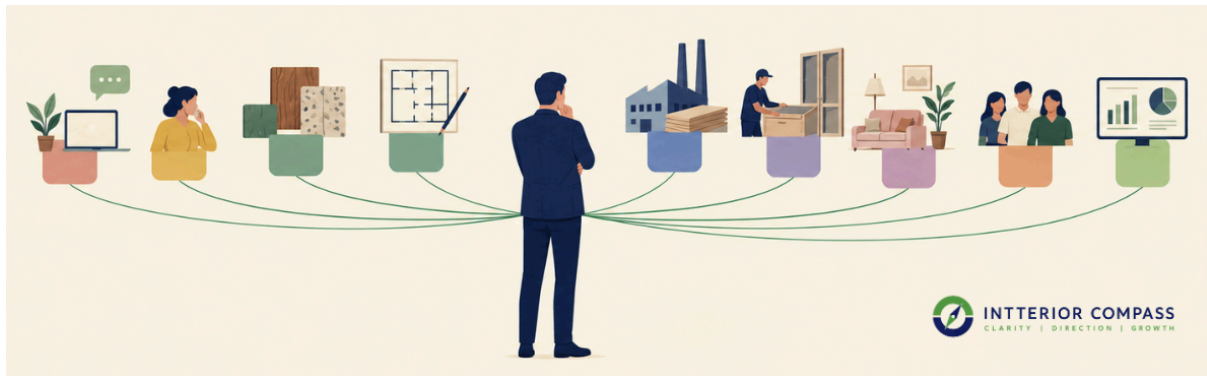




When the Business Runs on One Person

Case study: diagnosing founder dependency in a premium interiors company

At a glance

Client	A founder-led modular and custom interiors company in India
Position	Two factories online. Capacity of 18–20 projects a month at an average ticket of about ₹25L
The goal	A ₹2–3 Cr monthly order book, and a lead founder who is no longer in every decision
Our scope	Seven areas, from first enquiry to hiring and data
Method	Stakeholder interviews, a live factory visit, working sessions inside the CRM, and our own re-analysis of the raw data

The situation

The company had built the capacity before the demand. Two factories were running, but the order book was not at the level the capacity needed.

Every sales call, every design quote and most day-to-day calls on site ran through one co-founder. The partners knew this. What they did not know was where it started and why it kept happening. So we set two anchors: **grow the order book to ₹2–3 Cr a month**, and **free the lead founder**. The second was not a nice-to-have. A company that depends on one person's judgment has a ceiling on volume, however much factory it owns.

The question

What stops capacity from becoming revenue, and what would the company need to run without its founder in the room?

Our approach

We tested seven areas: demand generation, estimation and unit economics, product and material specification, delivery and referral practice, decision rights, talent, and data. Each area had its own method, such as process mapping, issue trees, a decision matrix and customer-voice calls.

We also did one thing the brief did not ask for. Wherever a headline number existed, we rebuilt it from the raw export instead of trusting the summary. Most of the sharper findings came from that layer.

What we found

Five patterns repeated in every area. They were not seven separate problems. They were one connected picture.



1. Sales converts well, but nobody can say why

The company wins 63.5% of decided deals, which is a respectable rate. But referral drives 75% of wins and 82% of pipeline value. Only 17% of referral deals had a named referrer on file, and some of those were the founders' own networks, which does not scale. Over 19 months, ₹1.09L went into paid social, and not one tracked deal carried that tag.

The result is good, but it rests on one person's judgment. There is no intake form, no lead tracker and no loss-reason field.

2. The final price is a strategy, not drift

Presales gives a deliberately low first quote, then grows it in two more stages. In the one fully documented trail, the price moved from ₹24.33L to ₹29.50L at design sign-off, then to ₹33.53L at final bill. That is **+37.8%**. Company-wide the average is 38–40%, and individual projects range from 30% to 100%.

The final bill arrived after day 180, once the customer already had the finished home. Comparable firms, on smaller tickets, issue their final quote between day 21 and day 60. The model held only because the founder personally absorbed the friction with customers.

3. Quality is checked at the most expensive point

About 70% of projects carry some rework, averaging 15–20% of scope within those projects. There is no quality checkpoint between design sign-off and the client's site, so installation is where errors get caught. The operations lead called it a "massive bottom line leak."

4. A good handover score was hiding a first-pass quality problem

Handover scores ran at 8–9. But the project manager was quietly absorbing rework and cost overruns to keep it there. There was no signed client agreement either. The quote's printed terms were the whole contract, with no delay clause, no possession clause and no dispute clause. The only protection written in covered the company's booking fee.

5. The authority already existed. The habit did not follow

This was the most useful finding. In at least three areas, the team already had approved authority. In one case, a customer asked for out-of-scope work, and the project manager got the vendor price, added the markup and was ready to close it. Then he took it back to the founder for a final yes. The founder's own diagnosis was that the decision did not need to come to him. He also accepted that a delegated structure would not make more errors than he does today.

So the fix was not to build new authority. It was to close a habit gap against authority that was already there.

The root cause underneath all five

The systems were already bought. CRM, Projects and Books were bundled under one account and renewed together. But nothing required anyone to fill a field, link a record or keep a status current. "Referred by" was filled on 5.8% of accounts. Projects sat at 0% complete for months. Producing this diagnostic took weeks of manual reconciliation.

Every area ended at the same place: the process lived in one person's head.

What we recommended

We sequenced the work so the foundation comes before the tools.

Foundation (first)

- Mandatory fields and gates in the existing systems: loss reason, deal owner, referrer, project status
- A written decision map: what the designer or PM can close alone, and what still needs the founder
- Pricing locked at design sign-off, with nothing added after it
- Two quality checkpoints: one before work leaves design, one before parts are cut
- A standard client agreement and a handover checklist with a defined referral ask
- KPIs and a hiring process for the roles closest to the bottleneck, starting with design



Intelligence layer (second)

Once the foundation holds, we configure the existing software and add an AI layer on top, acting as a chief of staff: a live dashboard, a morning brief on what each day's meetings should cover, and an end-of-day report on where every project stands.

The order is the point. An AI tool built on broken records would swap a blind spot for something worse, **false visibility**. It would summarise bad data with confidence.

The takeaway

A company does not depend on its founder because the team is weak. It depends on him because nothing else was ever written down.

Status

The diagnostic is complete and the engagement has been scoped. Impact figures will be added as the foundation work lands.

Note: some figures are reported by the client and not independently verified. The industry comparison comes from our own practitioner experience, not audited data.