

A FREE SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR BUSINESS OWNERS

The 7-Day Step-Away Test

Could your business run without you for one full week? Find out in 20 minutes, see exactly where you're the bottleneck, and get your first fix for each one.

3 steps · 15 questions · 1 honest answer

Arilda Surridge, MA, LMFT · Founder, Sustainable Growth Consulting & Coaching

Alex Sandev · Founder, HiveSourced & AnvilFlow

Your business is growing... so why do you have LESS time?

You started your business for freedom. More control over your time, your income, your life.

And then it grew. More clients, more team, more decisions... and somehow every one of them still comes back to you. You check email on vacation. You keep your phone face up at dinner. The last time you took a real week off, you spent half of it catching up.

This isn't a discipline problem. It's a design problem. Most businesses are built around the owner by accident, one "I'll just handle it myself" at a time.

The test is simple. Imagine you leave next Monday. Laptop closed, phone off, no "quick check-ins" for 7 days. What happens to your business?

How to use this guide

1

The Disappearing List

Write down what would break while you're gone. (5 minutes)

2

The Scorecard

Rate 15 statements across the 5 areas every business runs on. (10 minutes)

3

Your First Fixes

Find your biggest bottleneck and the first system to build. (5 minutes)

Print it or fill it in on screen. Be honest... nobody sees this but you :)

The Disappearing List

Picture your 7 days away. Write whatever comes up first. Don't solve anything yet... just list it. This list is your REAL to-do list.

Who would call or message you in the first 24 hours? About what?

Which decisions would sit and wait until you got back?

What money would stop moving? (invoices, payments, payroll, approvals)

Which client or customer would feel your absence first?

What would stop happening without anyone noticing? (posting, follow-ups, new leads)

What would be waiting on your desk when you came back?

The Scorecard

Score each statement: **0** = not true, **1** = sometimes, **2** = true. Add up each area (max 6). The three boxes on each line are 0, 1 and 2.

Decisions

Area total: ___ / 6

My team makes most day-to-day decisions without checking with me.

☐ ☐ ☐

Common decisions have written guidelines, not just "ask me."

☐ ☐ ☐

Someone other than me can approve spending up to a set amount.

☐ ☐ ☐

Clients

Area total: ___ / 6

Clients get a great experience even when I'm not personally involved.

☐ ☐ ☐

Someone else can handle client questions and complaints.

☐ ☐ ☐

New clients get onboarded without me touching every step.

☐ ☐ ☐

Money

Area total: ___ / 6

Invoices go out and payments come in without me doing it.

☐ ☐ ☐

I see my key numbers every week without digging for them.

☐ ☐ ☐

Payroll and bills get handled if I'm offline.

☐ ☐ ☐

Team

Area total: ___ / 6

At least one person could run the day-to-day for a week.

☐ ☐ ☐

Our key processes are written down, not stored in my head.

☐ ☐ ☐

My team would only contact me for a true emergency.

☐ ☐ ☐

Marketing & Sales

Area total: ___ / 6

New leads keep coming in when I stop posting for a week.

☐ ☐ ☐

Every new inquiry gets a reply within one business day, without me.

☐ ☐ ☐

Our marketing runs on a plan, not on how much energy I have that week.

☐ ☐ ☐

Total score: _____ / 30 · **Lowest area:** _____

What your score means

0 to 10

The business is you.

Right now, you ARE the system. That's normal for owners who grew fast... and it's also why rest never feels like rest. The good news: the first few fixes will give you the biggest relief.

11 to 20

Held together by you.

Some things run on their own, but the important stuff still routes through you. You could leave for a day or two. A week would hurt. Two or three systems stand between you and a real break.

21 to 26

Almost there.

You've built a real business, not a job. A few gaps (usually decisions or money) are the last things keeping you on call. Close them and a full week off becomes realistic.

27 to 30

Ready to step away.

Your business can run without you. Now the question changes: what will you do with the space? This is where the best strategic thinking happens.

Your lowest area is your bottleneck. That's where to start, even if your total score looks good. One weak area is enough to pull you back in on day two.

Now look back at your Disappearing List. Most owners find their list lines up almost perfectly with their lowest-scoring area. That's not a coincidence. It's your business telling you what to build next.

Your first fix for each area

Start with your lowest area. Each fix takes an afternoon, not a quarter.

1

Decisions: write a "decide without me" list

List the 10 decisions you make most often. Mark every one your team could make with a simple rule, then write the rule (for example: "Refunds under \$200, approve and let me know Friday").

2

Clients: record your process once

Record a 10-minute screen video of how you onboard a new client. Hand it to someone and have them do the next one while you watch. That video becomes your first written process.

3

Money: automate what repeats

Set up automatic invoicing and reminders, and a weekly one-page numbers email (revenue, cash, what's owed). If you only look at your numbers when something feels off, this one is for you.

4

Team: name a second-in-command for one week

Pick one person. Write down your top 5 recurring tasks, walk them through each, and agree on what "call me" means. Then test it with one day fully offline.

5

Marketing & Sales: build it to run on a plan

Batch four weeks of content in one sitting and schedule it. Add an automatic reply and a simple follow-up email for every new inquiry, so no lead waits on your inbox.

One more thing, from Arilda... Some owners build every one of these systems and still can't leave. That part isn't about systems. It's your nervous system, which learned that staying on call keeps everything safe. Try this: close your eyes and imagine turning your phone off for 7 days. Notice what your body does. That reaction is information... and it's workable.

WHAT'S NEXT

We built a week for this.

Reading about stepping away is one thing. Doing it is another. That's why we created **The Business Owner's Retreat**: 7 nights at Amatara Wellness Resort in Phuket, Thailand, **March 24 to 31, 2027**, with a small group of 15 business owners.

Think of it as taking this test for real. You set your business up to run without you, then you actually leave. And while you're away, you get the time and space to work ON your business instead of in it:

Systems & bottlenecks

Map where you're the bottleneck and build the first system to remove yourself.

Leadership & your nervous system

Lead with clarity instead of on-call stress.

Founder to CEO

Delegate with confidence and build a team that can lead.

Rest that works

Sea-view suite, spa, oceanfront yoga, and people who get it.

Two ways to take the next step

1. **Join our free masterclass.** "How to Step Away From Your Business for a Week (Without It Falling Apart)." Live with Arilda and Alex on Friday, November 6.
sustainablegrowthconsultingcoaching.com/masterclass
2. **See the retreat.** Full details, faculty, and room options.
sustainablegrowthconsultingcoaching.com/retreat-for-business-owners

Questions? Just reply to the email this guide came in. It comes straight to us :)