

The Indispensable Trap

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Part of the **Focused Perspectives** series exploring how leadership capability becomes visible and influential at the executive level.

Being indispensable feels like professional validation. You are the person leadership calls when problems become complex. You understand the systems, the relationships, and the operational details that keep the organization running smoothly.

But there is a hidden cost to that reputation. Organizations optimize for stability. If your role is critical and no one can easily replace you, promoting you introduces risk.

✓Who will take over your responsibilities?

✓Will the function continue to run smoothly?

When those questions cannot be answered confidently, advancement often slows not because you lack potential, but because your current role is too important to disrupt. The leaders who move forward most effectively understand this dynamic early. They deliberately build redundancy around themselves developing talent, sharing knowledge, and ensuring their teams can operate without constant oversight.

This is not just good leadership practice. It is strategic career management.

Where to start

Ask yourself a simple question:

❓ If you step away tomorrow, who could run your function?

If the answer is unclear, begin developing someone on your team to take on more responsibility. Advancement often begins the moment your current role can function without you.

Competence gets you in the room. Positioning determines what happens next.

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