

The 5 Warning Signs

Five statements. Tick the ones that are true. Be honest — there are no right answers here, only useful ones.

BEFORE YOU START

Most business owners in this position aren't failing — they're frustrated. The business is making money, has clients, and is going. But internally, something doesn't feel right. **These five signs are what we see most consistently in service businesses that have outgrown their original setup but haven't yet built the systems to match.**

Q1 **You are last in the payment queue in your own business.**

Your pay varies with what's left in the account at the end of the month. You've never set a fixed, non-negotiable salary for yourself — your take-home goes up when things are good and quietly disappears when they're not.

- You check the bank balance before deciding what to pay yourself
- You've worked months where you barely took anything out
- You're not entirely sure what your business owes you

Q2 **You can't take a proper holiday without the business coming with you.**

Every absence generates anxiety. You check emails constantly, deal with problems remotely, and return from breaks feeling like you never left. The business depends on your availability — and you both know it.

- Client problems escalate to you even when you're away
- You feel guilty every time you're not working
- You've cancelled or cut short time off because of the business

Q3 **Every decision — big or small — still lands on your desk.**

Your team defers rather than decides. Client escalations find their way to you. When you're not available, things stall. You have become the bottleneck in your own business — and the harder you work, the more essential you become.

- Team members ask permission for things they should own
- Clients expect direct access to you for everything
- You can't clearly say who owns what when things go wrong

Q4 You know your revenue – but not whether your business is actually making money.

You watch the bank balance and track turnover, but you can't point to the two or three things that, if improved, would improve everything else. You don't know which clients or services are profitable and which are quietly draining your margin.

- You've never calculated the true cost to deliver your core service
- Tax bills feel like surprises rather than planned expenses
- You make pricing decisions on gut feel, not known numbers

Q5 You've lost the connection to why you started.

The original reason – the energy, the ambition, the specific thing you wanted to build – has been buried under the weight of running the business day-to-day. You can't clearly connect what you do today with why you started. Success has arrived, but it doesn't feel the way you expected it to.

- You struggle to describe what you're building toward
- You feel isolated – no-one to be honest with about how it really feels
- You're privately uncertain whether anything will actually change

HOW MANY DID YOU TICK?

1

Early signal

2

Worth attention

3

A pattern

4

A system problem

5

Let's talk

Ticked 1

You're doing well. But one warning sign is worth understanding – most of them compound over time if left unaddressed.

Ticked 2 or 3

This is the most common position. The business works – but it's working you harder than it should. These aren't personality problems. They're structural ones. Structural problems have structural solutions.

Ticked more than 3

The business is running you. That's not a permanent state – but it won't change on its own. The system that got you here won't get you where you want to go.

If you ticked two or more, **we should talk**. Not because something is broken – but because there's a system that fixes exactly this, in exactly the right order.