WHY I BUILT DESIGNED CAPACITY

Growth creates pressure.
It does not create capacity.

A founder's thesis on recurring cross-functional constraints, the method behind the work, and why the visible problem is rarely the whole problem.

CAPACITY

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THE PROBLEM FOUNDERS RECOGNIZE

Why is everything so much harder now?

Years after founding a company, you may begin waking up to the same question almost every morning.

The business has more customers, more people, more tools, more data and more experience than it had before. It may be making money. It may be growing. From the outside, it may look stronger than ever.

Inside, it feels more fragile.

Decisions take longer. Priorities keep changing or being interpreted differently. A problem that looked solved returns from another department. Marketing improves, but margins fall. Sales increase, but delivery slows. A senior person has responsibility, yet still waits for the founder. The company adds another meeting, dashboard, process or hire, but the pressure does not disappear. It changes shape.

> **The leak is not your problem. It is a symptom.**
> **Nothing breaks in isolation.**

I built Designed Capacity for that moment: when a founder-led company has traction, the same problem keeps returning across functions, and leadership no longer trusts the obvious explanation of what should change.

The work moves through three stages: **SEE** what is actually happening. **TRACE** where the pressure begins. **REDESIGN** the smallest connected part that can no longer carry the next stage.

I first lived the problem inside Workista

I began building Workista at twenty-one. It started as an idea for a CRM SaaS product and grew into a real company: investment, an extended team of eighteen people and, by the time of the exit, more than 500 paying company customers.

From the outside, the company was functioning. Inside, too much of the way it functioned still passed through me.

Developers waited for decisions. Priorities changed or were misunderstood. Conflicts between people and departments returned to me. Problems were sometimes carried for weeks and surfaced only after the consequences had become expensive.

We had technical leadership, project management, business analysis and HR, but I was still involved in discussions, deals, product direction, team conflict and the decisions connecting one function to another.

If I was unavailable, parts of the company stopped moving.

I was also part of the problem. I was young and inexperienced. I made wrong hires. I said yes to deals that were not right for the company. I avoided necessary conflict with my co-founder. I kept people longer than I should have because firing them felt unbearable. I was a control freak, and I believed that one minute without control could destroy everything.

But "the founder cannot delegate" was still an incomplete explanation.

> **I had delegated tasks. I had not designed the conditions in which responsibility could hold.**

A role title is not authority. A task list is not ownership. People cannot carry responsibility if they do not have the context, information, skills, priorities, decision rights and working relationships required to act. When those conditions are missing, uncertainty returns to the person who still seems to hold the whole picture.

Usually, that person is the founder.

By the final month of the 2017 Start-Up Chile accelerator, I was living in Latin America while much of the company operated across European time zones. I was barely sleeping. In the coworking space, I watched founders with smaller companies still enjoy what they were building. They had lives around their work. I was in survival mode.

I imagined being out of my own company, and the first thing I felt was relief.

Workista was not only an asset. It felt like my baby. I considered cancelling the sale more than once. But I could no longer see a path through the way the company worked, and eventually I completed the exit.

18	500+	Exit
PERSON EXTENDED TEAM	PAYING COMPANY CUSTOMERS	COMMERCIALLY SUCCESSFUL

At the time, I thought the story was mainly about exhaustion. With distance, I understood something more useful.

> **My company did not need more of me. It needed the capacity to carry the growth it had already achieved.**

I had kept trying to solve a company-design problem with personal effort.

WHAT GROWTH CHANGES

Growth changes what the company must be able to carry.

The system that works at one stage can become the reason the next stage feels impossible.

In a three-person startup, information travels through conversation and shared memory. The founders can change priorities directly. Almost everybody knows what everybody else is doing. A founder-centered company may be exactly right at that stage.

Then the business adds customers, employees, markets, products, channels and senior roles. A marketing decision changes the work of sales. A promise made by sales changes what delivery must carry. Faster delivery changes costs. A product update changes onboarding, support and customer expectations. A new market changes commercial, operational and regulatory demands.

The company has not simply added more work. It has added more dependencies.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Larry Greiner argued that practices supporting one stage of growth can later contribute to the crisis of the next. Jay Galbraith connected increasing uncertainty with greater requirements for information processing and coordination. Contemporary organization-design research continues to treat configuration, control, information channels and coordination as central questions.[1] [2] [3]

The point is not that every company must become more bureaucratic as it grows. The point is that the original way of working does not upgrade itself automatically.

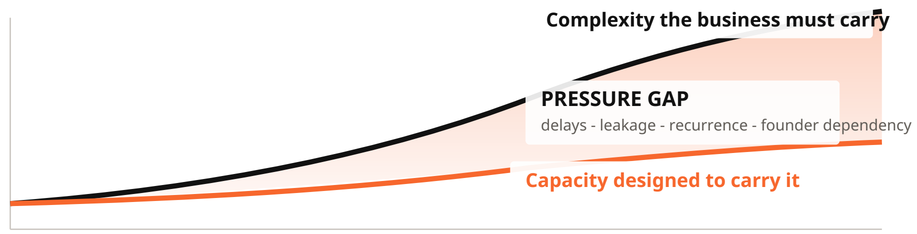
You cannot act like the founder of a company with two employees when you already have twenty.

Do not reject the change. Design it.

Operating-model redesign is not a rare corporate event. A 2025 McKinsey survey found that two-thirds of surveyed organizations had redesigned their operating models in the previous two years, and half expected another redesign in the following two. The survey covered larger organizations, not specifically founder-led companies, but it shows how widespread the underlying question has become: **what, exactly, should change?**[4]

THE CAPACITY GAP

CONCEPTUAL MODEL - NOT MEASURED DATA



WHAT I MEAN BY DESIGNED CAPACITY

I am not using capacity to mean how much more stress the founder can learn to tolerate.

I mean what the company itself can carry.

> **Designed Capacity is the deliberately created ability of a company to carry its current level of complexity and move into its next stage without requiring the founder to hold every important decision, conflict, priority and connection on their shoulders.**

Capacity is not headcount by itself. More people can create more confusion.

It is not capital by itself. Money can scale the wrong behavior.

It is not software by itself. A dashboard can formalize a version of reality that different functions still interpret differently.

It is not process by itself. A new process can solve one delay and create two more elsewhere.

Capacity appears through the way five connected lenses work together:

DIRECTION	VALUE	INTELLIGENCE	STRUCTURE	MOVEMENT
Where the company is actually going, not only what the strategy says.	Where value is created, transferred, diluted or lost across the business.	What the company can see, understand and decide - and whether functions share one reality.	Who owns what, where authority sits, and how escalation and handoffs work.	Whether decisions become results or work waits, repeats and requires rescue.

See - Trace - Redesign is how the work moves. **Direction - Value - Intelligence - Structure - Movement** are where I look.

Healthy pressure and capacity pressure are different.

Business will never be pressure-free. A new customer creates responsibility. A product release creates uncertainty. A consequential decision should carry emotional weight.

Healthy pressure comes from attempting something important while the company still knows how to respond. There is uncertainty, but there is also ownership, information, a next move and some ability to recover.

THE METHOD

See. Trace. Redesign.

The method does not begin with a new hire, a restructuring, a dashboard or a predetermined operating system. It begins by separating the visible symptom from the connected constraint underneath it.

SEE

Test the founder's explanation against operating reality.

Start with the founder's hypothesis, then compare it with decisions, numbers, customer behavior, workflows, handoffs and the different realities reported by different functions.

A feeling matters. It can be the first signal. But a feeling is a signal worth investigating - not the conclusion.

TRACE

Follow one real problem across the company.

A decision. A customer promise. A campaign. A release. A delayed order. A repeated conflict. A metric that changed unexpectedly.

Who noticed it? What information was available? Who was supposed to decide? Where did the work wait? Which function inherited the consequence? Where did it return to the founder?

REDESIGN

Change the smallest connected mechanism capable of changing the outcome.

Preserve what works. Do not restructure a capable team to prove that action is being taken. Do not install a complete operating system when one decision path, customer journey, capability or handoff is the real constraint.

Experience tells me where to look first.

Evidence tells me whether I am right.

FROM ONE COMPANY TO A REPEATABLE PATTERN

One company gave me the question. The years after gave me the pattern.

Workista could have remained only a painful story about a very young founder who worked too hard and delegated too little.

It did not.

In the years after the exit, I worked as a consultant, advisor and business analyst. I worked with founders across different products, markets and stages. I later led e-commerce at HEALBE across more than seventy markets, where commercial growth depended on product, marketplaces, marketing, customer experience, support, analytics and operations moving together. Now I am a founder again.

Across those roles, I kept seeing the same architecture under different problems.

OPERATING EXAMPLE / HEALBE

The company appeared to need more awareness. Customers needed more understanding.

At HEALBE, the apparent need was greater awareness for an unfamiliar wearable: more PR, more social-media recognition, more videos and more product exposure.

But customers were already reaching the product. What they lacked was a coherent explanation across marketplace content, packaging, application onboarding and support.

VISIBLE PROBLEM

Insufficient awareness

WHAT WE TRACED

Insufficient understanding across the customer journey.

We rebuilt the educational journey, added clearer onboarding and instruction materials, rewrote support scripts, and used interviews with customers - including people who returned the product - to understand where the experience was breaking.

This work formed part of a wider e-commerce transformation through which e-commerce grew from roughly one-third to more than 80% of company sales.

> **The first answer was not "bring more people into the journey." It was "make the journey understandable to the people already arriving."**

THE SAME SYMPTOM CAN HIDE DIFFERENT CONSTRAINTS

Weak sales did not mean the same thing twice.

ADVISORY EXAMPLE / SUSTAINABLE FASHION

A sustainable-fashion founder believed that nobody liked the product and that she had not found her audience. The company responded by appearing everywhere and applying essentially the same selling strategy to its website, marketplaces, social media and offline markets.

The product had not yet received a coherent commercial test.

VISIBLE PROBLEM

The product is unwanted

WHAT WE TRACED

Customer, channel, positioning and commercial capability were disconnected.

The work focused on the customer, the appropriate marketplace and channels, positioning, channel-specific selling content, controlled traffic spending and the e-commerce capability the company actually lacked. Instead of rebuilding a product she believed in, we built a route to market that could test it properly.

Why the obvious fix can make the company harder to run

When leadership does not understand a recurring problem, it still feels pressure to act.

The company adds meetings, emails, Slack channels and approvals. It buys another dashboard. It restructures. It fires people. It hires a senior executive who performed brilliantly somewhere else and expects that person to work magic inside a completely different system.

Any of those interventions can be correct. But a good intervention in the wrong place can compound the original problem.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Richard Daft and Robert Lengel distinguished uncertainty from ambiguity: sometimes the problem is not missing data, but the absence of a shared interpretation. A new dashboard may therefore give the company more numbers while marketing, sales, finance and operations continue to explain the same result differently.[5]

More meetings can create more communication without producing a decision. A restructuring can create movement without changing the mechanism that failed. A senior hire can enter a company with unclear priorities, fragmented information and insufficient authority - and then be blamed for failing to solve a problem the company never made possible for them to solve.

The goal is not to avoid hiring, systems, processes or restructuring. The goal is to understand what they are supposed to fix before making the company absorb the cost of them.

POSITIONING

Designed Capacity begins before another expensive intervention.

Founder coaching develops the person leading the company. Traditional strategy work helps determine where the business should go. Operating systems standardize how the company is managed. A fractional executive enters the organization to own execution.

Each can be the right intervention.

> **Designed Capacity begins when a founder-led company has traction, a recurring problem crosses functions, and leadership is no longer certain that the obvious explanation - or the obvious intervention - is correct.**

I enter as an external advisor: outside the operating hierarchy, but close enough to examine real decisions, reports, workflows, customer evidence and contradictions between functions.

The aim is to establish what is actually happening, trace the connected constraint, and design a focused intervention that the founder and leadership team can carry forward.

What changes is not only that the founder receives an answer. They can finally explain what is happening, what is merely a symptom, what should be stress-tested first, what should not be changed impulsively, and which responsibility the company must learn to carry without routing it back through them.

They move from reacting to the pressure to seeing its structure.

Why I built Designed Capacity

I built Designed Capacity because I needed it myself.

At twenty-two, I needed somebody outside my company who could see it without being trapped inside it. Somebody with whom I did not have to perform strength. Somebody who could separate my exhaustion from the operating reality and tell me what was actually happening before leaving became easier than continuing.

I did not have that person at the right time.

Years of consulting, operating and advising gave me the distance to recognize that the experience was not unique to Workista, my age or my mistakes. The same pressure appears in companies that look completely different from one another. It appears through different leaks, departments and numbers. But nothing breaks in isolation.

I am a founder again now. That matters because this is not a method reserved for other people's companies. I use the same discipline to challenge my own explanations, recognize repeated patterns earlier and ask whether I am solving the visible problem or the real one.

THE BELIEF

Capacity is designed.

Building a business is not a performance of calm. You cannot build something that matters deeply to you and feel nothing.

Emotion is not the failure.

The failure is requiring the founder's emotional and physical endurance to remain the structure holding the company together.

A company can ask a great deal of its founder. It should not need the founder to hold everything on their shoulders.

Growth creates pressure.
It does not create capacity.

Bring one recurring problem you no longer trust your own explanation of.

The 25-Minute Founder Fit Call is a first conversation about what feels hardest to carry, what may be connected, and what the clearest next step may be.

BOOK THE 25-MINUTE FOUNDER FIT CALL

25 minutes - free - opens the booking calendar

RESEARCH FOUNDATION - LIVE LINKS

1 Larry E. Greiner, "Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Grow," Harvard Business Review, May-June 1998 (originally published in 1972). OPEN SOURCE

2 Jay R. Galbraith, "Organization Design: An Information Processing View," Interfaces 4(3), 1974. DOI: 10.1287/inte.4.3.28. OPEN SOURCE

3 John Joseph and Metin Sengul, "Organization Design: Current Insights and Future Research Directions," Journal of Management 51(1), 2025. DOI: 10.1177/01492063241271242. OPEN SOURCE

4 McKinsey & Company, "A New Operating Model for a New World," June 18, 2025. Survey covers broader organizations, not specifically founder-led companies. OPEN SOURCE

5 Richard L. Daft and Robert H. Lengel, "Organizational Information Requirements, Media Richness and Structural Design," Management Science 32(5), 1986. DOI: 10.1287/mnsc.32.5.554. OPEN SOURCE