EXECUTIVE PACTIVE HANDBOOK

IT'S NOT OVER!

From Corporate Outcast to Business Insider

A Handbook for the Executive Pactive

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The executive who starts with structure ends up with control. The one who starts with excitement ends up managing consequences.

It tells you how to evaluate any business the right way. The decision is yours. The framework is here so that decision is informed, not emotional.

THIS HANDBOOK DOES NOT TELL YOU WHICH BUSINESS TO BUY

The funding chapter is a briefing document. Read it before any conversation about capital. Know your options before someone else defines them for you.

USE CHAPTER 13 BEFORE YOU TALK TO A LENDER

The Insider Advantage, the Negotiation Advantage, and the Old Bull Strategy are not background reading. They are preparation. Read them before you sit down with a corporate prospect. They will remind you what you already know and sharpen how you use it.

DEPLOY CHAPTERS 5, 6, AND 7 BEFORE CLIENT CONVERSATIONS

Return to it when you are evaluating a specific opportunity. The Framework in Chapter 8 and the Scorecard in Chapter 9 are working tools. Pull them out. Fill them in. Run every opportunity through both before you commit.

USE IT AS A REFERENCE

Cover to cover, in one sitting. It is short by design. Every chapter is a single argument, tightly made. No padding. No repetition. You should finish it in under two hours.

READ IT ONCE

A starting point for structure, not a novel of ideas to ponder.

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

FOREWORD

This is not a book you read and set on a shelf.
It is a working reference. Use it that way.
If you were eliminated from a corporate role and are evaluating business ownership, this handbook gives you the framework to evaluate any opportunity the right way: structure first, numbers second.
It will not tell you which business to buy. It will tell you what questions to ask, which risks to eliminate before you commit, and how to deploy the one advantage nobody else in your market carries: twenty years of operating experience inside the organizations you are now going to serve.
Read it once. Return to it every time you evaluate an opportunity. The Formula and Scorecard in Chapters 8 and 9 are working tools. Fill them in. Run every deal through both before you commit.
The decision is always yours. This handbook makes sure it is an informed one.
Ken Aselton

INTRODUCTION: Why Structure Matters More Than Effort

Structure determines whether a business survives. Most people figure that out after the fact.
You are reading this before. That is the entire advantage.
This handbook is built around one principle: remove every predictable way to fail before you commit a dollar. The executives who succeed in business ownership are not the ones who worked hardest. They are the ones who entered with the right structure and used their experience as the competitive weapon it is.
One word runs throughout: pactive. Passive enough for freedom, active enough for control. Build to it.
Start with Chapter 1. Run every opportunity through the Formula in Chapter 8 and the Scorecard in Chapter 9. Return to Chapters 5, 6, and 7 before every client conversation.
The rest is execution.

CHAPTER 1: The Problem Is the Structure

Most business failures don't happen all at once. They happen quietly, when stress replaces confidence and the owner realizes they can't step away without consequences. The cause is almost never effort. It is structure.

The myth of working harder.

Hard work can delay failure. It cannot redesign the system. Structure determines outcome long before effort comes into play.

How traditional businesses concentrate risk.

They need a location, staff always present, inventory on hand, and the owner involved every day. A long-term lease fixes costs while revenue stays uncertain. Inventory ties up cash. Payroll creates obligations that don't scale down. Owner presence turns time off into lost income. None of these risks announce themselves on day one. They surface at the worst possible time.

Activity versus control.

Many owners confuse being busy with being in control. True control means the business functions without constant intervention. In most traditional models, the owner is not the controller. They are the shock absorber. Every problem flows to them. Every absence creates instability.

Executive Pactive Businesses start with elimination.

The right question is not what to add. It is what can be removed without reducing value to the customer. Each removal reduces fragility. The owner stays important but stops being indispensable. That distinction is the difference between owning a business and being owned by one.

KEY POINT: Structure is set before you open the door. Fix it at the design stage or manage its consequences for years.

CHAPTER 2: Leases Are Silent Business Killers

Most owners don't think of a lease as dangerous. They think of it as necessary. It is one of the most underestimated sources of risk in business ownership.

The core problem.

Revenue moves with the market. The lease payment does not. When a business is locked into a long-term lease backed by a personal guarantee, a temporary slowdown becomes a permanent problem. A few bad months can create years of consequences.

Personal guarantees are not paperwork.

A personal guarantee converts business risk into personal debt. It turns a commercial decision into a personal liability. Owners tolerate bad situations longer than they should because the lease is always there demanding payment.

Location is not the advantage it used to be.

Customers find services online. They choose based on responsiveness, reputation, and convenience. In most service industries, the physical location adds cost without adding value. If a service can be delivered at the customer's location, a storefront is not an asset. It is an anchor.

Executive Pactive Businesses operate without permanent real estate.

They run from home offices, service vehicles, or customer sites. Costs scale with activity. When demand slows, so does the cost base. The owner can step back without fixed obligations pulling the business under.

KEY POINT: A good idea inside a bad lease structure is still a bad investment.

CHAPTER 3: When Proven Systems Still Fail

Few words are as reassuring to a buyer as proven system. The implication is clear: if it worked for others, it will work for you. That is not what proven means.

What proven actually means.

When a system is described as proven, it usually means the franchisor has sold many units, some operators are doing well, or the brand has existed for a long time. None of these guarantee survivability at your unit level. A system can be widely adopted and still rely on thin margins. Top performers can exist while the average operator struggles.

Unit-level economics are what matter.

Revenue per location. Net margins after fees. Labor as a percentage of revenue. Break-even point. A recognizable brand does not pay the bills. Many owners discover too late that their business only works when volume is high and everything goes right. That is not a margin of safety. That is dependency.

Growth hides structural weakness.

In expanding systems, new units temporarily cover inefficiencies. When growth slows, weakness surfaces. Owners who assumed the system would carry them realize they are responsible for risks they never evaluated.

Franchising is a distribution model, not a business model.

It determines how a concept is distributed. It does not determine whether the underlying economics make sense for you at the unit level. Ask not whether it worked for others. Ask what has to go right for it to work for you.

KEY POINT: If success requires perfect labor, steady demand, constant owner presence, or flawless execution, the system is not as safe as it appears.

CHAPTER 4: What an Executive Pactive Business Is

An Executive Pactive Business is not defined by industry. It is defined by structure. Understanding what it is requires equal clarity about what it is not.

It is not simply a small business.

Small refers to size, not quality. An Executive Pactive Business is right-sized by design. Some operate with a single vehicle and two employees. Others run multiple crews across several territories. What they share is optional scale. Growth is permitted, not required.

It is service-first.

Services do not require warehousing. They do not spoil. They do not go obsolete. They scale labor with demand rather than capital with inventory. The best Executive Pactive Business services are repeatable, trainable, and non-discretionary. They target problems that large organizations generate continuously, where the buying decision is made by someone who used to be your peer.

It is not credential-dependent.

If the owner must hold a specific license for the business to operate, the owner becomes the bottleneck. Executive Pactive Businesses rely on systems and training, not personal credentials. The business operates because the process works. But the owner brings something the process cannot: the instinct and relational intelligence of someone who has operated at the same level as their customer.

What it is not.

A retail storefront dependent on foot traffic
A model with heavy build-out requirements
A business with thin margins and high fixed costs
A business where the owner must be present for revenue to exist
A business where one employee can shut everything down

The Salon Suite: A Third Model

One structure that has emerged as a natural home for Executive Pactive businesses is the salon suite. A suite leases month to month. No long-term lease. No personal guarantee on a multi-year commercial commitment. No separate electric, gas, or water bill. No WiFi setup. No washer and dryer to

buy. All of that is included. The operator walks in on day one with a professional, private space that is fully operational. The cost is fixed, predictable, and scalable — add a second suite when the business supports it, step back to one if it does not. For service businesses that require a dedicated professional environment without the structural fragility of a permanent commercial lease, the suite model is the most efficient business address available.

KEY POINT: The goal is not to own a business. The goal is to own the right business.

CHAPTER 5: The Insider Advantage

Most business owners spend years trying to understand their customers. You already have that understanding. You spent twenty years on the other side of the table.

You are a former peer, not a vendor.

You know what a VP of Operations is accountable for and what keeps them from sleeping. You know that the person across the table is not just evaluating your service. They are evaluating what choosing you says about their judgment. Give them a reason to feel smart for saying yes.

How corporations actually buy.

From the outside, corporate procurement looks like a formal process. From the inside, you know the truth. Most decisions are made informally by one or two people with a problem, long before any formal process begins. The formal process is documentation for a decision that has already been made. Find the person with the problem. Have a direct conversation. Make it easy for them to say yes and easier for them to justify it internally.

The budget cycle is your calendar.

Capital expenditures are approved in Q4 for the following year. Maintenance budgets are allocated in advance and spent down by Q3. Your competitors show up when they need revenue, which is almost always at the wrong time in someone else's cycle. You know when to show up. You lived inside the cycle.

Your network is already your pipeline.

The people you worked with, reported to, and managed over a twenty-year career are now distributed across dozens of organizations. A phone call to someone you worked with ten years ago is not a cold call. It is a warm conversation between two people who already have context and mutual respect.

The spy in the room.

You walk into that room knowing things the person across the table assumes you don't know. You can read the table. You know what they are thinking before they say it. That is not deception. It is decades of accumulated intelligence, deployed on your own behalf for the first time.

KEY POINT: Every contract you close reflects what you know. Your bank account will confirm what your competitors will never understand.

CHAPTER 6: The Negotiation Advantage

The best negotiator in any room is not the most aggressive. It is the one who already knows what the other person needs to walk away satisfied. You are that negotiator.

They are not buying a service. They are managing risk.

The question they are actually asking, even when they ask about your price, is: will this vendor make me look bad? Will they create a problem I have to explain upstairs? Will they show up, perform, document, and disappear quietly? When you walk into a negotiation understanding that you are selling risk reduction, not a service, you stop competing on price. You start competing on confidence.

The invisible decision matrix.

The visible matrix is budget authority, approval thresholds, and compliance documentation. The invisible matrix is who else has informal influence, whose endorsement accelerates approval, and whose silence signals objection. You know this matrix exists because you operated inside it. Navigate it. Most of your competitors do not know it exists.

Give them the language to say yes.

Every executive who wants to bring on a new vendor has to justify that decision upward. Most vendors make them build that rationale themselves. You remove the friction. You arrive with the business case pre-built, framed in the language their organization uses: ROI, downtime reduction, compliance risk mitigation, operational continuity.

Stop discounting forever.

The moment you discount to win a deal, you signal that your confidence is performance, not reality. Price your service at what it is worth. The right clients will respect it. The wrong ones will leave. Both outcomes are the right result.

The renewal is easier than the first contract.

Renewal conversations with corporate clients are almost never about price. They are about trust, continuity, and the cost of switching. Be the vendor that makes it easy to keep you. A single Fortune 500 account, managed well, can generate more revenue over five years than a full year of new business acquisition.

KEY POINT: They thought they were getting rid of a cost. They were releasing an asset.

CHAPTER 7: The Old Bull Strategy

Two bulls stand on a hill above a valley. The young bull says let's run down and get one. The old bull says let's walk down and get them all.

That parable contains the whole idea.

Don't compete in the footrace.

The young operator is hungry, fast, and cheap. They will outrun you in every race you agree to enter. Don't agree. They run downhill at full speed and get one deal. One customer, one job, one transaction. Then they start running again, because tomorrow they need another one. Running that way is not building a business. It is running on a treadmill and calling it a strategy.

Precision beats speed.

In a market full of operators competing on response time and price, precision is a differentiator so rare that it reads as authority. Precision means showing up with exactly the right proposal for exactly the right problem, framed in exactly the language the buyer uses internally. None of that comes from hustle. It comes from experience. The young operator hustles. You aim. One of those approaches scales. The other exhausts itself.

Hold the price.

At some point a competitor will offer a lower price. The young operator will panic and match it. Don't fold. The buyer who chooses on price alone is not the buyer you want. They will leave the moment a lower price appears. The buyer who chooses you at your price is choosing reliability, credibility, and confidence. That buyer does not leave for a lower price. They expand the contract.

The walk down the hill.

Identify accounts worth having. Enter through relationship, not cold outreach. Take the first meeting without a proposal. Ask about their operation. Listen. Follow up with a proposal that addresses the real problem, framed in their language. Close the contract. Deliver at a level that makes the decision-maker look smart. Ask who else in the organization has similar needs.

By the time the younger operator has burned through three clients chasing a fourth, you have a portfolio of accounts that renews on its own every year.

KEY POINT: The old bull story is not about being slow. It is about being strategic.

CHAPTER 8: The Executive Pactive Success Formula

See the Executive Pactive Success Formula pullout on the following reference page.

Before you analyze upside, eliminate fragility. Use this formula on every opportunity before you look at a single financial projection. A business that fails one filter deserves hard scrutiny. A business that fails two deserves to be walked away from.

1. SIMPLICITY: Can you run this without becoming it?

Score high: one core service, repeatable process, minimal materials, trainable labor.

Score low: multiple SKUs, complex supply chains, owner as the only qualified technician.

2. MARGIN: Your buffer between a problem and a crisis.

Executive Pactive Businesses require net margins of 40% or better. Margin is the emotional distance between ownership and panic. High-margin businesses let you think. Low-margin businesses make you react.

Score high: net margins above 40%, variable cost structure.

Score low: thin margins, fixed overhead, small mistakes become existential threats.

3. OPEN TERRITORY: Where your credentials are the competitive advantage.

You are a former peer walking into a room with the plant manager, the VP of Operations, the Director of Facilities. You speak the same language. You know their budget cycle and their decision process. That credibility is worth more than any marketing budget.

Score high: fragmented market, room to operate, local reputation beats brand.

Score low: dominated by nationals, artificial entry barriers.

4. RENEWABLE DEMAND: Does this business refill itself?

Executive Pactive Businesses are built around demand that regenerates naturally. Equipment needs service. Facilities need maintenance. Compliance requires inspection. When demand returns on its own, you stop being a salesperson and start being a scheduler.

Score high: recurring need, natural return cycles, relationships outlasting individual transactions.

Score low: one-time purchases, project-based work.

5. ECONOMIC DURABILITY: Does this business survive a bad year?

Target services that solve problems that do not go away when confidence softens. Compliance-driven, safety-driven, and maintenance-driven demand persists regardless of economic conditions.

Score high: necessity-based demand, structural not sentimental.

Score low: luxury, convenience, or aspirational services where the customer can simply wait.

A business that passes all five filters is worth owning. Run the formula before you look at financials. Structure first. Numbers second.

KEY POINT: Status is not a business model. Structure is.

CHAPTER 9: The Executive Pactive Scorecard

See the Executive Pactive Scorecard pullout on the following reference page.

The Formula tells you whether a business deserves consideration. The Scorecard tells you where the risk lives. Use it on every deal. Score each category 1 to 5. Five means the structure works in your favor. One means risk is stacked against you.

1. Simplicity of Operations ___/5
If you got sick for two weeks, would this business function without you calling in?

2. Capital at Risk ___/5
If this doesn't work out in Year 1, what can you get back?

3. Net Margin Potential ___/5
At what revenue level do you stop worrying about payroll?

4. Demand Durability ___/5
Does demand exist because customers want this, or because they need it?

5. Economic Cycle Exposure ___/5
What happens to this business the year after a major recession?

6. Territory Accessibility ___/5
Is this market waiting for someone professional to show up?

7. Marketing Control ___/5
If the marketing platform changed its algorithm tomorrow, would you survive?

8. Owner Optionality ___/5
Could you take a two-week vacation in Year 2 without the business suffering?

9. Multi-Territory Scalability ___/5
In five years, could you run three of these without working harder?

10. Real Estate Independence ___/5
What happens to this business if you need to relocate?

11. Owner Dependency Risk ___/5
Are you buying a business or buying a job with more risk?

12. Employee Leverage Risk ___/5
Who on your team could walk out tomorrow and take your business with them?

TOTAL SCORE: ___/60

48-60: Strong structure. Proceed with confidence.

36-47: Acceptable with specific risk mitigation.

24-35: Significant structural concerns. Pause and reassess.

Below 24: Walk away.

KEY POINT: The most expensive mistake an executive can make is not walking away from a bad deal. It is staying in one because walking away felt like failure.

CHAPTER 10: Pactive Ownership

There is no passive business. Every business must be managed. What people mean when they say they want passive income is this: I don't want to be trapped inside the business for it to function.

Pactive defined.

Pactive means passive enough to give you freedom, active enough to give you control. In a pactive business, you are active in oversight, not execution. You control finances, hiring, and direction. You are not required to personally produce the revenue. You are not the engine. You are the operator of the engine.

Counter-strapped businesses.

Some businesses only work when the owner is physically present. If the owner doesn't show up, nothing meaningful happens. These are well-paying obligations, not assets. Time off is expensive. Illness is dangerous. Growth requires exhaustion.

The employee hostage problem.

Ask this before buying any business: can one employee shut this business down? If yes, you are not in control. Executive Pactive Businesses emphasize trainable roles, documented processes, and replaceability.

Why pactive businesses scale cleanly.

Businesses dependent on the owner do not scale. Every unit of growth requires more of the owner's time. Pactive businesses add crews, not hours. Systems, not stress. Growth becomes additive, not exhausting. And importantly, growth becomes optional.

KEY POINT: The right business gives you control. It does not take it away.

CHAPTER 11: Honeymoon vs. Renewable Revenue

The most important question you can ask about any business is simple: do I get paid once, or do I get paid again and again for the same customer?

The honeymoon business.

Built around one-time transactions. The customer comes in, buys once, and disappears. The business must constantly replace yesterday's customers just to stay even. Marketing must run continuously. Without it, revenue stops immediately.

Renewable revenue.

Industrial facilities have to be cleaned. Equipment builds up contamination. Production lines must be maintained. Compliance requires it. Safety demands it. None of that stops because the economy softens. Consider an executive who builds a fleet of industrial cleaning technicians in professionally wrapped Mercedes Sprinter vans, serving Fortune 500 manufacturers. The first job earns the relationship. The second job is scheduled before the technician leaves the parking lot. Within twelve months, the owner has annual service agreements with eight facilities. Revenue is no longer uncertain. It is calendared, contracted, and controlled.

Why it reduces stress.

When customers return predictably, the owner stops waking up every morning asking who to find today just to survive. The focus shifts to serving existing customers well and improving systems. Businesses with renewable revenue allow owners to think clearly. They create breathing room that is not just financial. It is psychological.

Fortune 500 procurement teams do not want to vet a new vendor every quarter. They want a professional who understands their world, respects their time, and makes the problem disappear. That relationship renews itself.

KEY POINT: A business with renewable revenue is easier to value, easier to finance, easier to sell, and easier to live inside.

CHAPTER 12: The Economic Cycle

Every business operates inside an economic environment whether the owner acknowledges it or not. Ignoring it does not make you immune. It makes you unprepared.

Three categories.

Recession-Exposed: Feel pain quickly when spending tightens. These look extremely attractive right before conditions change.

Recession-Resistant: Experience slowdowns, not collapses. Customers may stretch service intervals but don't disappear. Executive Pactive Businesses are designed to fall into this category. Every structural decision in the framework pushes toward recession resistance by default.

Recession-Proof: Demand is driven by necessity, health, safety, compliance, and demographics. Rarely glamorous. Consistently durable.

Economic exposure compounds structural risk.

A recession-exposed business with a long-term lease, thin margins, and owner dependency is not just exposed. It is fragile. Each risk layer amplifies the others. A slowdown becomes a crisis because the structure cannot absorb pressure.

The right questions before buying.

Which economic category does this business fall into? What happens to revenue under pressure? Can costs scale down as demand softens? Does the structure survive a bad year intact?

KEY POINT: You do not need to win every year. You only need to avoid losing permanently.

CHAPTER 13: Funding the Business

Everything in this handbook has been about removing fragility. Funding is part of that design. The wrong capital structure can undo every structural advantage before you open the door.

Tool 1: ROBS (Rollover for Business Startups)

An IRS-recognized mechanism to roll your existing 401(k) or IRA into a new C-corporation, which then funds the business. No taxable distribution. No early withdrawal penalty. No monthly debt service. No lender requiring personal collateral. For someone with $100,000 to $500,000 in retirement savings, this is often the most efficient path available. Setup costs typically run $5,000 to $10,000 with annual administration fees of $1,500 to $2,500. Working with a qualified ROBS provider is essential. Errors in execution can trigger taxes and IRS scrutiny.

Tool 2: Equipment Leasing

Rather than deploying $30,000 to $80,000 of startup capital on vehicles and equipment, lease it. The monthly payment is covered by a fraction of what a single service crew generates. You enter the business with cash still in the bank. That flexibility is a survival advantage in the early months. Leases typically run 24 to 60 months and are fully deductible as business expenses. Approval is based on personal credit and equipment collateral value, not business revenue history.

Tool 3: SBA 7(a) Loans

Government-backed financing up to $5 million, with lower equity injection requirements than conventional loans, typically 10% to 20% of total project cost. The key advantage is the government guarantee, which produces better rates and terms for borrowers without extensive business credit history. The disadvantage is process: 60 to 90 days to close, personal guarantee required, detailed documentation needed.

Practical funding combinations.

ROBS only: Full retirement rollover, no debt, maximum simplicity.
ROBS plus equipment lease: Retirement funds cover the franchise fee; leasing covers vehicles and equipment.
ROBS plus SBA 7(a): Retirement funds meet the equity injection; SBA covers the remainder.
Personal savings plus equipment lease: For buyers without qualified retirement accounts.

KEY POINT: The funding structure should never be an afterthought. Enter ownership with maximum flexibility and minimum fragility.

CONCLUSION: Control Is the Endgame

Business ownership is sold as freedom. Most owners discover a different reality. They trade one set of constraints for another. That outcome is not inevitable. It is the result of buying the wrong structure.

What durable businesses share.

Simple operations with no single point of failure
High margins that create room for error
Flexible costs that scale with activity
Renewable demand that returns on its own
Pactive ownership that puts the owner in strategy, not execution

No dependency on any one person, place, or assumption
Control is about placement. Put your involvement where it creates leverage: setting standards, designing systems, reviewing performance, and having the conversations your background makes you uniquely qualified to have. Remove yourself from daily production, firefighting, and being the indispensable piece.
The final filter.
Does this business survive without me today?
Does it survive a bad year?
Does it survive a bad hire?
Does it survive an economic slowdown?
Does it renew its revenue naturally?
Can I fund it without betting everything I have built?
If the answers are yes, you are not just buying income. You are buying resilience, and you are finally deploying the most underutilized asset you own: everything you already know.
The goal is a business where your experience is the moat, your relationships are the pipeline, and your understanding of how organizations think is the competitive advantage nobody in your market can buy, copy, or replicate.
They took you off the org chart.
They cannot take back what you learned.
Put it to work.

Control is the whole point.
The rest is distraction.

THREE BUSINESSES THAT PASS THE SCORECARD
The Framework Is the Filter. These Are the Answers.
Every business in the following list was evaluated against the Executive Pactive Success Formula and Scorecard before it was offered. Each one passes all five formula filters: simple operations, high margins, open territory, renewable demand, and economic durability. None requires a retail storefront. None requires a long-term commercial lease. All operate from a professional suite footprint, a home office, or both. All are executive-operated by design.
GetHairMD — Hair restoration services delivered from a professional suite. A $3.6B market growing 15% annually. Recurring client relationships. No retail inventory. The buying decision is made by the client who is already sitting in the stylist's chair next door. Franchise fee: $50,000. Territory: available nationally.
Cortz — Sports and recreation facility services. Territory-based. The client is a municipality, school district, or private athletic facility. The decision-maker is a Director of Parks and Recreation, a VP of Operations, or a Facilities Director — someone you already know how to talk to. Franchise fee: $50,000. Territory: available nationally.
ArcticResto — Recovery and restoration services. Cryotherapy, cold therapy, and performance recovery delivered from a professional suite. The market is athletes, executives, and health-forward clients who pay a premium and return on a schedule. Franchise fee: $50,000. Territory: available nationally.
If one of these fits your scorecard, the next step is a conversation — not a sales pitch. Call or email Ken Aselton directly.

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It's Not Over. It's just getting started.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ken Aselton began his career as a Commissioned Officer in the United States Army, flying helicopters and leading soldiers. He left the military the same way most executives leave their organizations, having given everything, and ready for what came next.

Since then, he has founded and built multiple multi-million dollar businesses, developed and operated multiple franchise systems, and advised executives and entrepreneurs on business structure, growth, and ownership strategy. He is a husband, father, and grandfather who has sat in every chair this book describes, the corporate one, the restructured one, and the one behind his own desk.

He wrote this handbook because no one handed him a framework when he needed one. He is handing you one now.
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Before you analyze upside, eliminate fragility.

01	**SIMPLICITY** *Can you run this without becoming it?*	**HIGH:** One core service, repeatable process, minimal materials, trainable labor. **LOW:** Multiple SKUs, complex supply chains, owner as the only qualified technician.
02	**MARGIN** *Is your buffer between a problem and a crisis in place?*	**HIGH:** Net margins above 40%, variable cost structure, room for error. **LOW:** Thin margins, fixed overhead, where small mistakes become existential.
03	**OPEN TERRITORY** *Are your credentials the competitive advantage?*	**HIGH:** Fragmented market, room to operate, your corporate fluency beats brand dominance. **LOW:** Dominated by nationals, artificial entry barriers, no room for a professional operator.

04	**RENEWABLE DEMAND** *Does this business refill itself?*	**HIGH:** Recurring need, natural return cycles, relationships that outlast individual transactions. **LOW:** One-time purchases, project-based work, demand that disappears after first delivery.

05	**ECONOMIC DURABILITY** *Does this business survive a bad year?*	**HIGH:** Necessity-based, compliance-driven, or safety-driven demand that persists regardless of conditions. **LOW:** Luxury, convenience, or aspirational services where the customer can simply wait.

Score each category 1 to 5. A score of 5 means structure works in your favor. A score of 1 means risk is concentrated against you.

#	CATEGORY	THE EXECUTIVE QUESTION	SCORE
01	**Simplicity of Operations**	*If you got sick for two weeks, would this business function without you calling in?*	__ / 5
02	**Capital at Risk**	*If this doesn't work in Year 1, what can you get back?*	__ / 5
03	**Net Margin Potential**	*At what revenue level do you stop worrying about payroll?*	__ / 5
04	**Demand Durability**	*Does demand exist because customers want this, or because they need it?*	__ / 5
05	**Economic Cycle Exposure**	*What happens to this business the year after a major recession?*	__ / 5
06	**Territory Accessibility**	*Is this market waiting for someone professional to show up?*	__ / 5
07	**Marketing Control**	*If the marketing platform changed its algorithm tomorrow, would you survive?*	__ / 5
08	**Owner Optionality**	*Could you take a two-week vacation in Year 2 without the business suffering?*	__ / 5
09	**Multi-Territory Scalability**	*In five years, could you run three of these without working harder?*	__ / 5
10	**Real Estate Independence**	*What happens to this business if you need to relocate?*	__ / 5
11	**Owner Dependency Risk**	*Are you buying a business or buying a job with more risk?*	__ / 5
12	**Employee Leverage Risk**	*Who on your team could walk out tomorrow and take your business with them?*	__ / 5

TOTAL **____ / 60**				