

# ARE YOU REALLY ACTING AS AN INTEGRATOR™?

OR JUST CARRYING THE  
BUSINESS ON YOUR BACK?



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# Introduction

There's a role in growing businesses that can look powerful from the outside but feel crushing from the inside.

It's often the person who makes sure things happen. The one who brings order to the chaos. The one the founder relies on. The one who keeps the team moving. The one everyone trusts.

They may be called the Integrator, COO, General Manager, Operations Director, or simply "the one who gets it done."

But here's the uncomfortable truth.

Some of those people are not really integrating the business.

They're carrying it.

And the difference matters.

Because if someone is genuinely acting as an Integrator, they help create a healthy, scalable, accountable business.

If they are simply carrying the business on their back, they become the bottleneck, the emotional shock absorber, the problem solver, the rescuer, & eventually, the exhausted human holding together a system that still hasn't been fixed.

This e-book is designed to help you spot the difference.

Whether you're a founder, a second-in-command, or part of a leadership team, this will help you assess whether your business has real integration or just over-functioning.

# Why This Role Gets Misunderstood So Often

A lot of businesses think this role is about being highly organised, operationally strong, commercially aware, & brilliant at follow-through.

Those qualities matter. But they are not enough.

A true Integrator™ role is not just about execution. It is about alignment.

It is about turning the leadership team into a team.

It is about helping the business operate as one business.

It is about holding priorities steady.

It is about creating focus.

It is about building accountability.

It is about translating vision into reality.

Without that, what you often end up with is an over-capable operator becoming the human glue for a business that lacks clarity.

That may keep things moving for a while. It does not build something healthy.

# The Biggest Signs You're Carrying the Business

**1**

## **Everything flows through you**

You are copied into everything, asked about everything, & expected to solve everything.

**2**

## **You are the unofficial fixer**

When there's confusion, tension, delay, or conflict, everyone comes to you.

**3**

## **You spend more time reacting than leading**

Your day gets eaten by interruptions, follow-up, & putting out fires.

**4**

## **You hold too many decisions**

You may not realise it, but the business has trained itself to check with you before doing almost anything meaningful.

**5**

## **You clean up after the founder**

You translate, soften, re-prioritise, explain, & smooth out the damage from unclear or shifting direction.

**6**

## **You protect weak performance**

Instead of creating accountability, you compensate for it.

**7**

## **You know the same issues keep coming back**

Nothing ever seems fully solved. It just reappears in a different form next quarter.

**8**

## **You feel indispensable**

That may sound flattering. It is usually a warning sign.

# What a True Integrator Does Differently

A true Integrator™ does not just get things done. They create the conditions for the business to get things done consistently.

They:

- create alignment across departments
- keep priorities clear
- ensure follow-through
- drive accountability
- solve root issues
- reduce noise
- create consistency
- keep the leadership team focused on what matters most
- balance the Visionary or founder with practical execution

They are not the star of the show.

They are the force that helps the whole business perform better together.

That's a far more strategic role than many people realise.

# Why Experience In the Role Is Not Always Enough

Someone may have sat in a second-in-command seat for years. That does not automatically mean they have learned the disciplines needed to thrive in the role.

Sometimes experience builds good instincts.

Sometimes it builds coping mechanisms.

For example, they may have learned to:

- over-function for others
- rescue weak leaders
- prioritise speed over clarity
- avoid conflict
- absorb founder pressure
- centralise decisions
- keep the peace instead of creating accountability

Those habits often develop for understandable reasons. But they can quietly hold the business back.

Experience is valuable.

Unexamined experience can also reinforce dysfunction.

# The Founder Problem Nobody Talks About Enough

Let's be blunt.

Sometimes the second-in-command is not the only issue. Sometimes the founder makes the role nearly impossible.

This happens when the founder:

- changes priorities constantly
- makes off-the-cuff decisions
- bypasses agreed structure
- avoids accountability
- wants support but not challenge
- expects someone else to tidy up the chaos

In those environments, the so-called Integrator can end up acting more like a buffer than a leader.

That is not healthy for either person.

A strong founder-2IC relationship needs trust, clarity, defined decision rights, & the ability to challenge each other productively.

Without that, you get frustration at the top & confusion everywhere else.

# The Key Shifts From Carrying To Integrating

Here are the major shifts that have to happen.

## Shift 1: From fixer to system-builder

Stop being the solution to every problem. Build the structure that reduces the need for rescue.

## Shift 4: From symptom-solving to root-cause solving

Stop treating recurring issues as one-off events.

## Shift 2: From bottleneck to clarity creator

Make decision rights clear. Push ownership back to where it belongs.

## Shift 5: From harmony keeper to accountability leader

Healthy businesses need productive tension.

## Shift 3: From busy to focused

Not everything matters equally. Create discipline around priorities.

## Shift 6: From founder protector to founder partner

The role is not to shield the founder from reality. It is to help turn vision into something executable.

# Questions To Ask Yourself

If you're in the role, ask yourself:

- What would stop in this business if I stepped away for two weeks?
- What problems keep landing back on my desk?
- Where have I become the workaround for poor structure?
- Where am I rescuing instead of leading?
- Where am I absorbing confusion instead of insisting on clarity?
- Have I become indispensable in ways that are unhealthy?
- Am I creating traction, or just managing pressure?

If you're the founder, ask yourself:

- Have I given this person real authority, or just responsibility?
- Do I allow challenge, or only support?
- Am I helping create focus, or constantly creating noise?
- Have I built a true leadership team, or a dependency loop around one capable person?

These questions can be confronting. Good. That usually means they matter.

# What To Do Next

If this e-book has made you realise your business has someone carrying too much, that is actually good news.

Because now you can do something about it.

Start with:

- clarifying the role
- defining decision rights
- improving leadership team accountability
- tightening priorities
- solving recurring issues properly
- reducing founder-driven noise
- building structure that supports scale

None of that is glamorous. All of it matters.

Because the goal is not to create a heroic second-in-command.

The goal is to build a business that runs well because the system works.

# Final Thought

A business that depends on one person constantly over-functioning is not healthy. It is fragile.

That person may be brilliant. Loyal. Hardworking. Incredibly valuable.

But if they are carrying the business instead of integrating it, the business is still stuck.

So the question remains:

**Are you really acting as an Integrator™?**

**Or are you just carrying the business on your back?**

Need help working out whether your leadership team has a true Integrator role or just an overloaded operator?

We help leadership teams get clear on structure, accountability, traction, & the roles that actually make a business work.

Email: [hello@sherwoodfoundry.com](mailto:hello@sherwoodfoundry.com)

**[I'm Interested in a Fractional Integrator](#)**

