

TOOL

# Solution Ownership

Curated by Simon De Los Rios

WHO IS THIS FOR

This tool is for leaders whose teams bring them problems instead of solutions, and who end up solving everything themselves as a result.

PAIN

Being the default answer for every issue, which keeps the team dependent and keeps you from doing the parts of your job only you can do.

SOLVES

Teaches your team to think through a problem before bringing it to you, without making them feel unsupported.

TOPIC

BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

READ TIME  
2 minutes

TIME REQUIRED  
15 min to set up

WHAT YOU NEED  
notebook, pen

## Step 1: Notice the pattern

For one week, write down every time someone brings you a problem without a proposed solution attached.

- *Is this happening because they have not been asked to think this way, or because it has always been easier to just ask me?*

## Step 2: Set the new expectation

Decide on the standard you want going forward. A common one: come with the problem, at least one possible solution, and what you think should happen next.

- *Can I explain this expectation in one sentence, clearly enough that there is no confusion about what changes?*

## Step 3: Introduce it directly

Tell your team the new standard, and why it exists, in a way that sounds like investment in them, not a rejection of their questions.

- *Does this land as “I trust you to think,” or as “stop bringing me your problems”?*

## Step 4: Hold the line the first few times

When someone brings you a problem without a solution, ask them to come back with one instead of solving it for them on the spot.

- *What is the version of this that supports them without doing the thinking for them?*

*Example. Joe ran a team where every unresolved issue eventually ended up in his inbox, badly formatted spreadsheets, client complaints, disagreements between two departments. He told his team the new standard directly, bring the problem, one possible solution, and your recommendation. The first week, two people came to him without one, and he asked them to think it through and come back. It felt awkward both times. By the third week, the problems arriving in his inbox had a proposed answer attached to almost all of them, and half the time his team had already solved it correctly on their own.*

BEFORE YOU CLOSE THIS

This will feel unhelpful the first few times you hold the line. That discomfort is the sign it is working.

CONTINUE WITH

The Recognition Gap, once your team is stepping up and solving more on their own, naming that shift out loud is what makes it stick.

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Source: One of the named outcomes from the Falcon Farms engagement, adapted by SDLR

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