



03

THE DELEGATION BOOMERANG

You handed it off. It came back. Or it's still out there, not moving, waiting for you to push.

DEPENDENCY TYPE EXECUTION & DELIVERY DEPENDENCY

HOW IT SOUNDS "IT DOESN'T MOVE UNLESS I PUSH IT."

TIME TO FIRST RELIEF ONE STALLED PROJECT RESTARTED THIS WEEK, WITHOUT YOUR PUSH

FIRE DANGER — HOW FAST THIS ONE COMPOUNDS



3.1 THE SCENE

Three weeks ago you delegated the client onboarding revamp, and today you realized you're still running it.

The handoff felt clean at the time. You picked a capable person, explained the project on a call, she took notes, everybody left energized. Week one, movement. Week two, quieter. Week three, you check the project board and it's exactly where it was nine days ago — so you drop a “hey, how's the onboarding revamp coming?” into Slack, and like magic, things move. A flurry of updates. Real progress. Then you get busy, the check-ins stop, and the project coasts to a halt again, like a toy that only runs while the crank is turning. You are the crank.

The other version of this fire comes all the way back around. You delegate the thing, and days later it returns to your desk wearing a question mark: “wanted to get your eyes on this before I go further.” “Wasn't sure which direction you wanted.” “Waiting on the piece from Marcus — should I follow up with him or will you?” Every returned item is polite and reasonable, and every one puts the work back in your hands. You threw a boomerang. Of course it came back. That's what boomerangs do.

There's a slower version you can watch happen in your own meetings, too. Something gets assigned in the Tuesday call, everybody nods, notes get taken. The following Tuesday, the item resurfaces on the agenda untouched, and the explanation is always reasonable — waiting on a reply, wasn't sure of the priority, thought it was next week. The assignment happened. The transfer didn't.

So you've quietly built a follow-up habit. A mental list of everything you've handed off, and a rotation of nudges to keep it all alive — which means you never really handed anything off. You handed off the doing and kept the driving. And driving, it turns out, was the exhausting part.

YOU KNOW THIS FIRE IS BURNING WHEN

- ◆ Projects move right after you ask about them and coast to a stop when you don't.
- ◆ You keep a mental (or actual) list of everything you've delegated, because if you don't track it, nobody will.
- ◆ Delegated work returns as questions: “which direction did you want?” “can you look before I continue?”

- ◆ Multi-person tasks stall in between people, and you're the one who notices and restarts them.
- ◆ Deadlines slide silently — nobody announces a miss, the date just quietly passes.
- ◆ You've taken at least one delegated project back this quarter because pushing it was more work than doing it.
- ◆ Your check-in messages all start with “just circling on...” and you hate that about your life.
- ◆ The team describes projects as “waiting” — and can't always say on what.

3.2 WHAT'S ACTUALLY BURNING

The costume on this fire says your team lacks initiative, ownership, hustle — pick your word. And the standard advice matches the costume: “just delegate,” done harder, with better people, maybe with a project management tool on top. You may have already bought the tool. The boomerang now stalls inside the tool, with nicer columns.

3

THINGS YOU SUPPLY WHEN YOU
PUSH: URGENCY, SEQUENCE,
PERMISSION

1

NAME ON EVERY STAGE

0

NUDGES — THAT'S THE FINISH LINE

What's burning underneath is Execution & Delivery Dependency: work in your business doesn't carry its own momentum, so it borrows yours. And there's one diagnostic question that cracks this fire open, so sit with it for a second. When you push a stalled project and it moves — what did your push actually supply?

There are only three answers, and each is a different missing structure.

Sometimes your push supplies urgency. The project has no real deadline — or a soft one nobody believes — so your attention is the only clock. When you ask, it matters; when you're quiet, it doesn't. The missing structure is a schedule with consequences that exist without you.

Sometimes your push supplies sequence. Nobody's sure what comes next or whose turn it is, so the project idles at every fork until you walk over and point. The missing structure is a defined order of operations with one name on every stage.

Sometimes your push supplies permission. The person hit a decision they didn't feel authorized to make and parked the whole project rather than risk the call. Your nudge reads as “proceed,” and

off they go. The missing structure is authority — which means this boomerang is Fire 01 hiding inside a project plan, and you should run that playbook alongside this one.

This is also why the project management tool keeps disappointing you. A tool displays structure; it doesn't create it. Load a project with no believed dates, no stage owners, and no pre-granted decisions into the fanciest board on the market, and you get the same stall with better columns. Founders switch tools the way sick people switch pillows — the relief is real for about a week, and the underlying condition hasn't moved an inch.

FIRE WATCH

The trap is taking it back. Every founder in this fire eventually says it: “it's faster if I just do it myself.” And in the moment, it's true — this week, doing it yourself is faster. But every take-back teaches your team that stalled work eventually goes home to you, which makes stalling a valid strategy, which produces more stalls, which produces more take-backs. That's how founders end up personally executing half the business at year six with a payroll full of capable people. The take-back is the fire feeding itself.

One more reframe before the plan, because it matters for how you show up to it: the people on your team who “lack follow-through” are mostly people executing inside a structure where following through requires information they don't have — the real deadline in your head, the sequence in your head, the permission in your head. The momentum has been living in your habits all along, and nobody can execute a habit they can't see.

And count what the driving is costing you, because it's more than the nudging minutes. Keeping the mental registry of everything you've delegated — who has what, how long it's been quiet, when to check without seeming like you're hovering — is a background process that never stops running. Founders in this fire describe being tired in a way their calendar doesn't explain. The calendar only shows the meetings. It doesn't show the registry.

Every push you supply is a structure you haven't built yet.

FOUNDER FIRE CODES™

⚡ 3.3 THE RESPONSE PLAN

Put it out this week.

1	2	3	4	5	6
PICK ONE BOOMERANG	DIAGNOSE YOUR PUSH	REPLACE THE PUSH	NAME EVERY STAGE	RESET THE HANDOFF	SIT ON YOUR HANDS

1 PICK ONE BOOMERANG

Choose a single delegated project that's currently stalled or orbiting back to you. One. Not the whole portfolio — the plan works by fixing one project completely and letting your team feel the difference, not by half-fixing six. Pick the one whose stalling costs the most, and name it out loud as the test case.

2 DIAGNOSE YOUR OWN PUSH

Look at the last two times this project moved. Find your fingerprints — the Slack nudge, the meeting question, the “any update?” — and ask what each push supplied: urgency, sequence, or permission. Write the answer down, because it's the prescription. Most stalled projects are missing one or two, rarely all three, and guessing wrong wastes the week.

3 INSTALL THE REPLACEMENT FOR WHAT YOU SUPPLY

Now replace your push with structure, matched to your diagnosis. If you supply **urgency**: set real dates per stage with the team in the room, visible to everyone, with a named cost for slipping (“if this passes Thursday, the launch email moves and the client hears about it”). If you supply **sequence**: write the stage order down — five to eight stages, each with a done-condition, so “what's next” is a lookup instead of a founder question. If you supply **permission**: pre-grant it in writing: list the decisions inside this project the owner makes without you, right on the project page.

One note on dates, because founders set them wrong constantly: teams believe deadlines that are public and connected to something real, and quietly ignore the ones that live in a DM and move without comment. Set dates in the open, name the downstream effect, and let the team set some of them themselves — a date someone chose is a date someone defends.

4 PUT ONE NAME ON EVERY STAGE

“The team owns it” means you own it. Every stage of the project gets exactly one name — not a department, not a pair, one accountable human who may pull in whoever they need. A simple table on the project page does it:

STAGE	ONE NAME	DONE WHEN	THEN HANDS TO
Draft the new onboarding flow	Dana	Flow doc covers signup through kickoff	Marcus
Build it in the systems	Marcus	Test client runs end to end clean	Dana
Client-facing copy & assets	Dana	All touchpoints written and loaded	Priya
Live pilot with next new client	Priya	First client through with notes captured	Owner review

5 RESET THE HANDOFF, OUT LOUD

Re-delegate the project properly — and name what changed, so this reads as a system upgrade instead of a critique.

SAY THIS TO THE PROJECT OWNER

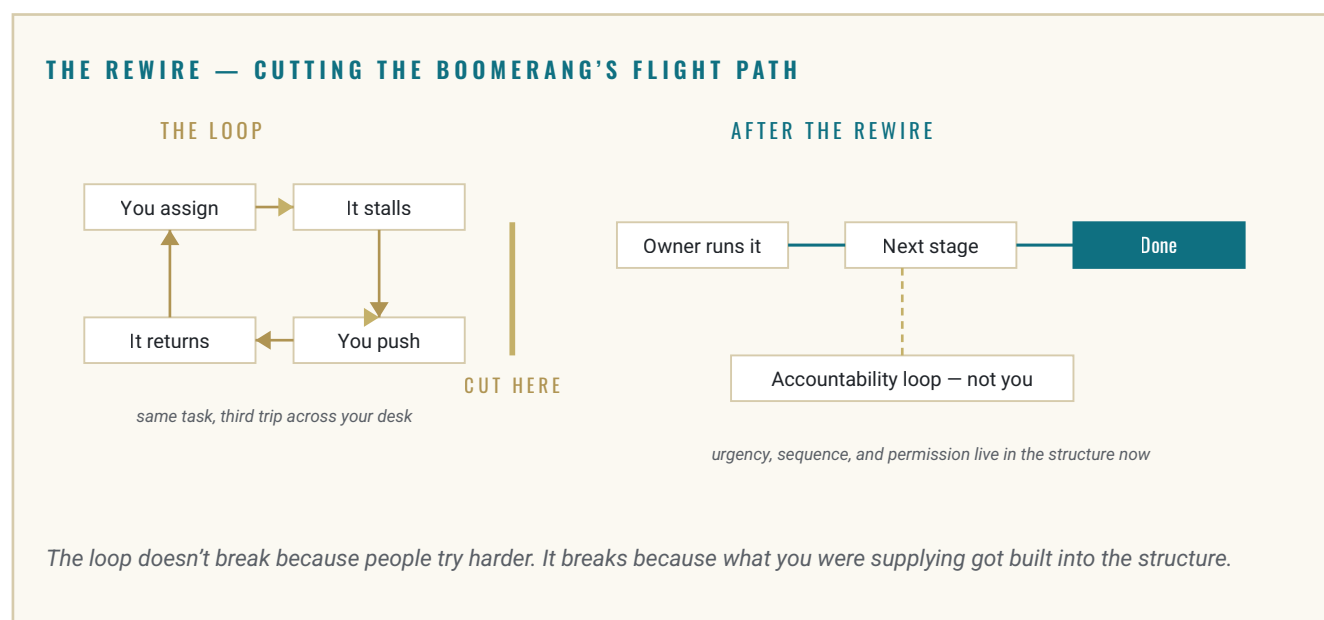
“I want to reset this project, and I’ll own my part: I handed you a task and kept the engine. The deadline lived in my head, the order lived in my head, and half the decisions still needed my nod — so of course it only moved when I pushed. That’s fixed now. The stages, dates, and owners are written down, and the decisions on that list are yours without checking. From here, this is yours to drive. If it hits a real wall, flag it the day it happens — don’t wait for me to come asking, because I’m not going to.”

6 SIT ON YOUR HANDS THROUGH ONE FULL CYCLE

Then comes your hardest job: don't push. Let the next stage run without a single nudge. If it moves — and with the structure installed, it usually does — your team just experienced self-driving work, and so did you. If it stalls anyway, do not revert to nudging: find which structure failed. A date nobody believed? A done-condition too vague to check? A decision that wasn't on the pre-granted list? Fix the package, not the person, and run the cycle again. A stall after a real handoff is information. A stall after a vague one is just Tuesday.

3.4 THE PREVENTION PLAN

Rewire it so it stops coming back.



You fixed one project. Prevention means changing how work leaves your hands so every future delegation carries its own momentum. Three structures.

STRUCTURE ONE: THE COMPLETE HANDOFF PACKAGE

The boomerang is built at the moment of handoff. A task handed off as a what — “revamp the onboarding” — keeps its urgency, sequence, and permission in your head, and the project has to keep coming back to collect them. This is exactly what the Whole-Picture Handoff™ exists to fix. Every real transfer carries six layers: the **What** (the outcome, with a definition of done you could check on a Friday afternoon), the **When** (deadlines and the trigger conditions that start each stage), the **Why** (what this connects to and what breaks if it's wrong — context is what lets people

make good calls mid-stream instead of parking), the **How** (steps, tools, examples), the **Standard** (what good looks like), and the **Judgment** (what they decide alone, what escalates). Before any delegation leaves your hands, check it against those six. The layers you'd have to “fill in later” are precisely the ones that would have come back as a boomerang.

Run the onboarding revamp through it and you can see the difference in texture. The What: a new-client flow live by the 30th, where “live” means the next real client runs through it end to end. The When: starts now; stage two triggers when the flow doc is approved. The Why: two clients mentioned slow starts last quarter, and renewals ride on the first two weeks. The How: the current flow doc, the tools, and the last revamp's files. The Standard: the welcome experience reads at the level of our best client's kickoff — here's that example. The Judgment: change anything about sequence and templates without asking; anything touching pricing or promises escalates. That package doesn't boomerang. There's nothing left in your head for it to come back for.

STRUCTURE TWO: ACCOUNTABILITY LOOPS THAT SKIP YOUR DESK

In the old wiring, all accountability ran through you: you noticed, you asked, you chased. Replace yourself with loops that don't include you. The pattern: every active project posts a short written status on a fixed weekly rhythm — owner writes it, whole team sees it, three lines: what moved, what's next, what's blocked. Blocked items get claimed in the thread by whoever owns the blocking stage, not resolved by you. Your role shrinks to reading — and only intervening on a project that's flagged blocked twice in a row, which is now a defined escalation, not a founder patrol. The difference is enormous: chasing is you supplying momentum; a loop is the structure supplying it, on schedule, whether or not you're paying attention.

The loop also solves a problem you've been handling with irritation: the chronically slow teammate. Under the old wiring, their pattern hid inside your general pushing — everybody got nudged, so nobody stood out. In a written weekly loop, patterns surface as data: one person's stages run late three weeks straight while everyone else's move. Now it's a coaching conversation with receipts instead of a vague frustration you carry around — which is a better deal for them, too.

STRUCTURE THREE: SEQUENCE AS A HOUSE RULE

Make the Fire 03 disciplines the default for how any multi-stage work gets set up, not a rescue you perform on sick projects: every project gets stages with done-conditions before it starts; every stage gets one name; every handoff between stages has a defined trigger (“when the draft doc is complete, Dana notifies Marcus in the project thread, and Marcus's clock starts”). Write these

three rules into how projects are opened in your project tool — template it — so the structure gets built at kickoff by whoever opens the project, instead of retrofitted by you at stall number two.

WHO HOLDS IT

Assign the operating rule to one person — usually your ops lead: no project launches without stages, names, and dates. When the enforcement of the structure belongs to someone besides you, you're finally out of the momentum business entirely.

★ FIRE MARSHAL'S NOTE

Every nudge you swallow this week, write down what you were about to supply — the deadline, the next step, or the go-ahead. That list is the exact spec for the structure you're missing.

3.5 MAKE IT YOURS

Twenty minutes, one project, real names and dates.

FILL IN · THE TEST CASE

The boomerang project I'm fixing first: _____. Currently stalled at: _____.

FILL IN · MY PUSH DIAGNOSIS

The last two times it moved, my push supplied (circle): urgency · sequence · permission. The structure that replaces me: _____.

FILL IN · ONE NAME PER STAGE

Stage 1: _____ — owned by _____, done when

Stage 2: _____ — owned by _____, done when

Stage 3: _____ — owned by _____, done when

FILL IN · PRE-GRANTED DECISIONS

Inside this project, the owner decides these without me: 1. _____ 2.
_____ 3. _____

FILL IN · THE LOOP

Every _____ at _____, project owners post what moved /
what's next / what's blocked in _____. I read; I only step in when a project is
blocked twice in a row.

FILL IN · THE RESET CONVERSATION

I'm resetting the handoff with _____ on _____, and then not
touching the project until _____.

✓ 3.6 PROOF IT'S OUT

Observable signs, not vibes:

- ☐ The test-case project advanced a full stage with zero nudges from you — check your own sent messages to confirm zero.
- ☐ A blocked item got flagged and claimed by a teammate in the status loop before you'd even read the thread.

- ☐ A deadline was at risk and the owner told you in advance — the slip announced itself instead of silently passing.
- ☐ Your “just circling on...” message count is measurably down week over week.
- ☐ A brand-new project launched with stages, names, and dates set by your team, template-first, without you asking.
- ☐ Something you delegated came back finished — not as a question wearing a draft.

WATCH FOR A RELIGHT

- ◆ You catch yourself doing a stealth patrol — checking the board daily and composing casual nudges. Old crank, same hand.
- ◆ A take-back happens under deadline pressure and doesn't get handed back afterward. One rescue is judgment; an unreturned rescue is the boomerang re-forming.
- ◆ Status posts start going thin or skipping weeks and nobody says anything. The loop is the momentum machine; if the loop decays, every project is quietly re-attaching to you.

Work that's packaged whole **doesn't come back. It comes through.**

FIRE 03 · CLOSED



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