

MARK PICKERING ADVISORY

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The Owner Dependence Diagnostic

How free is your business — really?

Most business owners reach a point where the business works — but only because they never stop. Every key decision needs their sign-off, important clients will only deal with them personally, and critical processes exist only in their head. The business looks successful from the outside. But remove the owner, even briefly, and it starts to unravel. That is not a successful business — it is a job with a company name attached.

This diagnostic is designed to surface where owner dependence is concentrated in your business — quickly and honestly. It takes approximately 10–15 minutes. Short, direct answers are sufficient.

There are no right or wrong answers. The value is in the clarity.

SECTION 1 — BUSINESS OVERVIEW

1. Number of employees (approximate):

2. Annual revenue (approximate):

Select the range that applies:

Under \$500K \$500K – \$2M \$2M – \$5M \$5M+

3. Primary business activity:

SECTION 2 — DECISION MAKING

4. Which decisions must you personally approve?

Brief examples

5. What decisions could be made without you, but currently are not?

SECTION 3 — CUSTOMER & REVENUE DEPENDENCE

6. What percentage of revenue relies on relationships you personally manage?

Estimate

7. Are there customers who will only deal with you?

Yes No

Comment (if relevant):

SECTION 4 — ROLES & ACCOUNTABILITY

8. Are all roles clearly defined with ownership of outcomes across the business?

Yes No

Comment (if relevant):

9. Where does accountability currently break down?

Brief examples

SECTION 5 — OPERATIONS & KNOWLEDGE

10. What processes rely on knowledge that sits mainly with you?

If any

11. What work slows down or stops if you are unavailable?

SECTION 6 — FINANCIAL VISIBILITY

12. How often do you review profit and cash performance?

13. Could someone else confidently explain the business's financial performance?

Yes No

Comment (if relevant):

SECTION 7 — LEADERSHIP & DEPTH

14. Who runs the business when you are not present?

15. Is there a credible second-in-command who can manage day-to-day operations?

Yes No

Comment (if relevant):

SECTION 8 — TIME & ENERGY

16. How many hours per week do you spend working in the business operationally?

Average

17. If you stepped away for four weeks, what would happen?

SECTION 9 — FINAL REFLECTION

18. If nothing changed over the next three years, how would you feel about the business and your role in it?

What to do with your answers

Review your answers and note where patterns cluster. The more sections where you are the single point of failure — in decisions, in client relationships, in operational knowledge, in financial oversight — the greater the structural risk to your business.

As a guide:

1–2 sections flagged	Some dependence exists. Manageable with focused effort.
3–5 sections flagged	Significant dependence. The business is more fragile than it appears.
6+ sections flagged	High dependence. Urgent structural attention is warranted.

About Mark Pickering Advisory

Mark Pickering Advisory works with business owners who want a business that runs without them — so it is more profitable, less stressful, and saleable on their terms. Mark Pickering Advisory provides practical, hands-on advisory support focused on building the structure, leadership, and systems that reduce owner dependence and create lasting business value.

If completing this diagnostic has raised questions about your business, we welcome a confidential discussion.

Email: mark@pickeringadvisory.com.au | **Web:** www.pickeringadvisory.com.au

This diagnostic is designed to bring clarity quickly — not add complexity.