



What Should a Founder Actually Be Doing?

5 places your time becomes more valuable as your business grows

When you started your business, your job was pretty simple: **do whatever needed to be done**. Sell the job. Do the work. Order the materials. Talk to the customer. Fix the equipment. Make payroll. Solve the problem. That willingness to do whatever it takes is probably one reason the business exists today.

But as the company grows, something has to change. There are now things that other people **can** do - and things that only you, as the founder, are positioned to do. Your goal is not to work less. It is to increasingly spend your time on the work that creates the most value for the company.

1 Decide where the business is going

When you are buried in today's work, the future can become whatever happens next. Another customer calls. Someone wants a new product. A piece of equipment becomes available. None of those opportunities are necessarily bad, but somebody has to decide which ones actually move the company where you want it to go. You do not need a complicated strategic plan, but you do need to decide where you are going, what you will get really good at, and what you are willing to say no to.

ASK YOURSELF: If I don't decide where this company is going over the next three years, who will?

2 Put the right people in the right seats

As the business grows, your ability to personally accomplish things matters less. Your ability to build a team that can accomplish things matters more. Who can lead production? Who should own sales? Who can manage people? Where is a good employee sitting in the wrong job? One excellent manager can give a founder enormous capacity back. One poorly placed manager can create more work than having no manager at all.

ASK YOURSELF: If my business doubled, which people could grow with it - and which important seats would still be empty?

3 Pay attention to the economics of the business

A growing company can look successful while becoming financially weaker. Sales are increasing. Employees are busy. The schedule is full. And somehow there still is not enough cash. You do not need to become an accountant, but you do need to understand where you actually make money, what consumes cash, and what another employee, truck, location, or \$1 million of sales really does to the bottom line.

ASK YOURSELF: Do I understand what actually creates - and destroys - profit and cash in my business?



4 Build and develop the people around you

There is a difference between giving someone responsibility and developing them to carry it. A new manager will make some decisions differently than you would and will make mistakes. The easiest response is often, 'I'll just handle it.' That solves today's problem quickly but can create tomorrow's dependence. Sometimes your job is no longer to solve the problem. Your job is to develop someone who can solve that kind of problem without you next time.

ASK YOURSELF: Am I using today's problems to develop tomorrow's leaders - or just solving them myself?

5 Work on the problems nobody else can solve

Every growing business eventually runs into constraints: capital, production capacity, margins, facilities, leadership, or the way the company is organized. These are often founder-level problems. One of your most important jobs is to look across the entire business and identify the biggest thing keeping it from becoming what it could be. The highest-value problem may not be the loudest problem.

ASK YOURSELF: What is the one constraint that, if solved, would make everything else in the business easier?

The Highest and Best Use of the Founder

One of the traps of entrepreneurship is that **being busy feels productive**. But not every hour of your time creates the same value.

You could spend an hour solving a scheduling problem someone else could learn to handle. Or you could spend that hour recruiting a manager who could eventually take 20 hours of work off your plate every week.

"What is the highest-value thing that only I can do?"

As the company grows, the founder's job shifts from being the company's chief problem solver toward building the people, systems, resources, and direction that allow the company to solve more problems without you.

A different way to think about your week: How much of my time am I spending on today's work, and how much am I investing in building tomorrow's company?

BUILD THE BUSINESS BEYOND THE FOUNDER

AgStrat helps founders of rural and real-world businesses build the leadership, financial, organizational, and operating foundation needed for the next stage of growth.

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