

The Three-Month Test

Eight questions that reveal whether your business benefits from your leadership or depends on your constant availability.

Circle or mark the answer that best describes what usually happens. Score 0 for the healthiest answer and 3 for the answer showing the greatest dependence.

1 When you are unavailable for a full business day, how does your team handle decisions?

- ☐ 0 They make appropriate decisions and keep me informed.
- ☐ 1 They handle most decisions, but a few wait for me.
- ☐ 2 Several decisions are delayed or sent to me.
- ☐ 3 Important work stops until I respond.

What example came to mind?

2 When a customer or client has an issue, what can your employees do without contacting you?

- ☐ 0 They can resolve it immediately within clear guidelines, including a reasonable discount, credit, or giveaway.
- ☐ 1 They can handle routine issues, but need approval for exceptions.
- ☐ 2 They are hesitant to offer a meaningful remedy without permission.
- ☐ 3 Most meaningful resolutions require me or another key person.

What example came to mind?

3 If lead flow slowed or profit per ticket changed materially, what would happen?

- ☐ 0 My team would identify it quickly, investigate it, and recommend action.
- ☐ 1 They would report it, but rely on me to determine what to do.
- ☐ 2 I would probably discover it through my own review.
- ☐ 3 We might not recognize it until it had already caused damage.

What example came to mind?

4 When work moves between departments or employees, how is the next step determined?

- ☐ 0 Ownership and the next action are clear to everyone involved.
- ☐ 1 The process usually works, with occasional clarification from me.
- ☐ 2 People frequently ask me who should handle it or what happens next.
- ☐ 3 I am the person holding the process together.

What example came to mind?

5 Has a work problem pulled you away from an important personal moment?

- ☐ 0 Rarely, and only for a genuine emergency.
- ☐ 1 Occasionally, but more often than I would like.
- ☐ 2 Regularly enough that my family or friends expect it.
- ☐ 3 I avoid making plans because I may have to work.

What example came to mind?

6 When you take time away, how available do you remain?

- ☐ 0 I can disconnect and trust the team to handle the business.
- ☐ 1 I check in at planned times, but rarely need to intervene.
- ☐ 2 I monitor messages and frequently step in.
- ☐ 3 I am technically away, but I am still running the business.

What example came to mind?

7 How much of the business exists primarily in your head?

- ☐ 0 The team can find the information and direction they need.
- ☐ 1 A few important areas still depend on my knowledge.
- ☐ 2 People regularly need me to explain how or why something is done.
- ☐ 3 My memory, judgment, and relationships are the company's operating system.

What example came to mind?

8 If the business continued operating exactly this way for the next three years, how would you feel?

- ☐ 0 Confident. The business is supporting the life I want.
- ☐ 1 Concerned. I would want some important things to improve.
- ☐ 2 Trapped. I cannot continue carrying this much indefinitely.
- ☐ 3 Alarmed. Something important in my health, relationships, or life would eventually suffer.

If nothing changed, what might it cost you?

WHAT YOUR ANSWERS SUGGEST

Your score is a signal, not a verdict.

Add all eight scores. The number matters less than the examples you wrote down, but it can show how business dependence and personal cost reinforce each other.

Add your eight scores

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	TOTAL

0-5**CHOICE AND RESILIENCE**

The business appears able to move without consuming the owner. Your involvement is generally a leadership choice rather than a daily requirement.

6-11**HIDDEN DEPENDENCE**

You remain in too many important loops. The cost may already appear as delayed decisions, unfinished time away, or attention that never fully leaves work.

12-17**OWNER AS OPERATING SYSTEM**

The team likely relies on your availability, memory, approval, or relationships. The business works in part because you never completely step away.

18-24**THE BUSINESS OWNS TOO MUCH**

Business continuity and your personal freedom are closely tied together. If the pattern continues, the cost is likely to grow inside the company and outside it.

A low score is good news. A high score is useful news. Neither improves by being ignored.

FLOW makes the business visible before anyone tries to fix it.

FLOW is a confidential business assessment. It does not begin with software, a reorganization, or a predetermined answer. It begins by finding out how work actually moves.

- F Follow the work** Trace real work across decisions, handoffs, customer commitments, cash, and exceptions. Observe what happens, not only what the process says should happen.
- L Locate the friction** Identify where work pauses, loops, escalates, disappears, or depends on one person's availability, memory, or approval.
- O Organize the truth** Reconcile leadership's view with employee experience and operational evidence. Separate isolated incidents from repeated patterns.
- W Way forward** Prioritize what should change first, who should own it, and how progress will be measured. The goal is a usable sequence, not a binder of observations.

Your role should be to shape the business, not serve as its emergency operating system.

The business may be growing. Is your life getting smaller around it?

Each delayed decision teaches people to wait. Each punished mistake teaches them to hide. Each successful workaround becomes one more invisible process the business must depend on.

Speed	Customers and employees wait longer for answers that should be routine.
Leadership	Capable managers learn that acting is riskier than escalating.
Visibility	Workarounds and private knowledge make reports less trustworthy.
Continuity	An absence becomes a business event instead of a normal occurrence.
Life	Family, friendships, health, and attention keep absorbing the cost of constant availability.
Value	The company remains difficult to scale, transfer, or eventually sell without you.

Imagine stepping away and returning to a business that kept getting better.

See if FLOW fits your business.

Bring the examples you wrote down. In a private 25-minute conversation, we will decide whether a FLOW assessment would be useful. If it is not a fit, we will say so. creativehydra.com/flow or **(425) 458-4500 x22**