



Businesses Forget.  
**We Codify.**

CONTROLSHIFT INSIGHTS · DIAGNOSTIC REPORT

# Operational Diagnostic

## & Transformation Roadmap

### Alpine Mechanical Systems

B2B commercial. Mechanical contracting for commercial general contractors, property management groups, and facility owners across Calgary and the Front Range. · 2M–5M revenue · 18 team members



0 DEVELOPING · ESTABLISHING · SCALING · OPTIMIZED 100

OVERALL OPERATIONAL HEALTH

## In Progress

Industry archetype: **Trades & Field Services**

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PART I

# Opening

*Where you are. What's at stake.*



*You built a \$2M-\$5M mechanical contractor that does excellent work and cannot run a single week without you, and you already know it.*

## Where you are right now

Right now Alpine is 18 people deep, working commercial HVAC, retrofits, controls, and 24/7 service across Calgary and the Front Range, and the whole operation still flows through one person: you. You said it plainly. If you are gone, quoting stops, dispatch gets chaotic, and cash gets tight because nobody else is watching it. That is not a hypothetical fear, it is the rated reality of the business. Owner dependency came back Red, a few days, and both your Director of Finance and your Director of Operations independently rated it Red too. When the founder and the two senior people all agree the place can't function without the founder, that's not anxiety. That's the operating model.

Look at how your week probably runs. You're the only estimator who fully understands the spreadsheets, so every five-figure bid waits on you, and last quarter you turned away two good projects because you couldn't get quotes out fast enough. That's revenue you were qualified to win, lost to your own calendar. Your office manager has quietly absorbed dispatch, AR, and HR with none of it defined, so when you're both buried, the whole back office is a single point of failure. Only one technician knows the controls programming. Only the office manager knows the billing system. A key foreman nearly walked because everything depends on you, and in a trade where good field leads are the scarcest asset you have, that near-miss should have your full attention.

Now look at what's actually strong, because the picture isn't all red. Your field operations, quality assurance, and safety and compliance all scored green, and safety is even documented. The craftsmanship is real, the culture is real (purpose and culture scored 67, your highest section), and your gross margin sits in the healthy 45-60% band. People stay; turnover is in the normal range. So this is not a broken business. It is a high-quality trade operation wearing a startup's back office: estimating in spreadsheets only you understand, books closing a month behind, dispatch run on texts and whiteboards, and nothing connected. You're re-keying job data from Jobber into QuickBooks by hand. The work is professional. The systems around it are improvised.

## What's at stake

If nothing changes, two things break, and they break in a predictable order. First, the people. You have loyal, capable staff stretched across undefined roles with no one owning the gaps, and you've already had a foreman nearly leave. Stretch them through another growth surge with the same improvised systems and you'll lose one of the few people who actually holds institutional knowledge, and in this trade that loss is months of capacity gone overnight. Second, the growth itself. You want past \$5M, but every quote, every dispatch decision, and every cash call still routes through you, so the very growth you're chasing is what's breaking things, your own words. You can't out-hustle a structural bottleneck. At some point the line of credit you keep funding payroll from becomes the constraint, because you can't see what's coming.

Commercially, the stakes are just as concrete. A business that can't run a week without its founder carries the heaviest discount a buyer or lender applies: key-person risk. Stack that on 25-50% client concentration and only 20-40% recurring revenue, and you have the three classic value-compressors all present at once. In service businesses at this scale, that combination is typically the difference between a forgettable multiple and a strong one. The good news hiding in your data: these are the exact things the next 12 months of work fix, and your healthy margins mean you can pay for the fix without starving the company. The cost of standing still isn't dramatic collapse. It's quieter than that: another year of you in the dispatch chair, another two good jobs turned away, and a business that's worth less than the quality of its work deserves.

## Executive Summary

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Alpine Mechanical Systems is a business whose reputation has outgrown its operating system. Brad, you built this from a single truck in 2010 to 18 people and the \$2M-\$5M bracket on word of mouth, clean work, and answering the phone at 2am. That is a genuine achievement and the foundation everything else gets built on. But the same instincts that got you here, doing it yourself, holding the knowledge, being the final call, are now the ceiling. You scored 34 out of 100 overall, which lands you in the Establishing band: the work is excellent, the company around the work is not yet a company that can run without you.

The core tension is stark and you named it yourself: your goal is to grow past \$5M and step off the tools, but the business still runs through you. You are estimating, dispatching, and firefighting daily. Your owner-dependency rating is Red, the single most damaging signal a buyer or lender can see, and it shows up everywhere else in the data. Strategic direction scored 14. Financial visibility scored 20. People and structure scored 24. The one bright spot, your purpose and culture at 67, tells me people want to stay (turnover is healthy) and believe in the mission. You have loyal people stretched across undefined jobs, waiting on you.

Fixing the top three priorities does two things at once. Operationally, it buys back the 15-plus hours a week you are losing to work that should sit with a coordinator, an estimator, and a finance rhythm, time you said you want to spend on growth instead of dispatch. Commercially, it directly attacks the three issues that compress what this business is worth: critical owner-dependency, 25-50% client concentration, and only 20-40% recurring revenue. Healthy 45-60% gross margins mean you have the room to fund this without bleeding profit. The margin is not your problem. The machine around the margin is.

The owner's-chair question is simple: a year from now, do you want to still be the only person who can get a quote out the door, or do you want to take a full week off and come back to a business that ran without you, with cash you could see coming? Everything in this report points at the second future. It is reachable inside 12 months on the budget you've already set aside.

### TOP PRIORITIES

1. Break the founder chokehold on estimating and dispatch by hiring and training a second estimator and a dedicated service coordinator, then writing down the quoting logic that currently lives only in Brad's head
2. Install financial visibility: a 13-week cash forecast and per-job margin reporting so payroll stops being funded blind off the line of credit

3. Codify the processes that already work in the field (safety, QA, field ops) into documented playbooks so quality stops depending on which foreman shows up and the next hire isn't trained by osmosis

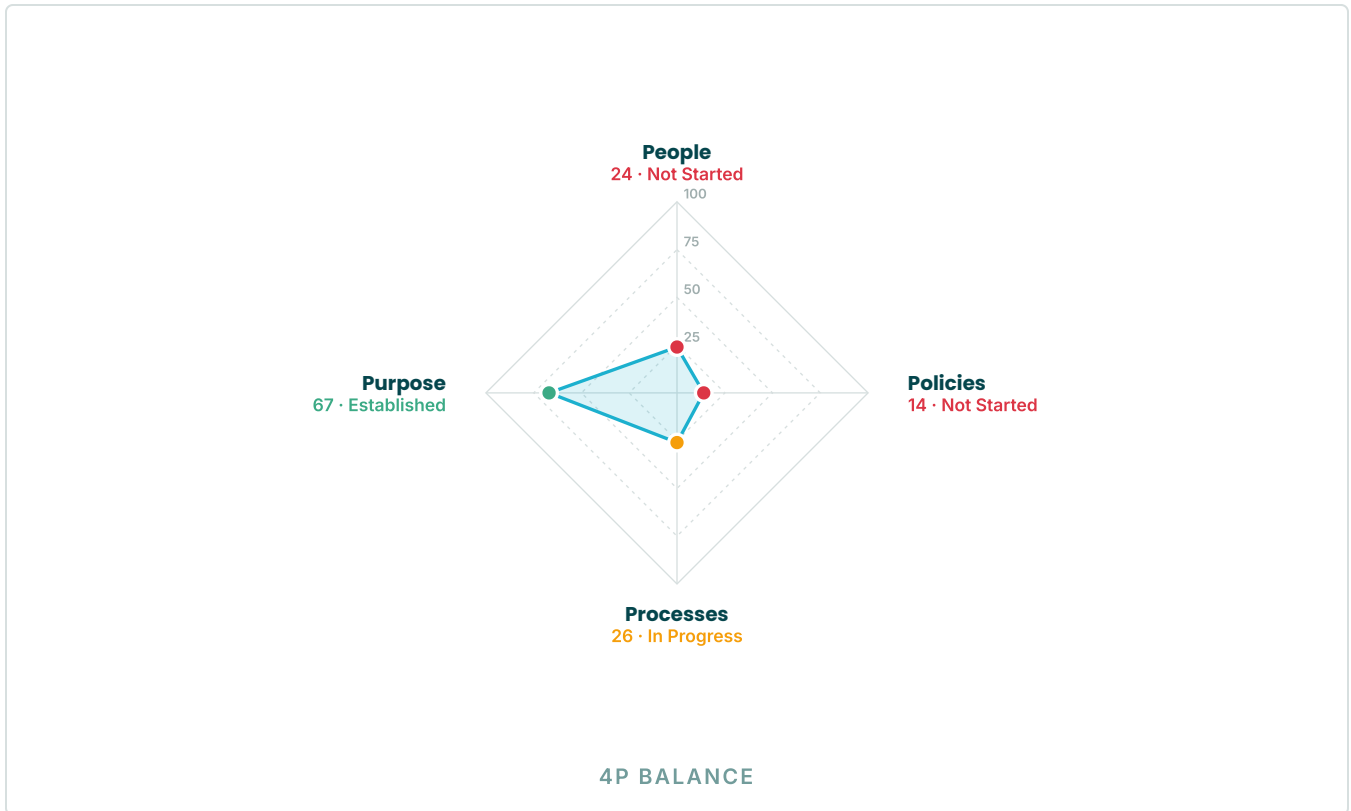
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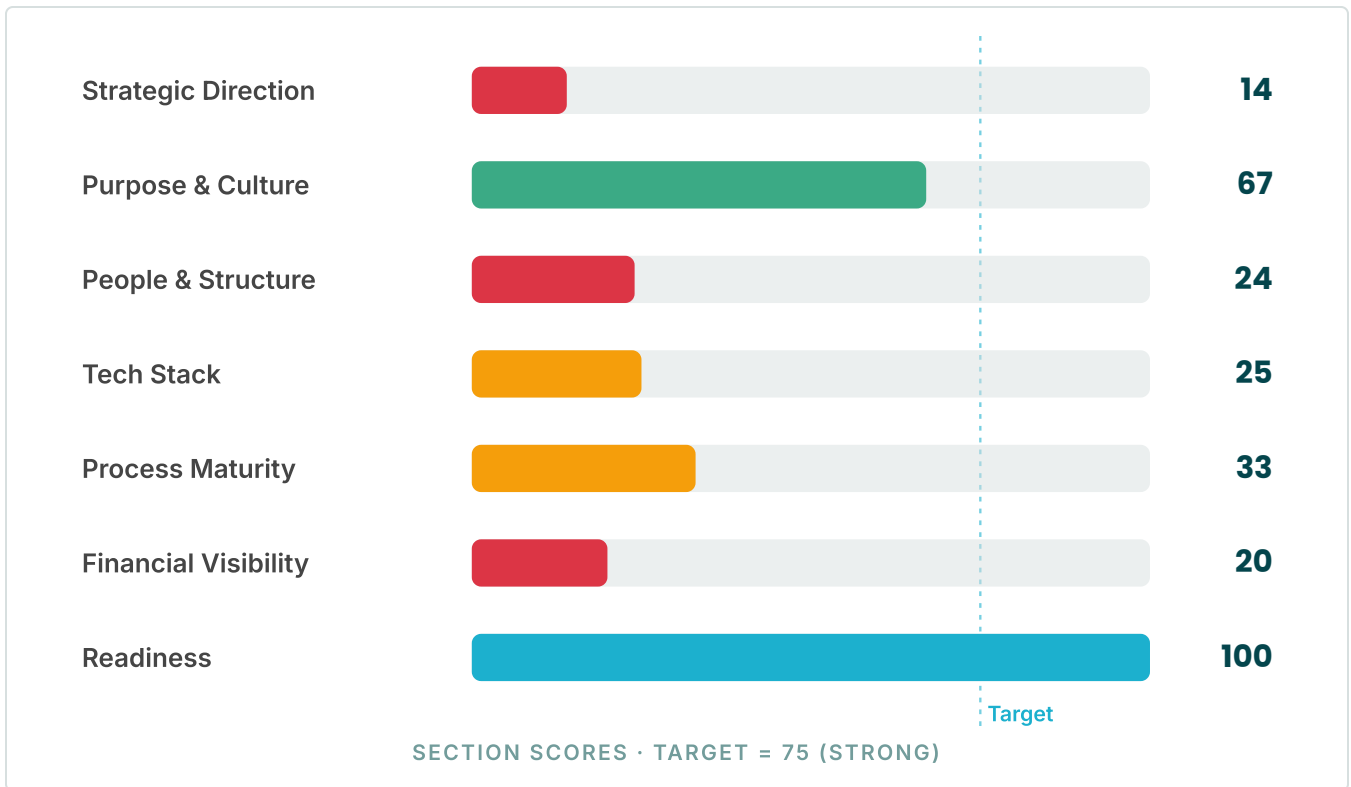
# The Diagnosis

*Data. Patterns. Section by section.*

# 4P Framework & Section Balance





Where your operational strength is balanced or lopsided across the four Ps, and how each scored section compares against the strong-quartile target.





## Critical Business Metrics

The metrics buyers, investors, and diligence teams look at first. Ranked by risk level. The highest-leverage signals of enterprise value.

METRIC	CURRENT BAND	RISK	WHAT IT MEANS
 <b>Owner Dependency</b>	A few days	<b>CRITICAL</b>	The business cannot function without you. This is the single largest threat to enterprise value and the #1 buyer concern.
 <b>Client Concentration</b>	25-50% top client	<b>HIGH</b>	Meaningful concentration risk. Diversification should be a deliberate strategic priority.
 <b>Recurring Revenue</b>	20-40% recurring	<b>HIGH</b>	Some recurring foundation but heavy project dependence. Valuation benefits from building the recurring base.
<b>% Gross Margin</b>	45-60% gross margin	<b>MODERATE</b>	Healthy margins. Room to invest in systems, talent, and growth while preserving profitability.
 <b>Employee Turnover</b>	10-20% turnover	<b>MODERATE</b>	Normal range. Retention is functional but could be a competitive differentiator with investment.

## The Current State Story

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Alpine Mechanical Systems is a \$2M-\$5M commercial mechanical contractor that has roughly tripled from the \$500K-\$1M band three years ago to where it sits today, built on Brad's reputation, craftsmanship, and a 2am phone that always gets answered. That growth is real and worth respecting. The problem is that the business grew on top of Brad rather than alongside a system, and the scores show exactly where the seams are tearing. Purpose and culture are genuinely strong (section\_4 at 67, green): the team knows what Alpine stands for, turnover sits in the normal 10-20% band, and the values are lived, not laminated. But almost everything that converts a strong culture into a transferable, scalable business is missing. Strategic direction sits at 14 (red), People & Structure at 24 (red), and Financial Visibility at 20 (red). The 34 overall isn't a single broken thing; it's the gap between a healthy front-of-house and an empty back-of-house.

Here is how the gaps compound. Owner dependency is rated red ('a few days' before the business stalls), and it is not an isolated weakness; it is the sum of every other red. Brad is the only full estimator (section\_5 redundancy answer), estimating lives in spreadsheets only he fully understands (section\_6 tech\_gaps), strategic and quarterly planning are red (section\_3), and there is no financial dashboard, no cash forecast, no budget (section\_8 all red). So when Brad is the only one who can quote, the only one watching cash, and the only one setting direction, 'a few days' isn't a pessimistic estimate, it's arithmetic. The business turned away two good projects last quarter because quotes couldn't get out fast enough. That is the owner bottleneck showing up directly as lost revenue.

The second compounding loop is process-without-paper. Section\_7 tells a clear trades story: operations, sales, field ops, and quality assurance all exist (green or amber on '\_exists') but are almost uniformly undocumented ('\_documented' red across marketing, sales, operations, project management, admin, finance, HR, onboarding). The one bright spot, and it matters in this industry, is safety and compliance, which is green across the board. But everywhere else, the standard lives in a few people's heads. Pair that with role charters red, KPIs assigned red, and integration maturity red (Jobber and QuickBooks are re-keyed by hand), and you get a business where quality holds today only because the same people are doing the same work every day. Add volume or add a crew, and quality variance and key-person risk arrive together. The office manager has silently absorbed dispatch, AR, and HR; only one technician knows the controls programming. Each of those is a single point of failure stacked on the others.

The third loop is financial blindness feeding cash whiplash. The Director of Finance is closing books a month behind and can't tell Brad a job's margin until it's long over. Gross margin is

healthy (45-60%, green), which is the good news and the trap: the money is being made on the jobs, but no one can see it in time to steer. With no 13-week forecast (cash\_flow\_forecasting red), no budget (red), and no dashboard (red), Brad funds payroll off the line of credit when three jobs land in one month and a dry spell follows. Healthy margins are quietly leaking into financing cost and stress because visibility, not profitability, is the missing piece.

#### THE DOMINANT PATTERN

Everything routes through Brad because nothing is written down, measured, or owned by anyone else: estimating, cash, dispatch, and direction all collapse back to one person, which makes owner dependency not a standalone problem but the visible symptom of red scores in process documentation (section\_7), role clarity (section\_5), and financial visibility (section\_8) all at once.

# Section-by-Section Deep Dive

A focused analysis for each area. What the data shows, what the current state is costing, what dialling it in unlocks, and how to get there.

## SECTION 1 CONTROLSHIFT: INSIGHTS



## Company Profile

**100** /100

Alpine has built a credible \$2M-\$5M commercial mechanical contractor on reputation and 2am phone calls, but the self-perform model that made you trusted is now the same thing that traps you in the dispatch chair.

### FINDINGS

- Alpine sits in the \$2M-\$5M revenue bracket with 18 people, self-performing sheet metal and piping while subbing out electrical and crane work, a model that gives you margin control but concentrates technical knowledge in a thin bench.
- Three distinct customer segments (commercial GCs on new-build/TI, property managers on service and maintenance agreements, and light-industrial building owners on retrofits) means three different sales motions, three different billing rhythms, and three different cash profiles

### ROOT CAUSES

- The company identity was built around founder responsiveness ('answer the phone at 2am') rather than around transferable systems, so growth has outrun the structure that produced it.

### GAPS

- The recurring maintenance segment, the one that stabilises cash and lifts valuation, is underweighted relative to project work, with only 20-40% of revenue recurring.

running through one undocumented system.

- Single location across Calgary and the Front Range keeps the operating footprint simple, which is an advantage you have not yet converted into a tightly run, repeatable engine.
- The service line is genuinely diversified for the bracket: HVAC install/retrofit, rooftop units and chillers, building automation and controls, preventative maintenance agreements, and 24/7 emergency service, the maintenance agreements are your most valuable asset for smoothing the lumpy project revenue you flagged elsewhere.

### WHAT THE CURRENT STATE IS COSTING YOU

#### OPERATIONAL

Three customer segments with different cadences all route through you and the office manager, creating a constant context-switching tax.

#### FINANCIAL

Healthy 45-60% gross margin gives you room to invest, but lumpy project revenue forces you onto the line of credit to make payroll.

#### STRATEGIC

A single-location, multi-segment trades business is buyable, but only once the operating model lives outside your head.

### WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

For a commercial mechanical contractor at your scale, the company profile reads as a deliberate engine: a defined target client per segment, maintenance agreements carrying a growing share of revenue to smooth the project swings, and a clear self-perform-versus-sub policy that any estimator can apply without you in the room.

## WHAT DIALLING THIS IN UNLOCKS

### OPERATIONAL

Clarity on which segments to grow lets you stop chasing every lead and start protecting capacity.

### FINANCIAL

Shifting the revenue mix toward maintenance agreements smooths cash and reduces line-of-credit dependence.

### ENTERPRISE VALUE

A diversified, single-location trades business with growing recurring revenue commands a stronger multiple than a pure project shop.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Document a one-page profile of each of your three segments: ideal client, typical job size, margin profile, and cash timing, so growth decisions are made on data not gut.

1 month

**MEDIUM IMPACT**

Owner: Founder

## PATH TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Start by naming which of the three segments you actually want more of (maintenance agreements are the obvious answer for cash stability). Then set a target recurring-revenue mix for the next 12 months. Then align estimating and service-coordination capacity behind that target so growth compounds rather than scatters.

**100** /100

You came up on the tools, and you named the trap yourself: the thing that built Alpine is now the bottleneck running through every estimate, every dispatch, and every fire.

**FINDINGS**

- Brad is a Red Seal journeyman with twelve years in the field before founding Alpine in 2011, technical credibility is total, which is exactly why delegation has been so hard: nobody else can do it 'right' yet because nobody else has been taught the standard.
- The founder's own words name the core tension precisely: 'I came up on the tools, which is both the company's greatest strength and, increasingly, its bottleneck,' and 'most days I am estimating, dispatching, and putting out fires.'
- Motivation is explicitly growth: the stated goal is to grow past \$5M and step off the tools entirely, but the founder is clear the goal and the daily reality 'are not aligned yet.'

**ROOT CAUSES**

- The business was scaled on the founder's personal capacity and judgement rather than on documented standards and a management layer, so every increase in volume increases the load on one person.

**GAPS**

- There is no second estimator and no service coordinator, the two roles the founder explicitly identifies as the ones absorbing him and the office manager.

- The trigger events are real and recent: two good projects turned away last quarter because quotes could not go out fast enough, and a key foreman who 'nearly walked' because everything depends on you, this is the cost of founder-dependency already showing up as lost revenue and retention risk.

### WHAT THE CURRENT STATE IS COSTING YOU

#### OPERATIONAL

Estimating, dispatch, and firefighting all sit with the founder, capping how much work the business can take on.

#### FINANCIAL

Turned-away work last quarter is direct, quantifiable lost revenue caused by the founder being the only estimator.

#### STRATEGIC

The founder's stated goal of stepping off the tools is structurally impossible until estimating and dispatch live elsewhere.

### WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

A founder in your position spends most of the week on growth, client relationships, and the few decisions only the owner should make, while a trained second estimator quotes the standard work and a service coordinator runs dispatch, with you reviewing exceptions rather than authoring every move.

### WHAT DIALLING THIS IN UNLOCKS

#### OPERATIONAL

Buying back the estimating and dispatch load frees the founder's calendar for the growth he says he wants.

#### FINANCIAL

Capacity to quote faster directly recovers the kind of work turned away last quarter.

#### ENTERPRISE VALUE

Reducing the business's dependence on one person is the single largest lever on enterprise value at this stage.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Write down the two roles you already named as missing, second estimator and service coordinator, with the specific tasks each will absorb from you and the office manager, so the hires have a real charter on day one.

1 month

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Founder

**PATH TO THE NEXT LEVEL**

First, capture how you estimate, the spreadsheet logic 'only I fully understand,' so it can be taught. Second, hire and train the second estimator against that captured method. Third, stand up the service coordinator role to own dispatch. Fourth, deliberately hand over decision rights in writing so the team stops waiting on you, which is the only way you ever run a full week away from the business as you wished for.



14 /100

Alpine has a clear destination (\$5M, off the tools) but no map, no waypoints, and no one but Brad holding the compass.

**FINDINGS**

- The 12-month goals are concrete and commercial: hit \$5M, train a second estimator, land two more recurring maintenance contracts. But the founder marked goals\_12\_month amber, strategic\_plan amber, and both goals\_3\_year and goals\_5\_10\_year red. Translation: there is a 12-month wish list living in Brad's head, but nothing beyond a year and no written plan to get there.
- Quarterly\_planning and quarterly\_objectives are both red, from the founder AND both stakeholders. There is no operating rhythm that turns the annual goal into 90-day moves. Goals at this company are aspirations spoken in the truck, not commitments tracked on a cadence.

**ROOT CAUSES**

- Founder bottleneck at the strategy layer. Brad came up on the tools and built Alpine by 'showing up and answering the phone.' That instinct works to \$2M. Past it, instinct-as-strategy means the only strategic processor in the company is one exhausted person who is simultaneously estimating, dispatching, and firefighting. There is no bandwidth left to think past next month.
- No cadence or discipline. Quarterly planning is red across all three respondents. The annual goal exists, but nothing converts it into 90-day objectives with owners and review dates. Without a rhythm, a goal is a hope, and hopes do not survive a busy March.
- No accountable owner for the planning process. The org structure (section 5)

**GAPS**

- No written strategic plan. The annual targets exist verbally; there is no document any team member could open to understand the year's priorities.
- No 3-year or 5-10-year horizon. The path from \$2m-5m to the stated \$5M-plus ambition, and beyond, has no defined milestones, no sequencing, no capability roadmap.
- No quarterly operating rhythm. Nothing breaks the annual goal into 90-day objectives with named owners, leading indicators, and a standing review.
- No deliberate client or revenue strategy. Project selection is dictated by quoting capacity, not by margin, client quality, or strategic fit. The 25-50% top-client concentration and the project-driven revenue swings are

- Goal\_alignment is the most revealing split in the section. Brad rated it amber. The Director of Finance rated it red. The Director of Operations rated it amber. The person closest to the numbers does not believe the team is pulling in the same direction, while the founder thinks it is roughly fine. That gap is the alignment problem in miniature.
  - The founder's own words confirm the diagnosis: 'We turned away two good projects last quarter because I could not get quotes out fast enough.' That is strategy by capacity constraint, not by choice. The business is reacting to what lands, not selecting what to pursue.
  - Both stakeholders independently rated goals\_5\_10\_year red. There is unanimous agreement that no one, including Brad, can articulate where Alpine is going beyond the current year. For a business that has tripled from the 500k-1m bracket three years ago to the 2m-5m bracket today, that absence of a forward horizon is now the binding constraint on the next step up.
- has no one charged with running strategy. The office manager has drifted into dispatch, AR, and HR. Field leads run crews. No one owns 'where are we going and are we on track,' so by default it lands on Brad, who has no time for it.
- Strategic clarity absent at the top in writing. Brad has clarity in his head (the project\_goals answer proves it), but it has never been externalized. What lives only in the founder's head cannot be delegated, measured, or aligned to. The team can't pull toward a target they can't see.
- symptoms of strategy by default.
- A founder-to-finance alignment gap on whether the team is even rowing in the same direction (amber vs red), unaddressed and likely undiscussed.

## WHAT THE CURRENT STATE IS COSTING YOU

**OPERATIONAL**

Every strategic question routes back to Brad because there is no plan to route it against. Two profitable projects were turned away last quarter purely because estimating capacity (Brad) was maxed. Without quarterly objectives, the team executes whatever is loudest that week, so effort scatters and the same fires recur. The Director of Operations' wish, 'documented processes... everything still waits on Brad,' is the direct downstream cost of having no strategic spine to delegate against.

**FINANCIAL**

Strategy-by-capacity is leaving margin on the table in two directions. Turned-away work is foregone revenue at a 45-60% gross margin, real contribution dollars Alpine simply declined. And the absence of a deliberate recurring-revenue push (still stuck at 20-40%) keeps the business on lumpy, project-driven cash flow, which is exactly the 'cash-flow whiplash' Brad funds from the line of credit. No 3-year plan also means no capital plan, so growth is financed reactively rather than deliberately.

**STRATEGIC**

This is the single largest brake on the next revenue milestone. A business that cannot articulate where it is going past 12 months cannot build the leadership, hiring, or capital plan to get there. To a future buyer or partner, the absence of a documented strategy and operating rhythm reads as a key-person dependency: the strategy IS Brad, and Brad is not transferable. That caps the multiple before any other diligence even begins.

**WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE**

For a commercial mechanical contractor at \$2m-5m with 18 people, dialled-in strategic direction means: a one-page written plan stating the 3-year destination (revenue, recurring-revenue mix, target client segments, headcount), broken into a 12-month set of 3-5 priorities, broken again into quarterly objectives each with a named owner and a leading metric. It means a 90-minute quarterly planning session with Brad, the Director of Finance, and the Director of Operations, plus a 30-minute monthly check against those objectives. It means project selection is filtered against a stated margin and client-fit threshold, not just 'can we quote it in time.' And it means the second estimator and service coordinator hires are explicitly sequenced into the plan as the capacity that unlocks the \$5M target, not afterthoughts.

**WHAT DIALLING THIS IN UNLOCKS**

**OPERATIONAL**

A written plan plus a quarterly rhythm takes the strategy load off Brad's daily

**FINANCIAL**

Deliberate project selection at a 45-60% gross margin means Alpine stops

**ENTERPRISE VALUE**

Strategic clarity is a multiple lever, not a cost line. A documented plan and

plate and gives the two directors something to own and execute against.

Decisions that currently wait on him (which jobs to chase, what to prioritize this quarter) get pre-decided by the plan. Expect the firefighting frequency to drop as effort concentrates on agreed priorities rather than the loudest fire.

declining profitable work for lack of estimating capacity and stops chasing low-fit jobs that drain the crews. A strategic push on the recurring-maintenance base (Brad's own stated goal of two more contracts) directly attacks the cash-flow whiplash and lifts the recurring mix toward the 40%-plus range, smoothing the lumpiness that currently forces line-of-credit draws on payroll.

operating rhythm begin dismantling the 'strategy = founder' key-person discount, the heaviest drag on this business's enterprise value. In service businesses at this scale, a buyer pays a meaningfully higher multiple for a contractor with a written growth plan, a recurring-revenue trajectory, and a leadership team executing against quarterly objectives than for one running on the owner's instinct. This is foundational to every other valuation gain in the report.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Run a half-day strategy session with Brad, the Director of Finance, and the Director of Operations. Output a one-page written plan: the 3-year destination, the 12-month top 3-5 priorities, and this quarter's objectives with named owners. Get the annual goals out of Brad's head and onto paper the team can see.

1-2 weeks

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Founder & President

2. Install a 90-minute quarterly planning session and a 30-minute monthly objective review. Each quarterly objective gets one named owner and one leading metric. This is the cadence that converts the annual goal into executed 90-day moves and stops strategy living only in the truck.

1 month

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Director of Operations

3. Define a project-selection filter: minimum gross margin threshold and target client segments. Make 'should we quote this' a rule the second estimator can apply, not a judgment only Brad can make. This is the first concrete step toward removing Brad from every estimating decision.

1 month

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Founder & President

4. Make 'two new recurring maintenance contracts' an owned quarterly objective with a target close date and a named owner, not a background wish. Tie it explicitly to the

recurring-revenue and cash-flow goals so it is sequenced as the lever that smooths the whiplash.

1 quarter

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Director of Finance

5. Surface and close the goal-alignment gap directly: in the first planning session, ask each director where they think the company is going and compare answers. The Finance Director's red rating on alignment is a signal to address openly, not paper over.

1-2 weeks

**MEDIUM IMPACT**

Owner: Founder & President

#### PATH TO THE NEXT LEVEL

First, externalize what is already in Brad's head: write the one-page plan with the two directors in the room, so the destination stops being a key-person asset. Second, install the quarterly and monthly cadence, because a plan without a review rhythm decays inside a quarter; the cadence is what makes it stick. Third, hand each quarterly objective to a named owner with a leading metric, this is where the directors start carrying strategy instead of Brad carrying it alone, and where the goal-alignment amber/red split gets resolved through shared accountability. Fourth, extend the horizon: once the 12-month rhythm is running and trusted, use one quarterly session to draft the 3-year destination (revenue, recurring mix, headcount, capital needs), turning the two red long-range ratings into an amber-then-green trajectory and giving every hire and investment a target to serve.



67 /100

Your culture is the strongest asset in this business, but right now it is doing the job your systems should be doing, and that is hiding the cracks.

**TEAM ALIGNMENT CHECK**

You and 2 stakeholders disagree on at least one rating by two or more steps. Disagreement is signal.

QUESTION	YOUR RATING	STAKEHOLDER RATINGS	GAP
Commitment to purpose	Established	Priya · In Progress Marcus · Established	1 step
Team alignment with purpose & values	Established	Priya · Not Started Marcus · In Progress	2 steps
Overall culture maturity	Established	Priya · In Progress Marcus · In Progress	1 step

**FINDINGS**

- This is the highest-scoring operational section in the report at 67 (green), against an overall score of 34. Your purpose\_commitment, team\_alignment, and culture\_maturity all came back green from your chair. That is real, and it is the reason eighteen people followed you from one truck without the scaffolding most

**ROOT CAUSES**

- Founder bottleneck dressed up as culture. The values feel strong because they radiate from you personally. 'Answer the phone' works because you answer the phone at 2am. That is admirable and it is also the single-point-of-failure the rest of this report keeps flagging. The culture is high-functioning precisely because it is

**GAPS**

- The values are undocumented as behaviour. They exist as five strong lines but there is no translation into role-level standards, onboarding content, or hiring criteria. A new technician 'learns by following someone around for a month' (Director of Operations), which means the culture transfers by osmosis and degrades with

businesses need at \$2M-\$5M.

- Your core values are unusually operational, not poster-wall fluff: 'Do it right the first time', 'Answer the phone', 'Leave the site cleaner than we found it', 'Look after your crew', 'No surprises on the invoice'. These read like field standards, which tells me the values are lived on the tools, not invented in a workshop. That is why your quality\_assurance and safety\_compliance scores in section 7 are green: the values ARE the QA program right now.
  - Your stakeholders do not fully share your read. Your Director of Finance marked team\_alignment red and purpose\_commitment amber. Your Director of Operations marked team\_alignment amber and culture\_maturity amber. You rated all three green. That is a meaningful gap between the founder's view from the field and the leadership team's view from the office.
  - The Director of Operations told us the real culture symptom directly: 'When we get busy, quality slips because the standard only lives in a few people's heads.' That is the warning
- founder-transmitted, not institutionalised.
  - No measurement or reinforcement mechanism. Culture is currently maintained by proximity and example, not by onboarding, role clarity, or review. Your role\_charters are red and kpis\_assigned is red (section 5), so the values are never translated into 'here is what living this looks like in your role, and here is how we know.' Values without an accountability loop erode under pressure, which is exactly what your Director of Operations described.
  - Office and field experience the culture differently. The field crews live the values daily through the work; the office leadership lives the strain of an undefined org and a one-month-behind close. That split explains why field\_ops scores green across everyone while your finance lead rates team\_alignment red. Same company, two cultures forming.
- every hire that does not get enough founder time.
  - No mechanism to detect culture drift before it shows up as turnover or quality variance. Your turnover is currently green (10-20%), but a foreman 'nearly walked' because everything depends on you. That near-miss is the leading indicator your green score does not capture.
  - Leadership alignment is not being managed. There is no cadence where you, the Director of Finance, and the Director of Operations get on the same page about priorities, which is why their section 3 and section 4 scores diverge so sharply from yours.
  - The strongest asset is not yet defensible. Culture that lives in the founder cannot be transferred to a buyer, a second estimator, or a service coordinator. It is value you cannot bank.

sign that the culture is carrying load the documentation cannot. The values hold under normal conditions and bend under volume.

- Your vision statement explicitly names the goal: 'building a company that runs without depending on any one person.' Your owner\_dependency metric is red (a few days). Your stated culture and your operating reality are pointing in opposite directions, and your team can feel it even if you score it green.

## WHAT THE CURRENT STATE IS COSTING YOU

### OPERATIONAL

The culture is currently absorbing the cost of missing systems. Crews do clean work and answer the phone because the values are strong, which masks the fact that nothing is written down. The moment volume spikes, the unwritten standard cannot stretch far enough and quality slips, exactly as your Director of Operations reported. Every new hire consumes a month of shadowing time that a documented onboarding would cut in half, and most of that shadowing demand

### FINANCIAL

Culture-driven quality is protecting your gross margin (green, 45-60%), do-it-right-the-first-time means low rework cost. But the protection is fragile: when the standard bends under load, callbacks, warranty work, and punch-list rework quietly eat margin, and because your close is a month behind (Director of Finance) you cannot see that margin leak per job until it is over. The culture is paying for the absence of job-costing discipline, and you cannot quantify what that is costing you.

### STRATEGIC

Your vision is 'a company that runs without depending on any one person,' yet the culture itself is the thing that depends on you most. A buyer or partner sees a values-led, low-turnover trades business, which is attractive, but on diligence they find the values are not codified, not measured, and not transferable. That converts your single best asset into a key-person risk line item rather than a premium.

lands back on you and your most senior people.

### WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

For a commercial mechanical contractor at \$2M-\$5M with eighteen people, dialled-in culture means your five values are translated into role-level standards that show up in three places: a one-day onboarding that every new tech and office hire completes (not a month of shadowing), the hiring scorecard you screen candidates against, and a simple quarterly check-in where field leads and office leadership rate whether the values are actually holding under current workload. 'Answer the phone' becomes a documented service-response standard with a named owner (your future service coordinator). 'No surprises on the invoice' becomes a change-order and billing checklist. The culture stops being something you personally transmit and becomes something the company reliably reproduces, which is the same thing as making it transferable.

### WHAT DIALLING THIS IN UNLOCKS

#### OPERATIONAL

Codifying the values into onboarding and role standards cuts new-hire ramp from the current month-of-shadowing toward one to two weeks of structured onboarding plus on-the-job, and it protects quality when you scale crews. It also frees your senior people and you from being the live transmission mechanism for 'how we do things here.'

#### FINANCIAL

Protecting the do-it-right-the-first-time standard under volume defends your 45-60% gross margin as you push toward \$5M. In trades at this scale, uncontrolled rework and callbacks typically run a few margin points; holding that line as headcount grows is worth meaningful EBITDA, and pairing it with job-level visibility lets you finally see it.

#### ENTERPRISE VALUE

This is where culture converts from soft to bankable. A documented, measured, transferable culture removes a chunk of the key-person discount a buyer would otherwise apply, and low turnover (10-20%, green) backed by a real onboarding and values-based hiring process reads as a durable workforce rather than a founder's personal following. In our experience with similar-size trades operations, demonstrable culture-and-retention infrastructure is a multiple-supporting factor, not a rounding error,

because it tells a buyer the team and the standard survive your exit.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Translate your five core values into role-level behaviour standards, one page per role family (field tech, foreman, office), so 'Answer the phone' and 'No surprises on the invoice' become concrete, observable actions tied to a named owner.

1 month

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Founder with Director of Operations

2. Build a structured first-week onboarding that captures the values and core field standards, so new hires stop learning by month-long osmosis. Stand it up in a knowledge tool like [Whale](#) so the standard lives somewhere durable rather than in your head.

1 quarter

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Director of Operations

3. Install a monthly leadership alignment meeting with you, the Director of Finance, and the Director of Operations specifically to close the culture-and-priorities gap your stakeholder scores exposed. Use it to surface drift before it becomes a foreman walking.

1-2 weeks

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Founder

4. Add a values-based screen to your hiring so you protect the culture as you add the second estimator and service coordinator, the two hires this report keeps pointing to. Hire to the standard, not just the skill.

1 quarter

**MEDIUM IMPACT**

Owner: Founder with office manager

## PATH TO THE NEXT LEVEL

First, close the founder-to-leadership perception gap: start the monthly alignment meeting so your green and their amber/red stop being a hidden disagreement. Second, codify the values into role standards and a real onboarding, this is the Codify stage and it is the move that turns culture from founder-transmitted to company-owned. Third, attach a light measure to it: a quarterly values check-in plus tracking onboarding time and early-tenure retention, so you can see culture drift before turnover does. Fourth, wire the values into your hiring scorecard so every new crew member and office hire is selected against the standard, which is how you protect green retention while doubling toward \$5M without the standard living in your head.



24 /100

You have eighteen capable people and zero structural leverage, because the org chart is a list of names, not a system of owned decisions.

## FINDINGS

- Owner dependency is rated red, the business runs 'a few days' without you. This is the single largest threat to enterprise value in the entire report and a buyer's first question. Your own words: 'if I am gone, quoting stops, dispatch gets chaotic, and cash gets tight because nobody else is watching it.'
- Both stakeholders independently confirmed the dependency. Your Director of Finance rated owner\_dependency red AND people\_maturity red. Your Director of Operations rated owner\_dependency red. This is not a self-perception gap. Everyone in the building sees the same bottleneck, which means the risk is real and corroborated, not theoretical.
- Role charters are red and KPIs assigned are red,

## ROOT CAUSES

- Founder bottleneck (primary): the company grew from one truck to eighteen people on your personal capacity, estimating, dispatching, and watching cash. The structure never caught up to the headcount because every gap got absorbed by you or the office manager rather than designed into a role.
- No accountable owner for function design: nobody has been tasked with drawing the real org chart, writing charters, or assigning decision-rights. It is everyone's problem and therefore no one's.
- No measurement layer: KPIs assigned is red. Without a number each role owns, you cannot delegate outcomes, only tasks, which means you stay the quality-control and

## GAPS

- No role charters: responsibilities, decision-rights, and authority limits are undocumented, so every non-routine decision escalates to you.
- No KPIs assigned to roles: you cannot hold anyone to an outcome, only to effort.
- Concentrated, undefined office-manager role spanning dispatch, AR, and HR with no backup or documentation.
- Two single-technician knowledge silos (controls programming, billing system) with no cross-training or written process.
- Field leads have responsibility without defined authority on hiring or purchasing.
- Two structurally necessary roles (second estimator, service coordinator) unfilled, keeping you and the office manager as the relief valve.

while org\_chart and defined\_roles are only amber. Translated: there is a loose shape of who does what, but nobody has a written charter, a decision-right, or a number they own. Your Director of Finance rated org\_chart, defined\_roles, role\_charters and kpis\_assigned ALL red, harsher than your amber on the first two. Finance sees less structure than you do.

- The office manager has, in your words, 'drifted into dispatch, AR, and HR without any of it being defined.' That is three functions, three risk surfaces, and one person, none of it charted. If she is out, billing stops, dispatch stops, and HR stops simultaneously.
- Single points of failure are stacked: 'Only one technician knows the controls programming, and only the office manager knows the billing system.' Controls and BAS work is tracked 'in the technicians' heads' (section 6). That is two key-person risks on top of the founder key-person risk.
- Employee turnover is green (10-20%), the one bright spot. People are staying. You wrote core value #4 as 'Look after your crew' and

exception-handling backstop for everything.

- Reactive hiring: roles get filled when the pain is unbearable, not designed ahead of demand. That is why the second estimator and service coordinator are still vacant while you and the office manager are buried.

it is showing up in retention. But you are retaining people into undefined roles, which means good people are 'stretched across too many undefined responsibilities, with no one clearly owning the gaps.'

- Field leads 'supervise crews but have no written authority on hiring or purchasing.' They carry responsibility without authority, the classic structure that pushes every real decision back up to you.
- Two roles are explicitly unfulfilled by your own admission: a second estimator and a dedicated service coordinator. Both are 'currently absorbed by me and the office manager, which is exactly why both of us are buried.'

### WHAT THE CURRENT STATE IS COSTING YOU

#### OPERATIONAL

You cannot leave for a full week, which is literally your stated number-one wish: 'That the business could run a full week without me in it.' Day to day, you are the escalation point for quoting, dispatch exceptions, quality disputes, and cash decisions. Your office manager is doing three jobs,

#### FINANCIAL

The structure is silently capping revenue. Turning away two projects because quotes could not go out fast enough is direct top-line leakage in a \$2M-\$5M business with healthy 45-60% gross margins, that is margin you simply did not get to earn. Lumpy cash is partly a structure problem:

#### STRATEGIC

Owner dependency at 'a few days' is the dominant enterprise-value discount on this business. In a sale or recapitalisation, a buyer prices a company that stops functioning when the founder leaves as a key-person risk, and they either discount the multiple heavily or structure most of the

so when she is overloaded, billing slips and dispatch gets chaotic. When you turned away two good projects last quarter, that was structural: there was no second estimator to absorb the volume.

nobody owns watching the line of credit because the office manager is buried and you are in the field. The unfilled service coordinator role also leaves recurring-maintenance revenue (currently 20-40%, your stated growth lever) under-managed.

price as an earn-out that keeps you chained to the business for years. Your goal is to grow past \$5M and step off the tools. The current structure makes both impossible: you cannot scale through a bottleneck, and you cannot exit a business that is you.

### WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

For a commercial mechanical contractor at \$2M-\$5M with eighteen people, dialled-in structure means: a real org chart with named owners for Estimating, Field Operations, Service, and Office/Finance, each with a one-page charter listing their three to five core responsibilities, their decision-rights (what they can approve without you), their authority limits (e.g. field leads can purchase up to a set dollar amount and recommend hires), and the two or three numbers they own (estimator owns quote turnaround and bid hit-rate; service coordinator owns maintenance contract renewals and dispatch fill-rate). It means a second estimator trained off your documented method, a dedicated service coordinator, the office manager's role split and defined, and the controls and billing knowledge cross-trained so no single person is a single point of failure. The test is simple: you can be unreachable for two weeks and quotes still go out, crews still get dispatched, invoices still go, and cash still gets watched.

### WHAT DIALLING THIS IN UNLOCKS

#### OPERATIONAL

Filling the two named roles and writing charters is the most direct time-buyback in the report. Realistically you are spending 15-25 hours a week on work that belongs to a second estimator and a service coordinator: quoting, dispatch exceptions, and chasing job status. A trained second estimator alone

#### FINANCIAL

Recovered estimating capacity directly recaptures the revenue you are currently turning away, two projects last quarter is a real, repeating leak. At 45-60% gross margin, every recaptured project flows hard to the bottom line. A service coordinator who actively manages and

#### ENTERPRISE VALUE

This is the single highest-value section in the report for enterprise value. Moving owner dependency from 'a few days' toward 'a few months' removes the largest single discount a buyer applies to a founder-led trades business. In our experience with similar-size operations, retiring key-

could absorb the bulk of estimating, plausibly 8-12 hours of your week. A service coordinator owning dispatch and maintenance scheduling removes another 6-10 hours. Combined, that is roughly 15-20 hours a week back, the difference between you being the bottleneck and you being able to leave for a full week.

renews maintenance agreements grows the recurring base (now 20-40%), which both smooths the cash-flow whiplash you described and lifts margin quality. Defining the office-manager role and cross-training billing reduces the AR and invoicing slippage that delays cash.

person risk and installing a credible second layer of management can lift the achievable multiple by a meaningful fraction (commonly a 0.5x-1x EBITDA swing) and, just as importantly, changes the deal structure from a long founder-tied earn-out to a clean transferable sale. Cross-training the controls and billing silos removes two additional diligence red flags.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Draw the real org chart as it actually works today (not aspirational): every name, every function they truly perform, and circle every box where only one person can do the job. This is your key-person-risk map.

1-2 weeks

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Founder with Director of Operations

2. Write one-page charters for the four core seats (Estimating, Field Operations, Service, Office/Finance): three to five core responsibilities, decision-rights, authority limits, and two to three KPIs each. Give field leads explicit purchasing and hiring-recommendation authority up to a defined dollar limit so routine decisions stop escalating to you.

1 month

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Founder with Director of Operations

3. Split and define the office manager's role. Separate AR/billing, dispatch, and HR into named responsibilities, and decide which one becomes the foundation of the new service coordinator hire. Cross-train a second person on the billing system immediately so it is no longer a single point of failure.

1 month

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Founder with Office Manager

4. Hire and onboard the dedicated service coordinator first (cheaper, higher transaction volume, removes the most dispatch chaos), then recruit and train the second estimator against your documented estimating method.

1 quarter

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Founder

5. Cross-train a second technician on controls and BAS programming, even partially, to retire the single-technician knowledge silo. Capture the core programming steps in

writing as you go.

1 quarter

**MEDIUM IMPACT**

Owner: Director of Operations

#### **PATH TO THE NEXT LEVEL**

Move from Not Started (24) to Establishing by sequencing in dependency order. First, map the real org chart and circle the single points of failure, you cannot fix risk you have not named. Second, write the four core charters with decision-rights and authority limits, because that is what lets routine decisions stop escalating to you and is the prerequisite for delegating anything. Third, assign two to three KPIs per seat so you can hand off outcomes rather than tasks, this is what converts 'amber roles' into accountable owners. Fourth, fill the two open seats (service coordinator first, then second estimator) and cross-train the controls and billing silos, which is what finally lets you be gone for a full week. Each step depends on the one before it: charters are meaningless without the org map, KPIs are meaningless without charters, and hiring into undefined roles just creates another buried generalist.



25 /100

Your stack is four disconnected islands and a whiteboard, and the bridges between them are Brad's memory and the office manager's after-hours data entry.

#### FINDINGS

- You run Jobber for service scheduling and invoicing, QuickBooks Online for accounting, a shared Google Drive for project files, and texting plus whiteboards for dispatch. Each tool is reasonable on its own. The problem is they don't talk to each other: you marked integration\_maturity Red, and both the Director of Finance and Director of Operations independently confirmed it Red.
- You stated plainly that job data is re-keyed from Jobber into QuickBooks by hand. At 18 people running commercial HVAC installs, retrofits, and 24/7 service, that is hours of manual re-entry every week and a built-in source of margin error, because the number in Jobber and the number in QuickBooks will drift the

#### ROOT CAUSES

- Founder bottleneck plus tool sprawl: tools were added reactively as the company grew from one truck to 18 people, never designed as a connected operating system. Nobody owns the stack as a whole.
- No accountable owner for systems and data flow. The office manager absorbed dispatch, AR, and HR by drift (section 5), so integration was never anyone's defined job.
- Knowledge lives in heads, not systems, by default. Estimating in a personal spreadsheet and BAS work in one technician's head are the same root cause as your Red owner-dependency score: the business has never been forced to externalize what it knows.

#### GAPS

- No integration between Jobber and QuickBooks: job and invoice data is manually re-keyed, creating both a time cost and a margin-accuracy risk.
- No single operational dashboard for project status, job margin, and crew location, so visibility depends on Brad and the whiteboard.
- Estimating is an undocumented personal spreadsheet with one fluent user, making the quoting function a key-person risk and a hard blocker on training a second estimator.
- Controls/BAS work has no system of record, concentrating your highest-margin specialty in a single technician's memory.
- Project management tooling is rated worse by

moment someone mistypes.

- Estimating lives in spreadsheets that, in your words, 'only I fully understand.' That single sentence is the tech-stack version of your owner-dependency problem: the quoting engine for a \$2M-\$5M contractor is a personal spreadsheet with one literate user.
- Controls and BAS work is 'tracked in the technicians' heads.' Only one technician knows the controls programming (per section 5). There is no system of record for the most specialized, highest-margin work you do. That is data loss waiting to happen the day that person is sick, quits, or retires.
- CRM (amber), PM (amber), and finance (amber) tooling all sit at partial maturity, but the Director of Operations rated project management Red against your amber. They are closer to the daily reality of project status than you are, which suggests PM tooling is failing harder on the ground than it looks from the President's chair.
- There is no single place to see project status, margin, or who is where on any given day. For a contractor

the Director of Operations (Red) than by the founder (amber), pointing to a field-level reality gap that needs a closer look before you buy more software.

juggling new-build, tenant-improvement, retrofit, and emergency service simultaneously, the absence of one operational picture is why dispatch gets chaotic the moment you step away.

### WHAT THE CURRENT STATE IS COSTING YOU

#### OPERATIONAL

Every job touches at least two systems that don't share data, so the office manager re-enters numbers by hand and the team has no shared view of who is where. When three jobs land at once, dispatch becomes a texting-and-whiteboard scramble that only Brad can untangle. New estimates can't be produced by anyone but Brad because the spreadsheet logic is in his head, which is exactly why you turned away two good projects last quarter.

#### FINANCIAL

Manual re-keying between Jobber and QuickBooks is a direct margin-accuracy risk on a business with healthy 45-60% gross margins worth protecting. More damaging: with no real-time job-margin view, your Director of Finance is closing the books a month behind and cannot tell you what a job earned until it is long over. You are flying a project-driven, cash-lumpy business with the gauges covered.

#### STRATEGIC

A stack held together by manual entry and personal spreadsheets does not transfer. A buyer or lender doing diligence sees no system of record for estimating or controls work, no integrated reporting, and concludes the operating knowledge walks out the door with two or three people. That caps your scalability well below the \$5M target and is a direct key-person discount on enterprise value.

### WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

For a commercial mechanical contractor at \$2M-\$5M with 18 people, a dialled-in stack means: Jobber (or a field-service platform) and QuickBooks Online connected so job and invoice data flows once, entered once. A real project and work-management layer such as ClickUp giving every crew, estimator, and coordinator one live view of project status, job margin, and crew location. Estimating moved out of a personal spreadsheet into a templated, documented system any trained estimator can run. Controls and BAS configurations captured in a shared knowledge base such as Notion so the

programming lives in the company, not one technician's head. One number is entered once and shows up everywhere it's needed.

### WHAT DIALLING THIS IN UNLOCKS

#### OPERATIONAL

Connecting Jobber to QuickBooks and killing manual re-keying typically recovers meaningful admin hours: if the office manager spends even 5-8 hours a week re-entering and reconciling job data, that is roughly 250-400 hours a year handed back, time that should be going to the dispatch and service-coordination work currently buried. A single live project dashboard removes the daily 'who is where' scramble and means dispatch no longer waits on Brad.

#### FINANCIAL

Real-time job-margin visibility protects the 45-60% gross margin you already earn by catching cost overruns while a job is open instead of a month after it closes. Eliminating dual manual entry removes a recurring invoicing-accuracy error source, which on a project-driven book directly reduces revenue leakage from missed change orders and mis-keyed invoices.

#### ENTERPRISE VALUE

An integrated, documented stack converts tribal knowledge into transferable systems, which is exactly what removes the key-person discount a buyer applies today. Moving estimating and controls knowledge out of individual heads and into systems of record is one of the highest-confidence ways to defend and expand your multiple as you push toward \$5M, because it makes the earnings reproducible without specific people.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Connect Jobber and QuickBooks Online so job and invoice data syncs automatically and stop all manual re-keying. Validate the first two weeks of synced data against the old manual numbers.

1 month

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Director of Finance / Office Manager

2. Stand up one project and work-management layer ([ClickUp](#)) as the single live view of project status, job margin inputs, and crew location, replacing the whiteboard-and-texting dispatch.

1 quarter

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Director of Operations

3. Rebuild the estimating spreadsheet into a documented, templated process anyone can follow, as the first asset the second estimator is trained on. Externalize the logic before you hire.

1 quarter

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Brad Halvorsen (Founder)

4. Capture controls and BAS configurations and standard programming in a shared knowledge base ([Notion](#)) so the company owns the specialty, not one technician.

1 quarter

**MEDIUM IMPACT**

Owner: Lead Controls Technician + Director of Operations

#### PATH TO THE NEXT LEVEL

First, close the data-flow wound: integrate Jobber and QuickBooks and end manual re-keying, because every other reporting fix depends on clean, single-entry data. Second, with one source of truth established, layer a single project and work-management view (ClickUp) so dispatch and project status no longer route through Brad's head or the whiteboard. Third, attack the two biggest key-person tech risks in parallel: document the estimating system out of the personal spreadsheet, and capture controls/BAS knowledge in a shared wiki, both of which directly unlock the second-estimator and redundancy goals you named. Do these in order: integration before dashboards, dashboards before you scale volume, because adding more jobs on top of a disconnected stack just multiplies the manual entry and the founder dependency.



## Process Maturity & Workflows

33 /100

Your best work lives in your crews' heads and your spreadsheets, which means it walks out the door every time someone takes a day off, and it's the exact mechanism keeping you trapped in the business.

### FINDINGS

- The pattern across your playbooks is consistent and damning: processes exist but aren't documented. Sales is green on exists, red on documented. Operations is green on exists, red on documented. Field ops is green on exists, amber on documented. Project management is amber on exists, red on documented. You have real, working ways of doing things. None of them are written down.
- Safety and compliance is your one fully dialled-in area: green across exists, documented, and maturity. In trades and field services this is the single most value-protective playbook to have nailed, incidents destroy enterprise value, and you've protected yourself here. Don't lose this discipline; replicate the

### ROOT CAUSES

- Founder bottleneck: the company grew from one truck to 18 people on word of mouth and your personal involvement. Process never had to be written because you were always there to be the process. That worked at 5 people. At 18, it's the ceiling.
- No accountable owner for documentation. Nobody's job is to capture how work gets done, so it never gets captured. Your office manager has drifted into dispatch, AR, and HR without any of it being defined, the gaps own her instead of the reverse.
- No cadence or discipline around codification. Documenting isn't urgent until a foreman nearly walks or you turn away two projects because quotes couldn't go out fast

### GAPS

- Estimating has zero documentation and lives with you alone. This is the chokepoint that cost you two projects last quarter and is the reason quoting stops when you're out.
- Controls and BAS programming knowledge sits with one technician. If that person leaves, a whole service line goes dark.
- No documented onboarding, so every hire costs a month of someone shadowing instead of following a written standard.
- QA exists but isn't fully documented, so quality varies by foreman the moment volume spikes.
- Project management process is thin on both fronts (amber exists, red documented), which compounds with the no-single-view tech problem to

same documentation rigor everywhere else.

- Quality assurance is green on exists and amber on documented. Your QA standard works but isn't fully captured, which is exactly why your Director of Operations told us 'when we get busy, quality slips because the standard only lives in a few people's heads.' Quality variance by crew is the classic trades killer.
  - HR is your weakest playbook: red overall, amber on exists, red on documented. Both stakeholders independently flagged HR as red. Your Director of Operations said it plainly: 'Every new hire learns by following someone around for a month because nothing is written down.' At 18 people with two open seats (second estimator, service coordinator), an undocumented onboarding process is a direct tax on growth.
  - Finance playbook is amber on exists, red on documented, and your Director of Finance confirmed she's 'closing the books a month behind' and can't report job margin until the job is long over. The estimating process you
- enough. Both already happened.
- Premature reliance on the wrong tools: estimating in spreadsheets and controls work tracked in technicians' heads means the knowledge has no home outside individual people.
- make project status and margin invisible mid-job.

described as living 'in spreadsheets that only I fully understand' is the single most concentrated key-person risk in the company.

- Marketing, admin, project management, and customer onboarding are all red on documented. The through-line: you have an 18-person business running on undocumented institutional knowledge, with you as the master index.

### WHAT THE CURRENT STATE IS COSTING YOU

#### OPERATIONAL

Quality slips under load because the standard lives in a few heads. New hires take a month to become useful because there's nothing to read. Every quote routes through you, so output is capped at your personal capacity, you already turned away two good projects last quarter for this exact reason. Your Director of Operations confirms everything 'still waits on Brad.'

#### FINANCIAL

Undocumented estimating directly throttles revenue: turned-away work is lost gross margin at your healthy 45-60% band. Slow onboarding burns senior labor hours on shadowing instead of billable work. Inconsistent QA risks rework and callbacks, which eat margin invisibly because, per your finance lead, job margin isn't even known until the job is closed.

#### STRATEGIC

This is the mechanism behind your Critical owner-dependency rating. A buyer or lender sees an 18-person contractor where estimating, controls programming, and billing each depend on exactly one person. That's a stack of key-person risks that triggers an automatic valuation discount and, in many cases, an earn-out or escrow hold tied to your staying on.

### WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

For a \$2M-\$5M commercial mechanical contractor, dialled-in process maturity means: a documented estimating method any trained estimator can run (not a spreadsheet only you understand), written field work-methods and QC checklists every foreman follows

so quality doesn't vary by crew, a one-week documented onboarding path, and controls/BAS programming captured in standard procedures rather than one technician's memory. Every playbook has a named owner and a review date. Safety, which you already nailed, becomes the template for how everything else gets documented. The whole library lives in one always-on place your team actually opens, something like Whale or Trainual, not a Google Drive folder nobody can navigate.

### WHAT DIALLING THIS IN UNLOCKS

#### OPERATIONAL

Documenting estimating and adding a trained second estimator removes the single biggest constraint on quoting volume, you stop being the bottleneck on every bid. Written onboarding typically cuts time-to-productivity from a month of shadowing to one to two weeks, and standardized QC checklists hold quality steady when volume spikes. Across the business this is realistically 8-15 hours a week back to you, the hours currently spent estimating, answering process questions, and refereeing quality disputes.

#### FINANCIAL

Capturing estimating and lifting quote throughput directly converts turned-away work into booked revenue at your 45-60% gross margin. Standardized QC reduces rework and callback costs that currently leak margin undetected. Faster onboarding recovers senior labor hours back to billable work. In our experience with similar-size trades operations, codifying core playbooks lifts effective gross margin by a couple of points and meaningfully increases revenue capacity without adding overhead.

#### ENTERPRISE VALUE

This is the highest-leverage valuation move you have. Each documented, transferable playbook removes a key-person discount. A trades business where estimating, controls, and billing no longer depend on named individuals can credibly support a 0.5x-1x higher multiple and dodge the earn-out or escrow hold that buyers attach to founder-dependent contractors. Your already-green safety documentation is a genuine asset in diligence, extend that rigor across the other ten playbooks and you convert a discount into a premium.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Document the estimating process end to end: pull it out of your head and the spreadsheets into a written, repeatable method, then use it to train the second estimator you already want to hire.

1 quarter

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Founder (Brad), then second estimator

2. Capture controls/BAS programming procedures from your single technician before that knowledge can walk, write the standard work and have a second person trained against

it.

1 quarter

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Lead controls technician + Director of Operations

3. Write a one-week onboarding path so new hires follow a document, not a person. Both stakeholders flagged HR/onboarding as the weakest area, this is a fast win.

1 month

**MEDIUM IMPACT**

Owner: Office manager (define the HR scope she's already absorbed)

4. Finish documenting your QA standard into crew-level QC checklists so quality stops varying by foreman under load.

1 month

**MEDIUM IMPACT**

Owner: Director of Operations

5. Stand up one always-on knowledge home (Whale or Trainual) and migrate playbooks into it as they're written, starting with safety as the proven template.

1 month

**MEDIUM IMPACT**

Owner: Office manager + Director of Operations

#### PATH TO THE NEXT LEVEL

First, codify estimating, it's both the biggest revenue chokepoint and your deepest key-person risk, and nothing else moves your owner-dependency score as much. Second, capture controls/BAS programming and your QA checklists, since those protect the margin and quality you already earn. Third, install one knowledge platform and migrate the documented playbooks in, using your green safety program as the model for format and discipline. Fourth, assign a named owner and a quarterly review date to every playbook so documentation becomes a living system, not a one-time project that decays. Done in that order, you move section 7 from amber 'In Progress' toward green, and you directly chip away at the Critical owner-dependency rating that's capping your enterprise value.



## Financial Visibility & Planning

**20** /100

You run a \$2M–\$5M contractor on 45–60% gross margins, but you fund payroll off the line of credit because you cannot see what is coming, that is a visibility problem, not a profit problem.

### FINDINGS

- Brad rated cash\_flow\_forecasting, financial\_dashboard, financial\_visibility, budgeting\_process, and financial\_kpis all red. The numbers exist; nobody can see them in time to act.
- Your Director of Finance confirms it from the inside: closing the books a month behind and unable to report job margin until the job is long over. That is the most damning data point in the report. Your own finance lead and you agree the business is flying blind.
- gross\_margin is green at 45-60%, a genuine strength for a self-performing mechanical contractor. The margin is being earned in the field, then lost in the back office through invisibility.
- net\_profit\_margin sits at 10-15% with owner comp of

### ROOT CAUSES

- No accountable cadence or system: the data lives in QuickBooks Online and Jobber but is re-keyed by hand (section\_6 integration red), so there is no single source of truth to forecast from.
- Founder bottleneck: estimating lives in spreadsheets only Brad fully understands, so job-cost-to-actual comparison cannot happen without him.
- No measurement discipline: financial\_kpis red means no owner is tracking margin-by-job, cash position, or AR days against a target.

### GAPS

- No 13-week cash forecast, the single most important tool for a project-driven trades business with lumpy revenue.
- No job-costing feedback loop: estimated margin is never compared to actual margin per project or per crew, so pricing errors repeat.
- Month-end close runs roughly a month behind, making every financial decision a backward-looking guess.
- No annual budget or monthly variance review; profitability is discovered, not steered.
- Balance sheet and WIP go unreviewed, hiding the true cash and retention picture.

\$165K. On a \$2M-\$5M base that is real EBITDA, but it is unmanaged: budgeting\_process and budgeting\_maturity both red means you are profitable by instinct, not by plan.

- recurring\_revenue at 20-40% and client\_concentration at 25-50% from one client are both flagged HIGH risk. Combined with project-driven lumpiness, this is exactly the cash whiplash Brad named: three jobs land in one month, then a dry spell.
- balance\_sheet\_reviewed is red and regular\_financial\_reviews only amber. P&L gets a glance (pL\_reviewed amber); the balance sheet, where WIP, retention, and AR aging live for a contractor, goes unexamined.

### WHAT THE CURRENT STATE IS COSTING YOU

#### OPERATIONAL

Brad funds payroll from the line of credit during dry spells because no forecast warns him. The Director of Finance spends the month chasing a backward-looking close instead of steering forward. Every margin

#### FINANCIAL

On 45-60% gross margin earned in the field but only 10-15% net, the gap is where invisibility eats profit: unrecovered change orders, repeated estimating errors, and line-of-credit interest funding timing gaps that a forecast would flatten. Even

#### STRATEGIC

This is the section that caps your ability to scale to \$5M. You cannot safely add a second estimator and a service coordinator while funding growth blind, more volume on no forecast multiplies the cash whiplash, not the profit.

question waits until the job is done and the cash is spent. 1-2 points of recovered net margin on a \$2M-\$5M base is roughly \$20K-\$100K a year.

### WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

For a commercial mechanical contractor at your revenue, dialled-in finance means: books closed within 5-7 business days; a live 13-week cash forecast the founder and finance lead review every Monday; job-cost-to-estimate variance reported per project and per crew within a week of close; a simple monthly P&L-and-balance-sheet review against an annual budget; and a one-page dashboard showing cash position, AR aging, WIP, backlog, and recurring-vs-project revenue mix. Dext to automate receipt and bill capture into QuickBooks removes the manual re-keying that delays your close.

### WHAT DIALLING THIS IN UNLOCKS

#### OPERATIONAL

A 13-week forecast ends payroll panic and the line-of-credit reflex. Job-cost feedback within a week means pricing errors get caught after one job, not repeated across ten. Close drops from roughly a month to under a week.

#### FINANCIAL

Recovering even 1-3 points of net margin through visible job costing and change-order discipline is roughly \$20K-\$150K annually on your base. Cutting line-of-credit reliance saves interest and frees working capital that today is trapped in timing gaps.

#### ENTERPRISE VALUE

Financial opacity is the second-biggest discount a buyer applies after key-person risk. A contractor that cannot produce job-level margin, a clean close, or a cash forecast fails Quality of Earnings and gets discounted hard. Fixing this section, clean monthly close, defensible job costing, a forecast, plus lifting recurring revenue above 40% to dampen the project lumpiness, is realistically worth 0.5x-1x of multiple expansion and removes the diligence red flags that otherwise compress any offer. Combined with reducing the 25-50% client concentration, this is the

difference between a discounted asset sale and a credible enterprise valuation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Build a 13-week rolling cash forecast in a spreadsheet, updated every Monday by the Director of Finance from AR, AP, payroll, and known job billings  
1-2 weeks **HIGH IMPACT** Owner: Director of Finance
2. Automate bill and receipt capture into QuickBooks Online with [Dext](#) to kill manual re-keying and compress the close  
1 month **HIGH IMPACT** Owner: Director of Finance
3. Stand up job-cost-to-estimate variance reporting per project and per crew, comparing Brad's estimate spreadsheet against actuals at close  
1 quarter **HIGH IMPACT** Owner: Director of Finance
4. Build a one-page weekly dashboard: cash position, AR aging, WIP, backlog, recurring vs project mix  
1 month **HIGH IMPACT** Owner: Director of Finance
5. Set an annual budget and install a monthly P&L-and-balance-sheet review against it  
1 quarter **MEDIUM IMPACT** Owner: Founder & Finance
6. Target two more recurring maintenance contracts to lift recurring revenue above 40% and reduce client concentration below 25%  
1 quarter **HIGH IMPACT** Owner: Founder

## PATH TO THE NEXT LEVEL

First, get the 13-week forecast live this fortnight, it is the fastest fix for the pain Brad named and needs no software. Second, automate capture with Dext so the close compresses from a month to a week and the forecast is fed by current data. Third, once the close is clean and timely, layer job-cost variance reporting on top so every estimate gets graded against reality. Fourth, with a reliable close and forecast in place, set an annual budget and run monthly variance reviews, moving finance from backward-looking bookkeeping to forward-looking steering.



## Final Questions & Reflection

**100** /100

You scored a perfect 100 here because you already know exactly what is broken and you have put real money behind fixing it, that is the rarest asset in this whole report.

### FINDINGS

- You rated yourself 'fully\_ready' to change, which matters: most founders at \$2M-\$5M who are buried in dispatch arrive defensive. You arrived diagnosed.
- You allocated a \$25k-\$50k budget. For an 18-person shop with 45-60% gross margin, that is a serious, executable commitment, not a tire-kick.
- Your one wish, 'that the business could run a full week without me in it,' names the exact critical metric flagged elsewhere: owner dependency at 'a few days'. You are not confused about the problem.
- Your expected results are specific and sequenced: second estimator and service coordinator hired, core processes documented, a 13-week

### ROOT CAUSES

- Founder bottleneck is self-aware, not denied. The gap is execution capacity, not willingness. Every fire still routes to you because no one else has the authority or the documented standard to catch it.
- The readiness is genuine but the constraint is your own time: you cannot build the systems that buy back your time while you are the one running dispatch.

### GAPS

- Readiness and budget are in place; what is missing is a sequenced 90-day execution plan with a named owner for each workstream so the \$25k-\$50k does not get spent reactively.
- Risk of spreading the budget too thin across estimator, coordinator, software, and forecasting all at once instead of sequencing for fastest time-back.

cash forecast you actually look at, and your time shifted from dispatch to growth. That is a roadmap, not a wishlist.

- Your biggest financial challenge, 'cash-flow whiplash' funded off the line of credit because you cannot see what is coming, ties directly to the red ratings in section 8 (cash\_flow\_forecasting, financial\_visibility, budgeting).

### WHAT THE CURRENT STATE IS COSTING YOU

#### OPERATIONAL

Your clarity is the unlock. You already turned away two good projects last quarter because quoting bottlenecked on you, so you know the cost of inaction in lost revenue, not theory.

#### FINANCIAL

Cash-flow whiplash is funding payroll off the line of credit. With no 13-week forecast, you are paying interest and stress for visibility you could build for a fraction of the budget you have set aside.

#### STRATEGIC

A founder who is fully ready, funded, and clear-eyed is the single best predictor that this transformation actually happens. Most reports have to manufacture urgency. Yours is already here.

### WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Your \$25k-\$50k deployed in deliberate sequence: first the cheapest, highest-volume time-back (service coordinator to absorb dispatch), then the 13-week cash forecast (low cost, high visibility), then the second estimator, then documentation of the estimating and project handoff process so it stops living in your head. Each move funded against a clear before/after on your hours.

### WHAT DIALLING THIS IN UNLOCKS

#### OPERATIONAL

#### FINANCIAL

#### ENTERPRISE VALUE

Sequenced deployment turns your readiness into 10-15 hours a week back within two quarters instead of a year of scattered effort.

A 13-week forecast alone typically ends the line-of-credit payroll funding cycle, recovering interest cost and removing the single biggest source of founder stress.

A funded, sequenced execution plan against named gaps is exactly what de-risks the owner-dependency discount that is currently capping your multiple.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Convert your expected-results list into a sequenced 90-day plan: service coordinator hire first, 13-week forecast second, then estimator, then documentation. Assign one owner and one date per item.

1-2 weeks

**HIGH IMPACT**

Owner: Founder (Brad)

2. Ring-fence the \$25k-\$50k against that sequence so it is not drawn down reactively. Hold back roughly a third for the documentation phase, which founders routinely underfund.

1-2 weeks

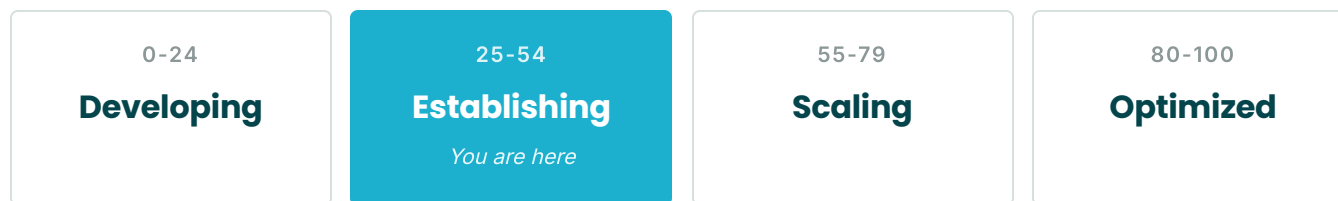
**MEDIUM IMPACT**

Owner: Founder + Director of Finance

## PATH TO THE NEXT LEVEL

You are already at the top of this section, so the path is not about readiness, it is about protecting it. First, lock the sequence so the budget buys time-back in order of fastest payoff. Second, put a fortnightly checkpoint on the plan so momentum does not die the next time three jobs land in the same week. Third, defend your own calendar: the readiness is worthless if you keep absorbing dispatch while the coordinator ramps.

# Operational Maturity



**Basic systems are forming and the work is excellent, but execution depends on a few key people, documentation is thin, and the founder is still the operating system.**

At 34 out of 100, Alpine sits in the Establishing band: you've outgrown pure improvisation, with real tools in place (Jobber, QuickBooks Online) and genuinely strong field, QA, and safety practices, but the company still runs on the founder's judgment rather than on documented, owned, measured systems. For a trades and field services business in the \$2M-\$5M bracket with 18 people, this is a common and dangerous plateau: the revenue has tripled from where you started, but the back office and the management layer haven't been built to match.

## WHAT TO PRIORITIZE

The fastest move from Establishing to Scaling for Alpine is to attack owner dependency directly, because it's both your worst-rated metric and the root cause feeding your weak scores in people, process, and finance. Sequence it: first get the estimating logic out of your spreadsheets and your head into a documented standard a second estimator can run, and hire that estimator plus a service coordinator to take dispatch off you and the office manager. In parallel, stand up the 13-week cash forecast and per-job margin reporting so you stop flying blind on cash. Your healthy 45-60% margins, your green culture, and the \$25K-\$50K you've already earmarked mean you have the fuel, the people, and the budget to do this inside 12 months. The constraint was never capability. It was that everything waited on you.

PART III

# The Vision

*Where you could be. What you could do with the time  
back.*

## Where You Could Be · Future State Vision

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*Twelve months from now, Alpine runs a full week without Brad on the tools, the phone, or the bid: estimating, dispatch, and cash all have a named owner who isn't you.*

### The business transformed

Picture Alpine at the same 18 people, pushing past the \$5M line you set in your project goals, but with a different center of gravity. The second estimator you asked for is hired and trained off a documented estimating method, the one that today lives only in spreadsheets you alone fully understand. Quotes go out in days, not weeks, which means the two good projects you turned away last quarter because you couldn't price them fast enough are now jobs you actually win. The service coordinator role is filled, so dispatch no longer routes through your phone and the office manager is out of the four-jobs-in-one-person trap (dispatch, AR, HR, billing) that has her buried alongside you.

The leadership layer is real, not theoretical. Your Director of Operations owns delivery outcomes and crew-level standards, with the field-ops and QA playbooks moved from green-but-undocumented to written checklists every foreman follows, so quality stops varying by who runs the job. Your Director of Finance, who told us she's closing the books a month behind and can't tell you job margin until the work is long over, is now closing faster and running a live 13-week cash forecast. The cash-flow whiplash you described, three big jobs landing together then a dry spell funded off the line of credit, becomes something you see coming six weeks out instead of discovering at payroll.

From the outside, Alpine looks like a different acquisition target. Where a buyer today sees a company that 'cannot function without you' for more than a few days, they'd see documented processes, an org chart with defined role charters, job costing per crew, and a recurring-maintenance base growing past the 20-40% band toward genuine contractual stability. The business carries its own weight: that is what turns a founder's job into a sellable asset.

## What this unlocks

Once estimating, dispatch, and finance no longer depend on you, the constraint on Alpine stops being your personal capacity and becomes a strategy decision. You can chase the two additional maintenance contracts in your project goals because someone other than you can service them. You can decide whether to push deeper into the Front Range, take on larger GC relationships to dilute the 25-50% client concentration that's currently flagged High, or build the recurring base that lifts the multiple a buyer will pay.

Most importantly, you buy yourself the option you said you actually want: to step off the tools entirely and run Alpine as an owner rather than its hardest-working employee. Growth past \$5M stops breaking things because the infrastructure scales with the revenue instead of cracking under it.

## THE FOUNDER'S SEAT

## Buying Back Your Time



*You're the estimating department, the dispatcher, and the cash watchdog all at once, which is exactly why three good things stop the moment you leave.*

### Where your time goes today

Start with your own words: if you're gone, 'quoting stops, dispatch gets chaotic, and cash gets tight because nobody else is watching it.' That single sentence maps your week. You rated owner dependency Red (a few days), and both your Director of Finance and Director of Operations independently rated it Red too, so this isn't a self-criticism, it's a shared reality across your leadership.

Here's where the hours land. Estimating: you're the only person who fully understands the spreadsheets, so every five-figure and six-figure bid waits on you, and when you're slammed, quotes don't go out and projects walk. Dispatch: with no service coordinator, the texting-and-whiteboards system runs through your phone, meaning you're the routing logic for the crews. Cash: with cash-flow forecasting rated Red and your finance lead closing the books a month behind, you're the only one watching the line of credit, so funding payroll in a dry spell becomes a decision only you can make. Add the role charters you marked Red and the field leads who have 'no written authority on hiring or purchasing,' and you're also the final approval on hires, purchases above some informal threshold, and any quality dispute a foreman can't settle. That's four jobs stacked on one person.

The pattern underneath all of it: nothing is written down (operations, sales, project management, finance, and HR playbooks all rated Red on documentation) and nothing is connected (integration maturity Red, job data re-keyed by hand from Jobber into QuickBooks). When knowledge lives in heads and systems don't talk, the founder becomes the integration layer. You are the API between estimating, the field, and the books.

## THE COST OF YOUR TIME

Your owner compensation is \$165K. Across a founder's week that typically runs 55-65 hours in a trades business at this stage, that's an effective rate somewhere around \$50-\$60 an hour on paper, but that understates it badly, because your real value is in the work only you can do: winning bigger GC relationships, building the recurring base, and deciding where Alpine goes next. If even 20 hours of your week is going to dispatch routing, manual data re-keying, and bid math a trained estimator could own, you're spending on the order of \$50K-\$100K a year of founder time on work that should live in roles paying a fraction of that. The harder cost is the invisible one: the two projects you turned away last quarter. At your 45-60% gross margin, a handful of missed mid-size bids a year is real lost contribution that never shows up as a line item because it never happened.

## The replacement path

Go in order of volume and cost, cheapest-to-offload first. Step one is dispatch and service coordination: the dedicated service coordinator you already named absorbs the routing, the whiteboard chaos, and the inbound service calls. This is the highest-frequency, lowest-judgment work on your plate, and it's also what protects the foreman who nearly walked. This is ControlShift Capture and Activate work: get the dispatch process out of your head and into a coordinator running a real scheduling tool like Connecteam or the Jobber workflow you already own, not your text messages.

Step two is estimating, which is the highest-value handoff. The second estimator only works if the method comes out of your spreadsheets and into a documented, repeatable process first (Capture, then Codify). Document your estimating logic, then train the hire against it, then hand off the smaller and mid-size bids while you keep only the largest or most strategic quotes. Done right, this is what gets quotes out fast enough to stop turning away work.

Step three is cash and financial visibility, which transfers to your Director of Finance through a built rhythm, not a hire. Stand up the 13-week cash forecast you asked for, get the books closing faster, and install a weekly cash review so the line-of-credit decision stops being a Brad-only call (Oversight). Step four, last, is decision rights: write the role charters you rated Red so your field leads have defined authority on hiring and

purchasing, and your Directors own delivery and finance outcomes. That's the move that lets you be gone for a week and have nothing stop.

#### WHAT YOU COULD DO WITH THE TIME BACK

With 10-20 hours a week back, you finally do the work you started Alpine to do but haven't had room for: building the GC and property-management relationships that win the bigger jobs, landing the two recurring maintenance contracts that smooth your cash swings, and deciding deliberately whether to expand across the Front Range. Your stated motivation is growth and eventually stepping off the tools entirely, that gap you said you're doing this to close. The reclaimed time is precisely the bridge: it's the difference between a business that depends on you and one you can grow, sell, or simply run from the owner's chair instead of the driver's seat.

# The Transformation Payoff

*What closing these gaps unlocks across four dimensions.*

## OPERATIONAL

Quotes go out in days instead of waiting on you, dispatch runs through a coordinator instead of your phone, and every foreman works to the same documented standard so quality stops varying by crew. The foreman who nearly walked has clear authority and isn't carrying undefined load, and the office manager is out of the four-hats trap. You can be gone a full week and the work doesn't stop.

## FINANCIAL

Closing the books faster and running a live 13-week forecast ends the cash-flow whiplash you described and cuts reliance on the line of credit to fund payroll. Job costing per crew protects the healthy 45-60% gross margin you already have by exposing the jobs that quietly erode it, and faster estimating recaptures the contribution from bids you currently turn away. In trades businesses at this stage, tightening job costing and bid discipline typically protects several margin points that otherwise leak invisibly across the project mix.

## ENTERPRISE VALUE

The single biggest lever is owner dependency, currently rated Critical and the #1 thing a buyer discounts. Moving Alpine from 'cannot function for more than a few days without the founder' to documented processes, defined role charters, and an accountable leadership layer removes the key-person discount that compresses multiples hardest in founder-led trades companies. Add a recurring-maintenance base growing past the 20-40% band and deliberate work on the 25-50% client concentration, and you shift Alpine from a job that happens to have employees to a transferable asset, the difference between a low and a meaningfully higher multiple at exit.

## STRATEGIC

Once you're no longer the constraint, growth past \$5M becomes a choice rather than a thing that breaks the business. You gain the option to win larger GC relationships, expand across the Front Range, build the recurring base, or position Alpine for sale, none of which are realistically on the table while quoting, dispatch, and cash all run through one person. The infrastructure you build this year is what turns your stated goal of stepping off the tools from a wish into an executable plan.

PART IV

# The Numbers

*Specific dollar impact. Lever by lever.*

## Impact Model · What Each Lever Is Worth

Each critical metric you can improve translates into a specific financial outcome. Ranked by dollar contribution.

EBITDA LIFT POTENTIAL




**+12%**

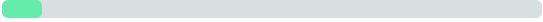
MULTIPLE UPLIFT

**+1.6x**

TOTAL VALUATION DELTA

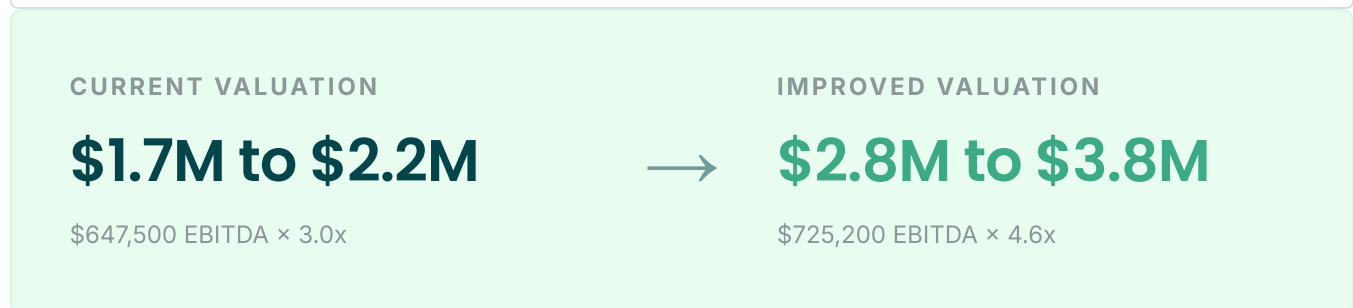
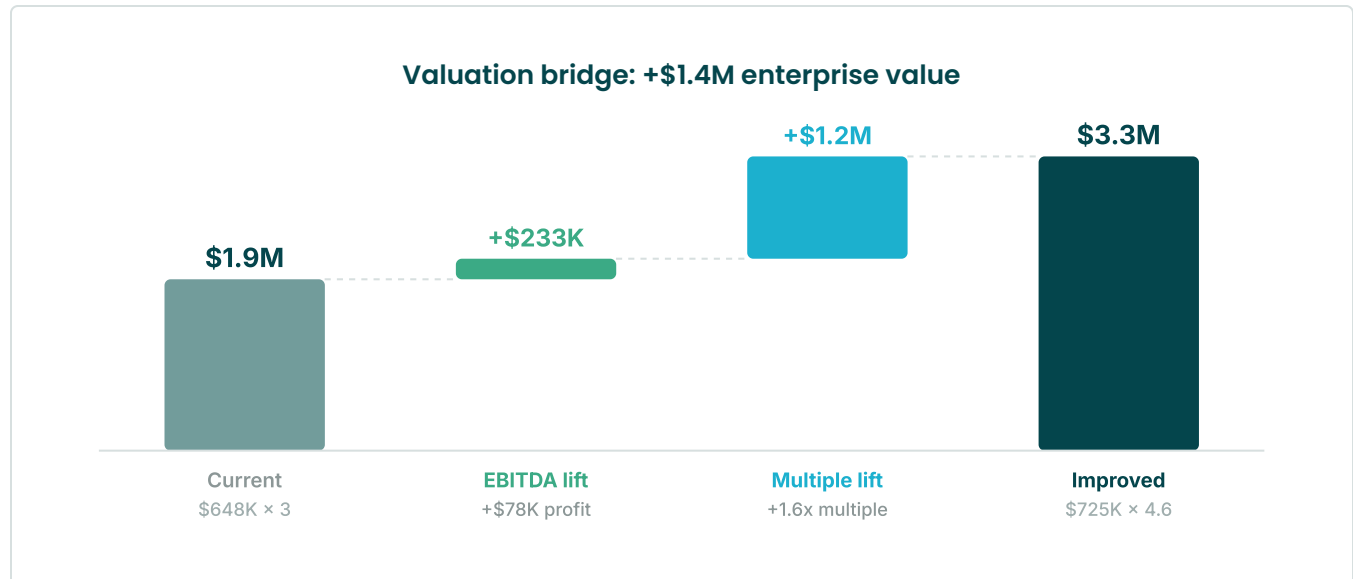
**\$1.2M to \$1.6M**

LEVER	TYPE	IMPACT SIZE	+ VALUE
<b>Reduce Owner Dependency</b> Key-person risk is the #1 buyer concern in founder-led businesses. Moving from 'business cannot operate without the founder for more than a few days' to the next level removes a substantial portion of the key-person discount, approximately 0.8x.	MULTIPLE		<b>+\$518,000</b>
<b>Reduce Client Concentration</b> Single-client concentration is one of the largest multiple-discount factors buyers apply. Reducing it from top client is 25-50% of revenue unlocks an estimated 0.4x multiple improvement.	MULTIPLE		<b>+\$259,000</b>
<b>Grow Recurring Revenue Base</b> Recurring revenue commands premium valuation multiples due to predictability. Moving from 20-40% recurring revenue to the next tier unlocks approximately 0.4x.	MULTIPLE		<b>+\$259,000</b>

LEVER	TYPE	IMPACT SIZE	+ VALUE
<p><b>Expand Gross Margin</b></p> <p>Gross margin flows roughly 1:1 to EBITDA. Moving from gross margin 45-60%, healthy typically adds ~10% to EBITDA through pricing, delivery efficiency, or scope control.</p>	EBITDA		<b>+\$194,250</b>
<p><b>Reduce Employee Turnover</b></p> <p>Every point of turnover reduction saves recruiting, onboarding, and lost-productivity costs worth roughly 50-100% of the departing employee's salary. Moving from annual turnover 10-20% (normal range) typically adds ~2% to EBITDA.</p>	EBITDA		<b>+\$38,850</b>

## Valuation Impact Scenario

The current-to-improved bridge, decomposed into EBITDA growth and multiple expansion, so you can see why the number moves, not just that it does.



**\$1.2M to \$1.6M in enterprise value**

*Illustrative range. EBITDA was estimated from your revenue band, not a profit-and-loss statement. Upload your financials for a precise figure.*

## THE VALUATION MODEL EXPLAINED

# How we got to this number

*A walk-through of the methodology, what moves the multiple, and why other valuation methods don't apply here.*

### PRIMARY METHOD

## EBITDA × Industry Multiple

For a trade & field-service contracting in the \$2M-\$20M revenue range, the dominant valuation framework used by strategic buyers, private-equity acquirers, and business brokers is the EBITDA multiple method. It answers the deal question cleanly: "How many years of current cash profit is a rational buyer willing to pay upfront?" It's directly improvable by the operational moves in this report, and it's what actually gets used in diligence, which is why we value on it here.

### HOW WE SOURCED THE EBITDA

MEDIUM CONFIDENCE

#### Derived from revenue bracket × margin

EBITDA derived from your revenue bracket (~\$3,500,000 midpoint) × a normalised margin (~18%). Replace with stated EBITDA or a P&L upload for a sharper read.

## Where your business sits in the band

Your operational score of 34/100 puts you in the lower half of the trade & field-service contracting multiple band, roughly 3.0x EBITDA. The gap to the top of the band is where the valuation lift lives.

Executing the recommendations in this report lifts the multiple toward 4.6x, a 1.6x expansion driven by reduced buyer risk, cleaner earnings, and reduced founder dependency.

At the same time, the operational levers identified are modelled to lift EBITDA by roughly 12%, from \$647,500 to \$725,200. That compound, higher EBITDA × higher multiple, is where the \$1,393,420 in enterprise-value uplift comes from.

## What moves the multiple up or down

For a trade & field-service contracting at your scale, these are the specific factors a buyer weighs.

**LIFTS THE MULTIPLE**

- Recurring service contracts (maintenance agreements, inspection programs) vs project-only revenue
- Route density and geographic concentration that reduces drive time
- Multi-trade or stacked-service offering per customer (ticket expansion)
- Technician productivity metrics tracked weekly with a documented job-profitability lens
- Fleet, certifications, and licences that transfer cleanly with the business

**COMPRESSES THE MULTIPLE**

- Owner running estimates, dispatch, or key customer relationships personally
- Revenue concentrated in 1-2 anchor accounts or one general contractor
- Pricing set in the truck, no rate card, no job-costing rigor
- Talent flight risk, no bench behind the lead technicians or superintendent
- Seasonal swings with no off-season revenue strategy

**Why not a different valuation method?**

Different business models get valued different ways. Here's why EBITDA × Multiple is the right frame for you, and when the alternatives actually apply.

**Revenue Multiple (ARR or TTM Revenue × X)**

**WHEN IT'S USED:** Software, SaaS, or subscription businesses where gross margins are 70%+ and revenue is largely predictable (MRR/ARR). Also used for high-growth pre-profit businesses where EBITDA isn't a stable frame.

**WHY NOT HERE:** Service businesses have blended margins driven by labour and delivery cost, not the software economics a revenue multiple assumes. Valuing on revenue would under-weight the quality of your cash-generation relative to your top line.

**Discounted Cash Flow (DCF)**

**WHEN IT'S USED:** Large, mature businesses with predictable 5-10 year cash-flow projections and known capital expenditure cycles. Also used by financial acquirers inside deal modelling.

**WHY NOT HERE:** At the sub-\$20M revenue range, DCF is highly sensitive to the discount rate and terminal-growth assumptions. Small changes in inputs move the output dramatically, DCF at this scale looks academic, not actionable.

### Asset-Based / Book Value

**WHEN IT'S USED:** Asset-heavy businesses (manufacturing, real estate holding, fleet-intensive operations) or distressed situations where the going-concern premium has evaporated.

**WHY NOT HERE:** For a well-run service operation, the majority of transferable value is goodwill (brand, systems, client relationships, team). An asset-based method floor-values the tangible assets but misses most of what a strategic buyer actually pays for.

### Seller's Discretionary Earnings (SDE)

**WHEN IT'S USED:** Smaller owner-operator businesses (usually under \$1M in profit) where the founder's compensation, perks, and one-time expenses are added back to normalise profitability. Common broker method for Main-Street deals.

**WHY NOT HERE:** At your revenue scale, strategic and private-equity buyers use EBITDA (not SDE) as the standardised comparable. SDE framing can actually hurt you in diligence at this size, buyers expect the owner comp to normalise into a market-rate leadership line in their pro-forma.

## Caveats · read before anchoring

- This is an illustrative estimate, not a formal valuation. It's directional, it tells you what operational improvements are worth, not what a buyer will actually pay on a given Tuesday.
- Real transaction prices vary with market conditions, buyer type (strategic vs financial), deal structure (cash at close vs earnout vs rollover equity), and specific diligence findings.
- A proper valuation for an exit-readiness conversation needs a formal Quality of Earnings (Q of E) analysis and a comparable-transactions study. That's typically a \$15-35K engagement with a CEPA-credentialed advisor or boutique investment bank.
- Use these numbers as a lens on the return-on-investment of the operational moves in this report, not as a sale-price expectation to anchor on.

PART V

# The Path

*Quick wins. Twelve-month roadmap. Your  
commitment.*

# Quick Wins (30–60 Days)

*High-impact actions executable in the next 30-60 days with minimal investment.*

## ⚡ Pull the estimating template out of your head

**HIGH IMPACT**

Take your most-used estimating spreadsheet and write a one-page logic guide: how you mark up labor, material, and subs (electrical/crane), and your minimum margin floor. This is the first asset that lets a second estimator quote without you. You turned away two projects last quarter because quotes were stuck on your desk; this is the unlock.

1-2 weeks    Stage: Capture

## ⚡ Stand up a 13-week cash forecast

**HIGH IMPACT**

Your Director of Finance is closing books a month late and you fund payroll off the line of credit during dry spells. Build a simple 13-week rolling cash forecast: known receivables, committed payroll, sub payments, and project milestones. Owned by Finance, reviewed weekly with you. Directly attacks the cash-flow whiplash you named as your biggest financial challenge.

1-2 weeks    Stage: Activate

## ⚡ Document the office manager's drifted roles

**MEDIUM IMPACT**

Dispatch, AR, and HR have all silently landed on one person with nothing defined. Map what she actually does today on one page, then split it: this is the spec for your service coordinator hire. Removes a key-person single point of failure and clarifies the gap you are hiring into.

1-2 weeks    Stage: Codify

## ⚡ Capture the controls/BAS programming knowledge

**HIGH IMPACT**

Only one technician knows the controls programming and it lives entirely in their head. Have them record screen-share walkthroughs of the three most common BAS configurations into a shared knowledge base such as [Whale](#). This is pure key-person risk removal on your highest-skill, lowest-redundancy role.

1 month    Stage: Capture

### **Connect Jobber to QuickBooks and kill the re-keying**

**MEDIUM IMPACT**

You are hand re-keying job data from Jobber into QuickBooks Online. Set up the integration (or a **Dext**-style capture layer for receipts and bills) so data flows once. Frees admin hours weekly and is the precondition for seeing real per-job margin.

1 month    Stage: Activate

### **Start a per-job margin scorecard**

**HIGH IMPACT**

Pick a simple format and track estimated vs actual margin on every job over \$25K, by crew. Your gross margin is healthy (45-60%) but invisible at the job level until projects close. This builds the job-costing discipline that protects margin as you push toward \$5M.

1 month    Stage: Refine

# 12-Month Transformation Roadmap

## Immediate (0-30 days)

- Write the one-page estimating logic guide so a second estimator can quote without you, reducing owner dependency on the revenue engine [CAPTURE]
- Build and begin weekly review of a 13-week cash forecast to end payroll-from-the-line-of-credit cycles (cash-flow archetype risk) [ACTIVATE]
- Document and split the office manager's dispatch/AR/HR load into a service coordinator role spec (People pillar) [CODIFY]
- Record controls/BAS programming walkthroughs to remove the single-technician key-person risk [CAPTURE]

## 3-Month Horizon

- Hire and onboard a service coordinator to absorb dispatch and service-agreement coordination off the founder and office manager (owner dependency) [ACTIVATE]
- Integrate Jobber and QuickBooks and adopt receipt/bill capture to eliminate manual re-keying and surface real-time financials (financial visibility) [ACTIVATE]
- Launch per-job margin scorecard by crew for all jobs over \$25K to standardize job costing (archetype priority) [REFINE]
- Publish documented SOPs for the operations, project management, and customer onboarding playbooks marked red on documentation (Processes pillar) [CODIFY]

## 6-Month Horizon

- Recruit and train a second estimator against the documented estimating guide so quoting no longer stops when the founder is out (owner dependency, revenue capture) [ACTIVATE]
- Formalize the org chart with written role charters and assigned KPIs for office manager, field leads, and coordinator (People pillar, section 5 red) [CODIFY]
- Build a monthly financial dashboard with P&L, balance sheet review, and named financial KPIs (financial visibility red) [OVERSIGHT]
- Land two additional recurring maintenance contracts to lift recurring revenue above the current 20-40% band (recurring revenue HIGH risk) [AMPLIFY]

## 12-Month Horizon

- Install quarterly planning and objectives cadence with the leadership team, closing the section 3 red on planning discipline [OVERSIGHT]
- Diversify the client base to pull the top client below 25% of revenue (client concentration HIGH risk) [AMPLIFY]
- Prove the business can run a full week without the founder in dispatch or estimating, validating reduced owner dependency [OVERSIGHT]
- Document and formalize the HR playbook (hiring, onboarding, reviews) which sits red across all respondents (Policies pillar) [CODIFY]

**YOUR NEXT MOVES**

## The Commitment

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**THIS WEEK**

- Block two hours and write the one-page estimating logic guide (markup rules, sub handling, minimum margin floor) so it stops living only in your head.
- Sit down with your Director of Finance and agree the format and weekly slot for a 13-week cash forecast; she already named visibility as her one wish.
- Schedule a 45-minute screen recording session with your controls technician to capture the top three BAS configurations.
- Draft the service coordinator job spec straight from the tasks currently drifting onto your office manager.

**THIS MONTH**

- Post the service coordinator role and screen candidates; this is the first hire that buys back your dispatch hours.
- Set up the Jobber to QuickBooks integration and stop the manual re-keying.
- Run the first per-job margin review on every open job over \$25K, by crew.
- Hold the first weekly cash-forecast review and make it a standing meeting you never skip.

**WHO TO HIRE FIRST**

Hire the service coordinator before the second estimator. With owner dependency rated red (a few days) and the office manager buried across dispatch, AR, and HR, the coordinator absorbs the highest-volume daily fires fastest and stabilizes service delivery. The second estimator follows once your documented estimating guide exists to train against, otherwise you just clone yourself.

**CADENCE TO INSTALL**

A weekly 30-minute cash and jobs review with your Director of Finance and Director of Operations: 13-week forecast, jobs landing, per-job margin flags. This single cadence attacks your two named pains at once, cash whiplash and founder-as-only-watcher, and it is your weakest discipline today (cash forecasting and financial reviews both red).

*You built an \$2M-plus business by answering the phone at 2am; the next \$3M comes from making sure the phone gets answered when you do not.*

Ready to turn this report into action?

<https://calendly.com/expansiveedge/strategy-call>

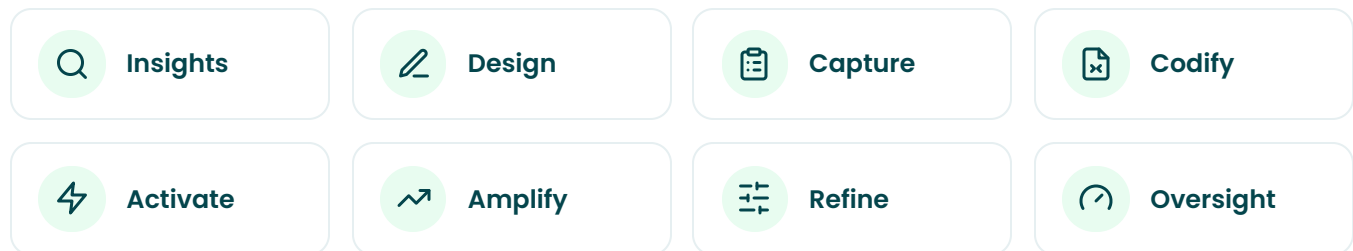
APPENDIX

# Methodology

*How we scored. How we think. What's behind the analysis.*

## The ControlShift Methodology

ControlShift is an 8-stage framework for systematizing service businesses. Every gap, root cause, and recommendation in this report maps to one of these stages so you know exactly where you are in the transformation and what comes next.



## Scoring Methodology

Your overall health score is a weighted average across seven operational-maturity sections (3-9). Weights reflect each section's impact on scalability and enterprise value: Process Maturity (20%) and Financial Visibility (18%) carry the highest weight. They're the strongest drivers of transferable, exit-ready businesses. Strategic Direction (16%) and People & Structure (16%) are the next tier. Tech Stack (12%), Purpose & Culture (10%), and Readiness (8%) round out the mix. Sections 1 (Company Profile) and 2 (Founder Profile) are captured for context but deliberately excluded from the weighted score. They measure form completeness, not operational maturity.

## About Expansive EDGE

**Expansive EDGE** is the operational advisory firm behind ControlShift Insights. We work with service-business founders, from solo operators through \$20M+ mid-market, who want to stop trading hours for dollars and start building enterprises that run without them.

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