

OWNERSHIP AND BACKUP ASSIGNMENT

One name per fire, plus a named backup. This roster is the foundation of the whole installation — nothing else in the toolkit works until it's filled in, because boundaries need someone to bound and escalation rules need someone to escalate to. Fill it in fire by fire as you install, not all at once. A row you're not ready to fill honestly is better left blank than filled with a guess.

OWNER SELECTION CRITERIA

Before you write a name, test it. The right owner is the person closest to the work, not the most senior person available. Run each candidate against these:

- They already touch this process every week — they know its normal, so they'll notice its weird.
- Teammates already bring them questions about this work. The team has informally elected them; the roster just makes it official.
- They have flagged a problem in this process before you saw it. Their radar covers this ground.
- When this process breaks, their week gets worse. Built-in skin in the game.
- They have room to hold it. An owner at absolute capacity drops the fire the first busy week — fix their plate before you hand them more, not after.

Two warning signs to respect: if you're choosing someone because of their title rather than their proximity, you're appointing a supervisor, not an owner. And if you genuinely cannot name anyone, you've found a role gap — put yourself down as interim with an end date, and make the hire or restructure the thing you solve this quarter.

WHAT THE OWNER GETS

Ownership without authority is a title with a target on it. Every assignment includes, in writing:

- The outcome they own, with a definition of done. Not a task list — a result.
- The decisions that are theirs alone, with numbers where numbers apply (see the Decision Authority Guidelines file).

- The founder's public backing: inside their boundaries, their call stands, even when you'd have called it differently.
- The right to change the process they own. An owner who can't change the steps is operating your process, not owning theirs.

WHAT THE BACKUP IS

The backup is not a co-owner. They are the named person who steps in when the owner is out and steps back when the owner returns. A real backup: has access to everything the owner has, has been walked through the fire at least once, and shadows the owner at least quarterly so stepping in is never a cold start. A backup who learns they're the backup during the emergency is a bystander with a title.

THE ROSTER

FIRE	OWNER	BACKUP	AUTHORITY GRANTED	STARTS
01 The Approval Pileup				
02 The Information Black Hole				
03 The Delegation Boomerang				
04 The Rework Loop				
05 The Broken Handoff				
06 The Founder Trust Trap				
07 The Revenue Drop-Off				
08 The Accountability Vacuum				
09 The No-Backup-Plan Breakdown				

In the Authority Granted column, write the single biggest decision the owner can now make without you. Specific and numbered beats broad and vague.

TEMPLATE

*Example row: 03 The Delegation Boomerang · Maya (Ops Lead) · Denise (Ops Coordinator) ·
Runs delivery workflow end to end, reassigns tasks without approval · March 2*

LOAD CHECK

Count how many times each name appears in the owner column.

NAMES APPEARING TWICE (FINE — WATCH THEIR PLATE): _____

**NAMES APPEARING THREE OR MORE TIMES (WARNING — YOU MAY BE RELOCATING FOUNDER
DEPENDENCY INSTEAD OF DISSOLVING IT. SPREAD IT, STAGGER THE START DATES, OR GROW A SECOND-
BEST CANDIDATE INTO ONE OF THE FIRES):** _____

THE ASSIGNMENT CONVERSATION

Each owner hears it from you privately, before any announcement, face to face or on a real call.

Cover: the outcome they own, the authority that comes with it, why you chose them, the start date, and the question that closes it:

TEMPLATE

"What would you need from me to say yes to this?"

Get them what they name, or shrink the assignment until you can. Then confirm it in writing within a day — short enough to re-read in a wobbly week.

OWNER CONVERSATIONS SCHEDULED (NAME AND DATE, ONE LINE EACH):

ROSTER STATUS

FIELD	ENTRY
Roster completed on	_____
Announced to team on	_____
Last reviewed	_____

Review the roster monthly for the first quarter, then quarterly. People leave, roles shift, and a roster with a departed employee still in the owner column is a fire with nobody holding it – which means it's yours again.

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