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From Founder to Leader

Four key shifts to help you thrive in your growing business

Welcome - and Why This Matters

If you're reading this, chances are you've built something solid. You've made it through the scrappy, high-stakes early days of building your business - wearing every hat (simultaneously), solving problems on instinct, and driving growth through sheer grit.

You've earned the right to lift your head and ask:

"What's next?"

And, with furrowed brow, probably also:

"Why is this still so hard?"

Because now the business is growing, so are the demands.

What used to work isn't working quite as well anymore. Your team needs more from you. You're spread ever more thinly. You want to lead, but you're still stuck in doing mode. You're #grateful, but, if you're honest, it's exhausting.

The transition from founder to leader is one of the most important shifts you'll make in business - and one of the least talked about. It's not just about giving yourself a new job title. It's about thinking differently. Delegating with purpose. Making space to lead well. And building a business that works without relying on you for every decision.

This is where a new shift is needed - not in your business plan, but in you. Because what got you here isn't enough for your next stage of growth.

This short guide will show you four key shifts to help you step into that leadership role - with more clarity, confidence and freedom.

LET'S GET STARTED!





Hello there!

I'm Emily Potts, a strategic growth partner for SME founders.

I help business owners excel as leaders, succeed as a team, and grow their business while keeping their sanity.

After starting my career as a consultant in the corporate sector, I built and sold my own multi-six-figure company while juggling team leadership, strategy, operations, and a family. So yes - I know what it's like to feel pulled in every direction and still be the one everyone comes to.

Now, I help other founders step out of that role - without losing momentum, values, or vision. I work with you to strengthen your leadership, develop your team, and create a business that runs well without always needing you at the centre.

Your business is yours, but you don't have to grow it - or lead it - alone!

Founder, Emily Potts Coaching

SHIFT 1: From Chief Bricklayer to Chief Architect

In the early days of your business, your job was to “do”. Send the invoices. Answer the emails. Pack the boxes. Tweak the website. Invent the next idea in the shower.

This wasn’t wrong. It was necessary.

You were the engine. Probably the wheels too.

But your next stage growth requires a shift. Not just in systems or team size, but in how you see yourself.

Leaders don’t just do the work. They create the conditions where the right work gets done – by the right people, in the right way, without everything needing their constant touch.

And that shift? It’s hard.

Not because you can’t do it. But because you can’t do everything. The “doing” has been your safety net, your confidence booster, your go-to move. Stepping away from it can feel like losing control – or losing your value.

But here’s the truth: you don’t become more valuable by doing more. You become more valuable by building the right environment for your team to do their job well.

So let’s talk about how you can start to lead more strategically.



FOCUS ON WHAT MOVES THE DIAL

Start with the big picture.

What does success look like in 2–3 years? What are the top priorities that will actually get you there?

Then ask:

“How much time am I really spending on these priorities?”

It’s not about becoming a guru-on-a-hill who never touches the work.

It’s about making intentional choices. Protecting time to think. Having one day a month where you step back and ask,
“Where are we heading, and what’s my role in getting us there?”

This one’s a bit uncomfortable. But helpful.

Imagine the version of your business you’re trying to build – bigger, better, more efficient, more impactful.

Now imagine the best possible leader for that business.

How would they spend their time?

What do they say no to?

What do they trust others to own?

Then ask yourself how that reflects the reality of your day-to-day role right now.

Bridging that gap is your real work.

**CONSIDER
HOW YOUR
FUTURE
BUSINESS
NEEDS
YOU TO
ACT
TODAY**

Time to Reflect...

Set aside an hour this week. No distractions. Phone away. Social media off.

Answer these three questions:

① WHAT WILL YOUR CUSTOMERS OR CLIENTS NEED FROM YOUR BUSINESS IN 3-YEARS TIME?

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② HOW DOES YOUR BUSINESS NEED TO CHANGE TO SUCCESSFULLY MEET THIS CHALLENGE?

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③ WHAT'S ONE THING YOU NEED TO SAY 'NO' TO TODAY, SO YOU CAN SAY 'YES' TO THIS NEXT LEVEL UP?

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Then block a little time next week to act on your answers. Nothing wild. Just one step at a time!

SHIFT 2: Build a team that don't need your constant involvement

Let's be honest: you didn't create your business to manage people.

You started a business to profitably bring the creative, the technical, impactful or deeply satisfying work you excel at to the world, and to give you the freedom and flexibility to fit in all the other important things in your life.

But then came growth.

And suddenly there are people. And those people need you.

Or more accurately: they need clarity, confidence, structure... yes, sometimes you. But not all the time.

One of the most common frustrations I hear from founders is this:

"I hired great people. So why is everything still coming back to me?"

That frustration is real. But it's not a sign of failure.

It's a sign that you've hit the next phase - where success depends less on how good you are at doing the work, and more on how good you are at creating the environment and the tools for other people to do it well.



LET GO BUT DON'T DISAPPEAR

There's a tricky dance at this stage.

Many founders flip between two extremes of the delegation spectrum:

- "You make all the decisions." (abandonment)
- "I make all the decisions." (micromanagement)

Neither works.

You need to **delegate like a leader**.

That means:

- Being clear on expectations
- Setting up regular check-ins (not just crisis catch-ups)
- Helping your team understand not just what to do, but why it matters

If you want your team to take ownership, you have to give them something worth owning, and a little space to figure things out, without fear of getting it wrong.

Growing a team is about more than shortening your to-do list.

It's about building a business of motivated and talented experts that doesn't grind to a halt if you step away.

That means:

- Hiring for potential and alignment, not just experience
- Giving people the support and the room to grow
- Asking "what do you think?" more often than saying "do it this way"

It takes longer upfront. It sometimes feels inefficient.

But you're not just getting tasks done - you're building a team that succeeds and scales.

**DON'T JUST
HIRE
HANDS,
BUILD
CAPABILITY**



Time to Reflect...

Think of one person on your team (or someone you work with regularly).

Ask yourself:

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**DO THEY KNOW WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE IN THEIR
ROLE – BEYOND ‘KEEP ME HAPPY’?**

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②

**WHAT’S ONE THING YOU COULD STOP DOING, AND
COACH THEM TO OWN INSTEAD?**

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③

**WHAT BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN THEM AND MAKES
THEM SHINE? (IF YOU DON’T KNOW, ASK THEM!)**

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And remember: your team want to do well.

Give them the tools, trust, and feedback to do that – and they’ll surprise you.

SHIFT 3: Build a culture that carries your vision

Culture. It's one of those HR words that gets thrown around a lot.

People say, "We've got a great culture!"

They might mean beanbags. Or Friday drinks. Or an office dog.

But culture – real, meaningful culture – is more than that.

- It's the little quirks people stop noticing after 3-month's with the company.
- It's what people do when no-one's watching.
- It's how you and your people work together (or not) to deliver your strategy.

It is the main reason good people join, stay or leave your company.

Whether you've shaped your culture on purpose or not, your business already has one.

So here's the opportunity:

If you're going to build a business that grows beyond you, your culture has to be able to carry the load.



CULTURE = CLARITY + CONSISTENCY

Culture isn't about slogans.

It's about **signals**. What you reward, what you tolerate, what you model.

If you're always available, answering everything and fixing what's broken, you're unintentionally building a culture of dependence.

If you talk about autonomy but jump in to course-correct every small decision, you're creating confusion and making people wary of taking initiative.

But if you give clarity, show trust, and follow through on your values?

You create a space where people take ownership, not just tasks.

Your culture may not need a handbook.

But it does need attention.

It needs values that actually mean something – that are translated into behaviours – and that show up in how decisions are made, particularly when the answers aren't clear cut. It's how people are treated by you and by each other. It's how work gets done.

That doesn't mean perfection.

It just means being intentional.

Ask yourself:

"If I weren't in the room, would the right thing still happen?"

If the answer's no – that's a culture opportunity.

**CULTURE
DOESN'T
HAVE TO BE
"BIG" –
BUT IT
DOES HAVE
TO BE REAL**

Time to Reflect...

Try this:

①

NAME YOUR REAL VALUES

Not the ones you think sound good, but the ones you actually act on. Ask your team, “What do you think we stand for here?”

②

CATCH PEOPLE DOING THE RIGHT THING...

and link it to the values. “That decision you made — that’s a great example of how we value taking ownership.”

③

CREATE ONE SMALL RITUAL THAT REINFORCES YOUR CULTURE

Weekly shout-outs? Monthly check-ins on how the team’s living the values? A one-question pulse check?

Remember: you can’t scale you.

But you can scale your culture if you’re willing to lead it.

SHIFT 4: Embody the Leadership Mindset

Here's the tricky part about leadership:

You can change your to-do list.

You can change your team structure.

You can even change your job title.

But if you don't change how you act, no-one else will notice the difference.

This shift from founder to leader isn't just about roles and responsibilities. It's about mindset. How you show up. How you make decisions. How you see yourself in your business.

And like any mindset shift, it's more about commitment and consistency than grand gestures.

"Leadership is not about being in charge. It's about taking care of those in your charge."

But that doesn't mean doing everything for them.

It means showing up in a way that makes your team feel confident, supported, and trusted, so they can do their best work without needing you in the middle of everything.



LEADERSHIP IS LESS ABOUT KNOWING AND MORE ABOUT CHOOSING

Being a leader doesn't mean having all the answers.

It means creating the space for the right answers to emerge
– from you, from your team, from the wider business.

It's about choosing to show up when it's hard.

To be visible when you'd rather hide.

To have the tough conversation even though it's awkward.

To say no, thoughtfully.

To say yes, strategically.

And to keep doing those things – especially when no one's clapping.

Your mindset – how you think, how you react, how you lead –
cascades through everything else.

If you're frazzled and firefighting, your team feels it.

If you're calm, focused, and intentional, your team feels it.

Leadership isn't about becoming someone else.

It's about becoming more of the version of you your business needs
– on purpose.

That means:

- Showing up consistently, even when things are wobbly
- Making space for thinking, not just reacting
- Investing in your energy, resilience, and support network
- Letting go of perfection, and aiming for progress

And above all, it means remembering this:

Building a business, is shaping the environment in which other people will grow.

**YOU ARE
YOUR
BUSINESS'S
BIGGEST
LEAVER**



Time to Reflect...

Try this:

①

WHAT'S ONE SMALL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR...

a check-in, a thank-you, a pause before replying – that you will commit to doing consistently this month?

②

WHAT'S ONE CONVERSATION OR DECISION YOU'RE AVOIDING BECAUSE IT FEELS UNCOMFORTABLE?

What will your next step be?

③

WHAT SUPPORT DO YOU NEED TO KEEP SHOWING UP AT YOUR BEST?

Are you allowing yourself to ask for it?

Remember: leadership can be challenging, but it's also a skill which you can build one small decision, one clear choice, one brave conversation at a time.

Ready to Level-Up as a Leader?

We've explored the four key shifts that help founders become leaders:

- Think like a leader, not just a doer
- Build a team that doesn't need you daily
- Shape a culture that carries your vision
- Embody the mindset that holds it all together

And now it's down to you!

What small action will you take today to put one of these shifts into motion. Something real, something visible.

That's how momentum builds.

I'd love to know what you found most valuable in this book. Please get in touch using the details below!

And if you'd like some support on your journey from Founder to Leader - I'm here to help you excel as a leader and take your business from good to great!

BOOK A FREE 30-MINUTE
CALL

Or get in touch via:



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