PROBLEM? RELAX. YOU'VE GOT THIS!

I Hired My First Employee and Suddenly I'm the HR Department

How to Define Responsibilities, Onboard and Delegate Work, and Coordinate with Accounting and an HR Specialist Without Having to Learn Everything During Your First Crisis



Max Paradox

I Hired My First Employee and Suddenly I'm the HR Department

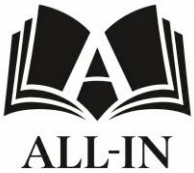
How to Define Responsibilities, Onboard and Delegate Work, and Coordinate with Accounting and an HR Specialist Without Having to Learn Everything During Your First Crisis

Max Paradox

PROBLEM? RELAX. YOU'VE GOT THIS!

ISBN: 9788384839904

ALL-IN Rafał Płonkowski



CONTENTS

INTRO 5

Chapter 1 - Congratulations, You're a Manager Now. Nobody Mentioned the Instructions. 11

Chapter 2 - The Job Description Is Not a Bottomless Shopping Cart 19

Chapter 3 - Welcome Aboard. Now Please Explain What You're Supposed to Be Doing. 28

Chapter 4 - Your Accountant Is Not a Mind Reader, and Neither Is Your HR Specialist 36

Chapter 5 - The Boomerang Assignment: How to Delegate Work Without Getting It Back 45

Chapter 6 - The First Mistake: Fix the Damage Before You Fix the Person 54

Chapter 7 - "I Told You Yesterday!" and Other Communication Strategies That Don't Work 63

Chapter 8 - The Empty Chair Problem: When Half Your Company Calls in Sick 72

Chapter 9 - Your Calendar Is Not Made of Rubber: Planning a Workweek That Can Survive Reality 81

Chapter 10 - Payday Without Panic: Building a Monthly Payroll Routine That Actually Works 90

Chapter 11 - "How Do You Think You're Doing?" The Performance Review Without the Corporate Theater 100

Chapter 12 - "Starting Monday, We're Doing Things Differently": Changing the Rules Without Creating an HR Disaster 109

Chapter 13 - The Employee Knows the Password, and Suddenly Your Business Needs Permission to Exist 118

Chapter 14 - Friday, 4:47 P.M.: Your First Real HR Crisis Has Arrived 127

Chapter 15 - Your Employee Said No. This Is Not Necessarily a Rebellion. 137

Chapter 16 - Revenue Took a Holiday. Unfortunately, Payroll Didn't. 146

Chapter 17 - When the First Hire Doesn't Work Out: Ending Employment Without Setting Fire to the Office 155

Chapter 18 - The System Worked Beautifully Until Everyone Stopped Using It 164

Chapter 19 - Before Your Employee Says "I've Had Enough": Recognizing Problems Nobody Has Reported Yet 174

Chapter 20 - You're the Boss, Not the Entire Emergency Services Department 183

INTRO

At 3:17 on a Thursday afternoon, your first employee walks into your office holding a customer order and asks a perfectly reasonable question: "Am I allowed to approve this change, or should I wait for you?" You open your mouth to answer, but your phone rings. It's your accountant, who needs information about the employee's pay. Before you can explain, another message arrives from the HR specialist asking whether the necessary employment paperwork has been completed. You stare at the screen, suddenly aware that three different people are waiting for decisions you didn't realize belonged to you. Six weeks ago, you were a business owner. Today, you appear to be the entire management team, payroll department, and emergency information desk. Your job title hasn't changed, but your responsibilities have been breeding quietly behind your back.

Hiring your first employee is supposed to be a milestone worth celebrating. You've built something that needs more than one person's efforts, and that should be encouraging. You imagine handing over routine tasks, spending more time with customers, and perhaps finishing work before your evening becomes an unofficial second shift. Then reality arrives carrying a folder of unanswered questions. Your new employee needs instructions, access to tools, decisions about priorities, and explanations of things you've been doing instinctively for years. Meanwhile, the administrative obligations of becoming an employer don't disappear because you have a small business. Apparently, the universe has no special exemption for entrepreneurs who are already very busy.

The fundamental difficulty is that a business operated by one person is often held together by knowledge that exists nowhere except inside that person's head. You know which customers need

extra attention, which deadlines are flexible, and which apparently harmless requests can turn into expensive commitments. You remember why a particular supplier is unsuitable, although the reason was never written down. You can change priorities halfway through the morning without explaining yourself because you are both the person making the decision and the person executing it. Once somebody else joins the business, that arrangement becomes unreliable. Your employee doesn't inherit your experience simply by accepting the job. Unfortunately, workplace telepathy remains unavailable as a standard feature of employment contracts.

This is where many well-intentioned owners start creating problems without recognizing them. They recruit a capable person, explain the general responsibilities, and expect common sense to handle the details. But common sense cannot supply missing information or clarify authority that was never defined. An employee might know exactly how to complete a task yet have no idea whether they can make a judgment call when circumstances change. They might ask permission repeatedly, frustrating you, because the alternative is risking criticism for acting independently. You then complain that they lack initiative, while they quietly conclude that initiative is something the company encourages in theory and investigates afterward. Neither person intended to create this arrangement, but both become trapped inside it.

Delegation is particularly deceptive because handing someone an assignment feels remarkably similar to handing over responsibility. The difference appears later, when the work returns to you with questions, incomplete information, or decisions nobody was authorized to make. You may discover that you have stopped performing the physical task while retaining every ounce of its mental burden. You still remember the deadline, monitor progress, check every detail, and worry about the outcome. Your employee has effectively become an additional pair of hands attached to your

original workload. Genuine delegation requires clear outcomes, sensible decision-making boundaries, adequate resources, and an agreed way to raise exceptions. It also requires something many owners find uncomfortable: allowing another competent person to work without reproducing every one of your personal habits.

Then there is onboarding, a word that sounds wonderfully organized until you attempt it in a business with no training department. You cannot simply place an employee beside your desk, demonstrate a few tasks, and assume professional independence will emerge by Friday. Effective onboarding involves preparing the working environment, explaining essential procedures, introducing appropriate safeguards, and allowing skills to develop through practice and feedback. It doesn't require a spectacular presentation or an employee handbook large enough to qualify as office furniture. It does require identifying what someone must know before performing work safely and correctly, and what they can reasonably learn later. Most importantly, it requires time. Hiring another person doesn't immediately create more hours in your day. At first, it often consumes some.

The administrative side introduces a different sort of confusion. You may already have an accountant who handles your business finances, so you naturally assume that employment-related matters will be taken care of as well. Perhaps they will. Perhaps their service includes payroll but not broader HR administration. Perhaps another specialist prepares employment documents while you remain responsible for providing information and making decisions. The only reliable answer comes from clarifying the actual arrangement. Outsourcing a service doesn't mean outsourcing your awareness of what needs to happen. An external professional cannot record an event they were never told about, verify an agreement they haven't seen, or make every employment decision on your behalf. "I thought someone else was handling it" is an explanation, not a management system.

This book won't pretend that employment law, payroll obligations, and workplace requirements are identical everywhere. They depend on the jurisdiction, the type of employment relationship, the circumstances, and the rules currently in force. Some decisions require qualified legal, payroll, accounting, or HR advice. You shouldn't improvise those decisions from a half-remembered article or treat a general business guide as a substitute for professional assessment. What you can do is organize your responsibilities so you know which questions to ask, what information to gather, which specialist to involve, and how to confirm that an important matter has actually been handled. The objective is practical competence, not earning an imaginary doctorate in Employment Administration During Lunch Breaks.

There is another person in this story, and their experience matters just as much as your frustration. Your first employee has joined a business whose rules may still be evolving. They want to understand what success looks like, which decisions they can make, and whether asking questions will be welcomed or interpreted as incompetence. They also have their own limits, obligations, expectations, and rights. You may feel that the business deserves extraordinary flexibility because you've invested years of effort into building it. Your employee hasn't necessarily made that same personal investment. That doesn't make them disloyal. It means you're establishing a professional relationship between two people with different responsibilities. Managing that difference fairly is one of the essential skills of becoming an employer.

Nor does becoming a good employer mean becoming endlessly available, endlessly accommodating, or endlessly enthusiastic about paperwork. You still have customers, expenses, deadlines, and a business that needs to earn money. Sometimes you won't have the time or resources to implement an elaborate system. Sometimes a decision will be unpopular. Sometimes your employee will make a mistake, and sometimes the person who needs to

rethink a decision will be you. You'll need to distinguish problems caused by insufficient training from problems caused by performance, and genuine emergencies from ordinary inconveniences wearing dramatic costumes. You also need processes that work during busy weeks, employee absences, and periods when cash flow is less cheerful than your original business forecast.

The goal of this book is to help you build that practical foundation. You'll learn to translate expectations into workable responsibilities, introduce a new employee without overwhelming either of you, and transfer meaningful ownership of tasks. You'll develop a clearer approach to communication, performance discussions, difficult decisions, and the everyday coordination that keeps work moving. You'll also learn how to work intelligently with outside specialists rather than turning every unfamiliar document into a personal research project. The examples won't assume unlimited money, perfectly cooperative customers, or employees who arrive equipped with every skill you will ever need. Those people are exceedingly rare and probably run their own consulting firms.

You don't need to transform your small company into a miniature corporation. You need enough structure to make responsibilities understandable, important information accessible, and decisions appropriately assigned. Some arrangements will need revisiting as the business grows. Others will be surprisingly simple once you've explained them properly. There will still be interruptions, mistakes, misunderstandings, and occasional messages arriving at spectacularly inconvenient moments. But they needn't all become crises requiring your personal intervention. A business becomes more manageable when the people involved understand how to act, how to ask for help, and what happens when something doesn't go according to plan.

Your first employee should represent an expansion of what your business can accomplish, not the beginning of your career as a permanently exhausted human help desk. You will still be responsible for running the company, and some employment obligations will always require your attention. But you can learn to manage them without personally performing every task, answering every question, and discovering every requirement at the worst possible moment.

You hired another person because doing everything yourself had stopped making sense. The next challenge is to stop organizing the business as though you still do.

Chapter 1 - Congratulations, You're a Manager Now. Nobody Mentioned the Instructions.

The first sign that your business has changed comes at 10:26 on a Tuesday morning. Your new employee is standing beside a rental van, holding a clipboard and looking concerned. A customer has arrived to collect equipment for an event, but the booking doesn't specify whether the lighting package includes extension cables. You know the answer immediately. That particular customer always receives the additional cables because of an arrangement you made last spring. Unfortunately, the arrangement exists only in your memory. Your employee asks whether they should include the cables, and you wonder why such a simple question requires your attention. Then your phone rings, another customer needs a quotation, and someone asks where the spare batteries are kept. You hired an employee to reduce your workload. Somehow, you've become a full-time answering service for a business that used to run perfectly well when nobody else worked there.

This is the peculiar difficulty of becoming an employer for the first time. You haven't merely increased the number of people doing the work. You've changed how the business must operate. Previously, you were the person who received information, interpreted it, made decisions, performed tasks, and checked the results. Those activities happened so closely together that you rarely noticed the transitions. A customer requested something unusual, and you adjusted the order without needing to explain your reasoning. A supplier delivered the wrong product, and you knew which alternative would be acceptable. Now somebody else needs access to the information behind those decisions. Your experience remains valuable, but it can no longer function as the company's entire operating system.

When a business consists of one person, inconsistency can be surprisingly efficient. You change priorities because circumstances have changed. You make exceptions because you remember previous conversations. You keep several unfinished tasks in your head and somehow know which one deserves attention next. You might not even realize how many decisions you're making. Once an employee arrives, the same flexibility can become bewildering. Yesterday you said customer collections should be prepared before noon. Today you want an urgent quotation finished first. Both decisions may be entirely reasonable, but the employee doesn't necessarily understand what changed. From their perspective, the rules appear to have been written in disappearing ink by someone who enjoys surprise examinations.

The difference between doing work and managing work becomes important here. Performing a task means producing an outcome through your own actions. Managing someone else's work means establishing what the outcome should be, providing reasonable conditions for achieving it, defining appropriate authority, and responding when circumstances prevent progress. You still have responsibilities as a business owner, but you no longer need to participate personally in every action. That distinction sounds obvious until you notice yourself checking the employee's screen, answering questions that should have been covered by existing information, and rearranging their priorities several times a day. You aren't necessarily supervising badly because you lack leadership talent. You may simply be continuing to operate as though the entire business still belongs inside your personal attention span.

One useful starting point is to examine decisions rather than tasks. Over several ordinary working days, notice the moments when you make a judgment that another person could not confidently make using the information currently available to them. Perhaps you authorize a replacement item, prioritize a particular

customer, choose between suppliers, or recognize that a seemingly routine request carries unusual risk. Write down the decision, what information influenced it, and whether the employee might need to make something similar. You don't need to record every passing thought. The purpose is to identify recurring judgments that keep pulling work back to you. A list of twenty activities might look intimidating, but discovering that twelve of them depend on the same missing rule gives you a manageable problem to solve.

Consider the equipment rental business again. The employee can check inventory, prepare collection documents, and inspect returned items. Yet they keep asking whether a customer can substitute one model of speaker for another. The owner initially sees this as a lack of confidence. A closer look reveals that the business has no clearly communicated substitution policy. Some alternatives are acceptable because the performance and agreed service remain appropriate; others would change the customer's booking or create additional obligations. If the employee learns the relevant criteria and knows which changes require authorization, many routine cases can proceed without interruption. The owner still handles decisions involving significant commercial consequences. Neither person needs to pretend that independence means making every possible judgment alone.

This raises an uncomfortable possibility: some of the questions irritating you are perfectly rational responses to the environment you've created. If your employee gets criticized for deciding without permission, they're likely to seek permission more often. If you then criticize them for asking too many questions, you have created a workplace puzzle with no winning answer. The solution is not a motivational speech about taking initiative. It's making the boundaries understandable and applying them consistently. An employee should know which ordinary choices are theirs, what information must be checked first, and when to involve you. In return, you need to accept appropriate decisions made within those

boundaries, even when you might have chosen a slightly different approach.

Of course, the transition takes time, which is inconvenient because time is probably why you hired someone. In the first weeks, you may spend more hours explaining work than you save by handing it over. You need to prepare access, answer unfamiliar questions, review early results, and correct assumptions that have never been tested outside your own head. Treating every minute of training as wasted productivity encourages shortcuts that cost much more later. But training should not become endless conversation either. Pick recurring activities that genuinely matter, explain what successful performance looks like, and create opportunities for the employee to practise. As competence develops, the amount of assistance should change. If you are still demonstrating an ordinary task for the twentieth time, investigate what is preventing the learning from sticking.

Your own calendar needs to accommodate this new responsibility. The owner of the rental business might reserve a short period near the beginning of the day to settle priorities and another appropriate opportunity to address questions that can safely wait. Matters involving immediate safety, serious customer consequences, or work that cannot proceed require a different response. The exact arrangement depends on the business. What matters is that your employee knows when support is available and doesn't have to interrupt you continually to obtain routine decisions. Equally important, you must actually honour the arrangement. Scheduling a daily conversation and then being unavailable for it every day creates a process that exists mainly as a decorative feature of the calendar.

Another adjustment concerns the meaning of quality. When you performed everything yourself, you knew instinctively whether a result was good enough. The new employee doesn't have access to that private standard. Imagine asking them to prepare equipment

for collection and then complaining that the presentation looks untidy. What specifically makes it untidy? Are cables incorrectly labelled, protective cases dirty, or items missing from the checklist? Those are observable problems. Perhaps you simply prefer arranging the cases in a different order. That may be a legitimate preference, but it shouldn't automatically be treated as evidence of poor performance. Distinguish requirements affecting safety, completeness, customer commitments, and quality from personal habits that don't materially affect the result.

This distinction becomes particularly important when an employee discovers a better way of working. Owners are often deeply attached to processes they developed through years of trial and error. That experience deserves respect, but it doesn't make every inherited practice optimal. Your employee might suggest changing the layout of the storage area so frequently rented equipment can be collected more efficiently. Your first instinct may be to explain why the existing arrangement has always worked. Before defending it, examine the proposal. Does it reduce unnecessary movement? Are there safety, inventory, or operational consequences? Can it be tested without creating significant disruption? Accepting a useful improvement doesn't diminish your authority. It means you're benefiting from having another person who can think.

There are limits to what may properly be handed over. Certain decisions belong to the employer or require specific qualifications, authorization, or professional support. Employment documentation, workplace safety, financial commitments, and access to sensitive information may involve legal or contractual requirements that depend on where the business operates. Hiring someone doesn't remove your obligations as an owner or employer. You need to distinguish everyday operational responsibility from duties that cannot simply be transferred through an informal conversation. Where the correct approach isn't

clear, consult an appropriately qualified professional. The aim is neither to control everything personally nor to treat delegation as a magical ceremony that makes legal responsibilities disappear.

Money and available capacity also shape how well this transition works. A new employee cannot absorb unlimited responsibilities just because the business needs help. You may expect them to prepare rentals, handle enquiries, update inventory, clean equipment, and assist with deliveries. Each activity sounds manageable in isolation. Together, they may exceed the available working time, particularly when customers arrive unexpectedly or an item requires additional inspection. If performance seems disappointing, compare the workload with what can realistically be completed before concluding that the employee lacks effort. Leadership includes deciding what should wait, what matters most, and what work the business cannot responsibly accept. Sometimes the most valuable managerial decision is declining an additional commitment.

You may also discover that becoming a manager changes your relationship with mistakes. When you made a minor error yourself, you understood the circumstances and probably forgave yourself after correcting it. When somebody else makes one, you see the consequences before you understand the reasoning. The temptation is to take the task back because you know you could finish it faster. Occasionally, immediate intervention is necessary. In ordinary learning situations, however, repeatedly rescuing the employee prevents them from developing the judgment you hired them to exercise. Explore what happened, explain the requirement, and decide what support or safeguard is appropriate. A business cannot become less dependent on its owner if every imperfect result causes the owner to reclaim responsibility indefinitely.

The employee also needs a reliable way to tell you what isn't working. Imagine they regularly struggle to find equipment because the booking software uses product names that differ from

the labels in storage. They mention the issue twice, but you're busy and promise to look at it later. Eventually, they stop raising it and develop a handwritten translation list. You now have an employee who appears independent, an unofficial inventory reference, and a problem waiting for the next person who doesn't know about the list. Listening to operational concerns is part of management because the person performing the work often notices friction that the owner has learned to ignore. Not every suggestion needs to be implemented, but recurring difficulties deserve a reasoned response.

Your new role will also involve conversations you may find awkward. An employee might question a deadline, request different working arrangements, or disagree with your assessment of a task. That doesn't automatically indicate disloyalty. They have a professional relationship with the company, not an obligation to share every personal sacrifice you make as its owner. Sometimes you can accommodate a request; sometimes business requirements or legal constraints prevent it. You need to explain decisions without promising what you cannot deliver or making disagreement feel dangerous. A respectful working relationship doesn't require constant agreement. It requires sufficient clarity that people can continue working professionally when their preferences differ.

A practical way to judge your progress is to observe what happens during an ordinary busy morning. Do routine tasks proceed without you supplying forgotten information? Can the employee identify what requires authorization? Are important problems raised while there is still time to respond? Do you spend your attention on decisions that genuinely require your role, or are you still functioning as a human confirmation button? Don't expect complete independence immediately. Look for a gradual change in the kind of assistance required. Early questions may concern where information is stored. Later questions should increasingly involve

unusual situations, competing considerations, or significant exceptions. That's evidence that knowledge and judgment are developing rather than merely being borrowed from you.

The most significant change may be psychological. Your business is no longer something you personally perform from beginning to end. It is becoming a collection of responsibilities shared by people who need sufficient information, authority, and support to work effectively. You remain accountable for running the enterprise, but you don't prove that accountability by personally handling every detail. You demonstrate it by establishing conditions in which appropriate work can happen without your constant involvement. That requires patience, clear decisions, and occasionally allowing somebody else to do something differently from how you would have done it.

One afternoon, the owner of the rental business may receive a short message: a customer requested an alternative speaker, the employee checked the agreed criteria, confirmed a suitable option, and updated the booking. No urgent phone call, no lengthy explanation, no equipment waiting beside the van while everyone looks for the boss. The owner reviews the information when appropriate and returns to negotiating a new commercial contract. It's an unremarkable moment, which is precisely what makes it valuable. The business has completed a routine piece of work without borrowing the owner's entire brain.

That is what hiring your first employee should eventually make possible. Not a second version of yourself, not an audience for your remarkable dedication, and certainly not somebody whose main responsibility is asking whether you're available. Another capable person, doing defined work with the appropriate support, while you finally begin learning the difference between owning every responsibility and personally performing every task.

Chapter 2 - The Job Description Is Not a Bottomless Shopping Cart

"Other duties as required" is a wonderfully convenient phrase. It takes up very little space, sounds professionally flexible, and appears to offer unlimited possibilities. Unfortunately, some business owners interpret it as permission to add any task that happens to exist within a thirty-mile radius of the employee. You hire someone to coordinate orders for your custom stationery company. Within a month, they're answering customer enquiries, checking print proofs, ordering envelopes, photographing products, updating your website, preparing promotional emails, and occasionally collecting supplies. Then you wonder why the invitations for an important customer haven't been dispatched. Your employee explains that they've spent most of the morning preparing a product launch announcement you requested yesterday. You reply that customer orders should obviously come first. Apparently, the job description was supposed to include that information through a system of invisible footnotes.

Defining a job properly is one of the most useful things you can do before expecting consistent performance. Yet it's frequently treated as a recruitment exercise rather than an operational decision. You prepare a vacancy announcement, describe the sort of person you'd like to hire, and list activities that sound broadly relevant. Once the employee arrives, the document disappears into a folder while the actual job develops through spontaneous requests. Gradually, the role becomes whatever you happen to need that week. Some flexibility is necessary in a small business, where work rarely fits into perfectly separate departments. But flexibility without boundaries makes it difficult for either person to understand what should be accomplished, what deserves priority, and whether the workload is realistic.

A useful job description begins with the business purpose of the role. Why are you paying someone to perform this work? Perhaps the stationery company needs reliable coordination between customer approval and the final dispatch of completed orders. That purpose is more informative than a collection of verbs such as "assist," "support," "handle," and "coordinate." Those words aren't inherently bad, but they become nearly meaningless when nobody explains their objects. Support whom, with what, and toward which result? A position exists because the business needs particular outcomes, not because it requires another human being who can be assigned miscellaneous activities. If you cannot describe the position's central contribution in a clear sentence, the role may still be insufficiently defined.

For the stationery company, the owner might decide that the employee's principal responsibility is making sure approved customer orders move accurately through preparation, production coordination, and dispatch. Several tasks naturally follow: confirming the details received from customers, checking order completeness, communicating with production partners, updating order status, and arranging shipping. These activities belong together because they contribute to the same outcome. By contrast, building a new social media campaign serves a different purpose. The employee might reasonably undertake occasional promotional tasks, but those responsibilities need to be considered alongside the primary role, not introduced through the assumption that any work involving a computer belongs to the same position.

Once you've identified the purpose, examine the work that genuinely needs doing. Owners tend to underestimate time spent on small, repeated activities because each one appears insignificant. Responding to a customer question may take four minutes. Finding an archived design, checking a special paper specification, and clarifying a delivery address can take considerably longer. If these interruptions occur throughout the