last edited them, in the channel they already use.

DELIVERED

### Reporting nobody chases

Daily stand-ups sent as direct messages before work starts. Weekly utilization and burn against contracted hours. Intake forms wired straight through to tickets.

SCALE

**40+ automation rules, 9 scripted jobs, 8 integrations**

Across Jira, ScriptRunner and Google Workspace. Two paid automation subscriptions retired and replaced with scripts the team could read and change.

RANGE

**30+ digital projects delivered end to end**

Coordinated across North America, EMEA and APAC time zones, including direct third-party and vendor communication.

CREDENTIALS

**Google Project Management Professional Certificate and Google AI Essentials**

Plus Anthropic AI Fluency and Model Context Protocol. 31 certifications in total, every one independently verifiable.

> " Paul is dependable, highly organized, and always willing to step in wherever support is needed. His attention to detail, problem-solving skills, and commitment to keeping operations running smoothly made him an invaluable part of the team.
>
> Mary Joy Bertulfo · Executive Assistant · Worked together 2+ years

HOW TO START

# Test me on something real, before you commit to anything.

Operations support is hard to evaluate in an interview, because the skill only shows up in the work. So do not evaluate it in an interview.

OPTION 01

### Give me one broken workflow

Pick the process that annoys you most. I will observe it, document it, and come back with a written SOP and an automation proposal. You will know inside a week whether I understand your business.

OPTION 02

### Give me one week of your inbox

Not access to everything. One category. I will show you what triage, routing and drafting looks like in your voice, and what still reaches you afterwards.

OPTION 03

### Give me the map

Two weeks, part time, to produce the written map of your recurring work: what happens, who owns it, where it lives and what it costs. Useful to you whether or not you hire me.

WHY I OFFER THIS

If I am the right hire, this is the fastest way for you to know. If I am not, you have lost a week and gained a document. That asymmetry is deliberate.

## Available now for remote work

Chief of Staff · Operations · Senior Executive Assistant · Project Manager
Comfortable across North America, EMEA and APAC hours.

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Sources: Gallup research on delegator talent and entrepreneurship. Harvard Business Review on manager discomfort with delegation. SHRM on onboarding cost and early turnover. Brandon Hall Group on structured onboarding and time to productivity. Jobvite and subsequent surveys on reasons for 90 day attrition. Figures are published industry research, not results I am claiming.