

APPENDIX A

The Leadership Leverage Toolkit

Building Capability That Extends Beyond the Leader

Leadership Leverage is measured not by how little the leader does, but by what the organization becomes capable of doing because the leader was there.

Leaders create value by solving difficult problems, making consequential decisions, supplying experience, connecting information, and intervening when judgment is required. Those same strengths can create dependence when difficult work repeatedly returns to the leader.

The objective is not to eliminate dependence, but to distinguish necessary from inherited dependence and build capability where responsibility can move. Some decisions should remain concentrated and some expertise specialized.

Tool	Use When
Tool A Leadership Dependency Map	Work repeatedly depends on a particular leader
Tool B Intervention Test	You are deciding whether to step in or let someone else decide
Tool C Decision Development Ladder	Someone needs to develop greater judgment and ownership
Tool D Boundaries and Escalation Map	Authority, consultation, or escalation expectations are unclear
Tool E Capability Transfer Map	Important knowledge, context, judgment, or relationships are concentrated
Tool F Leadership Absence Test	You want to know whether capability survives the leader's absence

Use the smallest tool that reveals the dependency. These tools can be used individually or together. For a recurring dependency, a useful progression is:

Identify → Intervene → Develop → Bound → Transfer → Test

Tool A — Leadership Dependency Map

The Leadership Dependency Map identifies work that continues to rely disproportionately on a particular leader.

Begin with: **What repeatedly comes to me, and why?**

Look for decisions that wait, questions repeatedly answered, conflicts repeatedly reconciled, relationships concentrated in one person, reports only one person can interpret, problems requiring the same intervention, and processes that become fragile when someone is unavailable.

Element	Dependency 1	Dependency 2	Dependency 3
Dependency			
What I Supply			
Why It Comes to Me			
What Happens Without Me?			
Necessary or Inherited?			

Then ask what the dependence is supplying:

Source of Dependence	Ask
Direction	Does someone else understand what matters enough to resolve the tradeoff?
Information	Do I possess information or context others do not?
Authority	Could someone else decide but has learned to ask?
Judgment	Does the situation genuinely require experience others have not developed?
Capability	Am I performing a function the organization cannot yet perform?
Relationship	Does trust or history reside primarily with me?
Integration	Am I connecting people or information that do not connect without me?
Risk	Do the consequences justify continued involvement?

Do not assume every dependency should move.

What would the organization need in order to carry this responsibly?

Tool B — Intervention Test

The ability to improve a decision is not enough reason to own it. If improvement becomes the standard for intervention, Authority continually migrates toward the most experienced person.

Before intervening, use five tests:

Test	Ask
Consequence	What happens if I do nothing? Is the Risk acceptable and reversible?
Capability	Does the person have sufficient information, context, Authority, judgment, and boundaries?
Quality	Is the decision wrong—or merely different from the one I would make?
Lesson	What will my intervention teach the person and everyone watching?
Residue	What capability, context, boundary, principle, or process improvement should remain afterward?

Different is not necessarily wrong.

If capable people are permitted to decide only when they reach the leader’s preferred answer, Authority has not really moved.

When an outcome is disappointing, ask:

- What did the person know and reasonably expect at the time?
- What information or assumptions proved wrong?
- Was the Authority boundary clear?
- Was this an honest error, capability gap, poor judgment, misconduct, or system weakness?
- What should the person, manager, or organization learn?
- What should change because this happened?

Every intervention has two outcomes: what it solves and what it teaches.

Can I supply what is missing without taking ownership back?

Tool C — Decision Development Ladder

People develop judgment through increasingly consequential opportunities to think, decide, experience consequences, receive Feedback, and learn.

Use this progression: **Observe → Recommend → Decide → Own → Teach**

Stage	Developmental Step
Observe	See how an experienced decision-maker thinks, including what matters and which tradeoffs shape the decision
Recommend	Reach and explain a recommendation before receiving the answer
Decide	Make appropriate decisions within defined boundaries
Own	Remain connected to execution, consequences, correction, Feedback, and Adaptation
Teach	Help someone else develop the capability without simply supplying the answer

Use the ladder to identify where someone operates and what should come next.

Element	Person 1	Person 2	Person 3
Person			
Decision / Capability			
Current Stage			
Next Stage			
Developmental Opportunity			
Boundary / Risk			

Ask:

- Who has better judgment than their current Authority allows them to exercise?
- Who observes important decisions but rarely recommends an answer first?
- Who can recommend well but has not yet been allowed to decide?
- Who decides but remains protected from the consequences?
- Who can own decisions but has not yet learned to develop others?
- Who is making other people more capable?

Do not measure development only by what someone has learned.

Measure what they can responsibly own that previously required someone else.

Tool D — Boundaries and Escalation Map

Delegation fails when Authority is vague.

Too little Authority produces permission-seeking. Too much Authority without appropriate capability or boundaries creates unnecessary Risk.

For a recurring category of decisions, define four conditions:

Element	Decision 1	Decision 2	Decision 3
Decision			
Own			
Consult When			
Escalate When			
Ownership Transfers When			

Use the distinctions deliberately:

Condition	Meaning
Own	Decide independently within the established decision space
Consult	Bring in another perspective without transferring ownership
Escalate	Add information, expertise, Authority, context, capacity, or coordination
Transfer	Move ownership because the nature or consequence of the problem has materially changed

A useful boundary helps someone recognize when an ordinary decision has become something different. A customer issue may become a legal issue. A routine expenditure may become a major commitment. A production adjustment may threaten an important customer obligation. A technical problem may become a safety condition.

Escalation should mean:

I still own this problem, but I need something I do not currently have.

Ownership should transfer deliberately, not disappear somewhere inside the escalation path.

Does escalation add capability to the problem—or merely move the problem upward?

Tool E — Capability Transfer Map

Experienced people often carry knowledge, context, judgment, relationships, and pattern recognition that are difficult to see precisely because they use them so naturally.

Listen for:

- “Only _____ knows how to do that.”
- “Ask _____; they always handle it.”
- “We need _____ in the meeting.”
- “That customer only trusts _____.”
- “The process works as long as _____ is here.”

Then determine what is concentrated and how it should move.

Element	Capability 1	Capability 2	Capability 3
Capability			
Where It Resides			
Consequence if Unavailable			
Transfer Method			
Who Is Developing It?			

Different forms of capability require different transfer mechanisms:

Method	Best Suited For
Document	Specifications, procedures, thresholds, definitions
Teach	Concepts, principles, reasoning, tradeoffs
Demonstrate	Techniques and practices that benefit from observation
Practice	Judgment requiring consequential experience
Share	Relationships, information access, customer knowledge
Embed	Standards, systems, checklists, controls, decision rules
Multiply	Capability that should reside in several people rather than another single expert

Do not transfer only **what** the expert does.

Also transfer:

- Why?
- What matters?

- Which patterns deserve attention?
- What Risk is being managed?
- What makes this circumstance different?
- What would change the answer?
- When does the normal standard stop fitting?

The objective is not perfect replication of the expert. It is enough shared understanding that other people can continue thinking when the expert is absent.

What important capability would disappear if this person disappeared?

Tool F — Leadership Absence Test

Absence reveals what presence can conceal.

A leader who remains continuously available may have difficulty distinguishing organizational capability from personal compensation.

Begin with:

What stops if I am not here?

Absence	Ask
One Day	What waits?
One Week	What begins to deteriorate?
One Month	What capability gaps become visible?
Permanently	What has never truly left the leader?

Look across approvals, decisions, meetings, customer relationships, coordination, information flow, judgment, expertise, Authority, and organizational memory.

Element	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3
What Stops?			
Why?			
Necessary Dependence?			
Capability Needed			
Action			

Also look for what **does not** stop:

- Which meetings proceed effectively?
- Which decisions no longer wait?
- Which customer relationships have broadened?
- Which conflicts are resolved where they occur?
- Which questions have stopped reaching you because someone else has become capable?

Some of the strongest evidence of leadership is work that continues well while the leader is somewhere else.

Extend the Test to Succession

Succession is not only the selection of another person. It tests what the organization has become capable of carrying beyond the current leader.

Area	Ask
Judgment	Which decisions still depend disproportionately on my experience?
Relationships	Which important relationships remain primarily connected through me?
Information / Context	What do I know that someone else would struggle to reconstruct?
Authority	Which decisions remain centralized because I continue making them?
Principles	Which expectations remain personal rather than transferable?

Develop more than one possible future owner where practical. Development should create optionality, not merely identify an heir.

A successor should inherit enough accumulated wisdom to avoid unnecessary rediscovery without becoming obligated to reproduce the predecessor.

Continuity without imitation.

The final succession test is not whether the organization can keep making **your** decisions.

It is whether it can keep making **good decisions without you.**

A Compact Leadership Leverage Review

For a periodic review, use these ten questions:

1. What repeatedly requires me that should not require me?
2. What can someone else responsibly own today that they could not own a year ago?
3. Where am I supplying answers when I should be developing judgment?
4. What information, context, relationship, or knowledge remains unnecessarily concentrated?
5. What happens when I am unavailable?
6. Which recurring conflict or escalation reveals an organizational problem we have not solved?
7. Who is developing other people rather than merely becoming more capable personally?
8. Which principles can guide good decisions when nobody has time to ask permission?
9. What does the capability we have built allow us to attempt next?

Do not use the questions merely to identify weaknesses.

Look for evidence of movement: a decision that no longer escalates, a relationship that has broadened, an expert whose knowledge has become usable elsewhere, a supervisor who develops another supervisor, a team that resolves conflict without senior arbitration, or a successor who can exercise independent judgment.

These are not absences of leadership. They are evidence that leadership has traveled.

Final Thought

Leadership Leverage is not about withdrawing from the organization. Some decisions should remain with the leader, some expertise should remain concentrated, and some controls should remain strong. The useful question is whether dependence remains deliberate.

Eventually, the toolkit reduces to two questions:

- What happened while I was responsible?
- What became possible because I was responsible?

The first measures results. The second reveals whether those results created capability that can extend beyond the person who produced them.

The final Leadership Leverage question is therefore:

What is the organization capable of doing now that it could not do before?

When leadership dependence reflects a broader structural problem rather than an individual capability gap, return to the **Decision Architecture Toolkit** in Book Three.