

From Doer to Reviewer

The Career Transition Most Technically Strong People Underestimate

The reviewer creates safe judgement in other people; the doer merely proves they can still do the task themselves.

PREPARED BY

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Document Status and Use

CONTROLLED USE *This is an external Buildit development resource. It is not company policy, an industrial instrument, a competency matrix, legal advice or a guarantee of promotion, remuneration or retention. Adapt it to the client's delegations, systems, privacy requirements, project controls and formal people processes.*

Purpose

A practical transition guide for becoming accountable for work prepared by others without rewriting it, suffocating ownership or lowering the standard.

Audience

Senior contract administrators, contracts managers and first-time commercial managers.

How to Use This Manual

1. Read the relevant chapter before a live conversation, review or decision—not after the consequence has already landed.
2. Apply the method to current project work. The suite is designed to change observable behaviour, not merely increase awareness.
3. Record the decision, action, owner, evidence and review date produced by the exercise.
4. Use the related manuals where the issue crosses career, communication, judgement, leadership or stakeholder boundaries.

Contents

- 5. 1. Why Technical Excellence Stops Being Enough
- 6. 2. Set Expectations Before Work Begins
- 7. 3. Review Without Rewriting
- 8. 4. Distinguish Error, Preference and Alternative Judgement
- 9. 5. Delegate Consequence, Not Just Activity
- 10. 6. Develop Judgement in Junior Staff
- 11. 7. Correct Without Humiliation
- 12. 8. Monitor Without Suffocating Ownership
- 13. 9. Become Accountable for Work You Did Not Prepare
- 14. 10. Build a Repeatable Review System

1. Why Technical Excellence Stops Being Enough

Personal output has a ceiling; team judgement creates leverage.

The organisation promotes a reviewer because more work must become safe without passing through one person's hands. Continuing to be the strongest doer can therefore become the behaviour that prevents the next transition.

Every significant promotion requires you to stop relying on part of what made you successful at the previous level.

The difficult part of progression is not adding more skill; it is changing the unit through which you create value. Early careers reward personal production. Senior careers reward the quality of decisions, people and systems created around you.

Transition	Old source of value	New source of value
Learner → reliable producer	Effort and potential	Accurate output with declining supervision
Producer → package owner	Completing assigned tasks	Owning outcome, interfaces, evidence and forecast
Package owner → project commercial leader	Personal package control	Whole-project judgement and output through a team
Project leader → portfolio leader	Knowing one project deeply	Pattern recognition, governance and intervention across projects
Portfolio leader → Commercial Director	Operational commercial control	Enterprise strategy, capital, clients, work winning and leadership succession
EXAMPLE — THE MANAGER WHO WOULD NOT LET GO A newly promoted Commercial Manager continued rewriting every assessment and attending every package negotiation. Quality remained high but decisions slowed, the team stopped thinking and the manager had no time for forecast risk or the client. The promotion had changed the title, not the unit through which they created value.	EXAMPLE — THE MANAGER WHO WOULD NOT LET GO A newly promoted Commercial Manager continued rewriting every assessment and attending every package negotiation. Quality remained high but decisions slowed, the team stopped thinking and the manager had no time for forecast risk or the client. The promotion had changed the title, not the unit through which they created value.	EXAMPLE — THE MANAGER WHO WOULD NOT LET GO A newly promoted Commercial Manager continued rewriting every assessment and attending every package negotiation. Quality remained high but decisions slowed, the team stopped thinking and the manager had no time for forecast risk or the client. The promotion had changed the title, not the unit through which they created value.

Progression is the widening of the decisions you can safely carry, not the abandonment of technical skill.

The doer produces accurate work. The reviewer tests whether the work is complete, consistent and supported. The approver decides whether the organisation should rely on it and accepts the residual risk. Senior roles require fluency across all three positions.

To progress, practise reviewing work before you hold the title. Ask what is missing, what could fail, what the next person needs and whether the record will survive. Then practise approving in bounded situations: make the call, state the conditions, monitor the consequence and learn from the outcome.

EXAMPLE — The unofficial reviewer A CA began reviewing junior payment assessments before they reached the commercial manager. They did not simply correct arithmetic. They asked for basis, evidence, consistency, counter-position and approval amount. Over time the manager relied on the CA to protect the review gate. That behaviour became stronger promotion evidence than saying they were ready to lead.

2. Set Expectations Before Work Begins

The cleanest review comment is the one prevented by a clear brief.

State the decision, audience, authority, materiality, evidence standard, format and deadline before the preparer starts. A vague brief followed by a detailed rewrite teaches dependence.

Operating Checks

15. Explain what good looks like and what the work must allow someone to decide.
16. Identify non-negotiable legal, contractual, financial and governance constraints.
17. Separate required content from personal preference.
18. Set intermediate review points for high-consequence work rather than waiting for the final draft.

Review Brief

Field	Expectation
Decision / output	
Audience / approver	
Authority / boundaries	
Evidence standard	
Material consequences	
Review points / deadline	

3. Review Without Rewriting

A review should improve the preparer's next decision, not merely repair this document.

Ask the preparer to explain the logic before editing the words. Identify the few issues that materially affect correctness, authority, consequence or defensibility.

Working Sequence

19. Read once for the decision and recommendation.
20. Read for authority, entitlement and evidence.
21. Read for commercial consequence and stakeholder field.
22. Classify comments as error, missing analysis, alternative judgement or preference.
23. Return material comments with reasoning and ask the preparer to close them.
24. Record repeated patterns for future briefing and coaching.

Example — the redraft trap

EXAMPLE *A Senior CA rewrites a junior's variation assessment overnight because the recommendation is poorly framed. The issue is fixed, but the junior sees only the finished version and repeats the pattern. A reviewer instead marks the missing entitlement link, asks the junior to restate the decision in five lines and reviews the revised reasoning the next morning.*

4. Distinguish Error, Preference and Alternative Judgement

Not every difference is a defect.

An error must be corrected. A preference may be optional. Alternative judgement may be reasonable if assumptions and consequences are explicit. Reviewers damage confidence when every stylistic difference is treated as wrong.

Comment Classification

Type	Test	Reviewer response
Error	Incorrect fact, logic, authority or calculation	Correct and explain
Missing analysis	Decision cannot safely be made	Ask targeted questions
Alternative judgement	Different defensible weighting	Test assumptions and consequence
Preference	No material effect	Use sparingly or leave alone

5. Delegate Consequence, Not Just Activity

Development begins when the person owns an outcome within clear boundaries.

Delegation should include the decision scope, stakeholder contact, authority, support and review. Passing low-value activity while retaining every meaningful conversation does not develop a future reviewer.

Transfer the doing and the authority; retain the accountability for the outcome.

Delegation develops capability while retaining accountability. Good delegation is planned, monitored proportionately and supported with clear expectations. It is one of the clearest early signals that someone can operate above their current role because it shows they can create output through others, not only through their own hands.

Delegation is not offloading. The person who delegates retains accountability for the outcome; what they transfer is the doing, together with the authority and context needed to do it well. Delegating without clear outcomes is not empowerment, it is abdication with a friendly name.

EXAMPLE — Coaching a graduate through a subcontract package A senior contract administrator handed a graduate an entire minor subcontract package rather than parcel out tasks. They set the outcome clearly, agreed check-in points at tender, award and first claim, and let the graduate make the reversible decisions. The graduate stretched; the package was delivered soundly; and the senior CA demonstrated they could run more work than their own two hands allowed. Both readiness cases advanced at once.

EXAMPLE — Delegation that failed on unclear outcomes Under pressure, a manager told a junior to 'sort out the variations register' with no definition of done, no priority order and no check-in. Two weeks later the register was brought up in an internal meeting with the Operations Manager and it was reformatted and neat, but the material claims were untouched, with obvious technical errors, double ups, superseded claims and no science behind any of the R&O weightings. The failure and minor reputational damage was not the junior's, the outcome had never been made explicit. Reworked post meeting with a clear objective and a mid-point review, the same person delivered well and learned a skill along the way.

KEY TAKEAWAY *Delegate the task and the authority, keep the accountability, and define what 'done' looks like before you let go.*

Delegation should transfer a clear outcome, sufficient authority and a review rhythm while the manager retains accountability. It is not dropping a vague problem onto a junior or dictating every step so tightly that no judgement is required.

Match the delegation to evidence level. Early exposure needs more structure; near-readiness needs room to decide. Review the reasoning and consequences, not only whether the task was completed.

EXAMPLE - THE FINAL ACCOUNT The manager gives a CA authority to lead a final-account strategy within agreed settlement parameters. The CA prepares the position, coordinates stakeholders and recommends the landing. The manager attends the final negotiation but does not take the process back.

For each piece of work, choose deliberately among four modes:

25. Do it - the manager or embedded senior takes direct ownership because speed, sensitivity or consequence dominates.
26. Lead it - the employee owns the work with active direction and checkpoints.
27. Review it - the employee completes the work and receives focused challenge before release.

28. Clarify and return it - resolve the blockage, define the standard and return ownership to the employee.

The objective is neither automatic delegation nor automatic rescue. It is to close urgent risk while preserving the best available development opportunity.

6. Develop Judgement in Junior Staff

Questions create judgement when they expose the field the junior has not yet learned to see.

Ask what decision is required, who carries it, what assumption could reverse the answer, what happens downstream and what evidence would change the recommendation.

Readiness is visible in the questions you ask before the work begins.

The shift from task thinking to outcome thinking is one of the clearest signals of readiness. The same situation produces different questions depending on whether someone is managing their task or the outcome around it.

Task thinking	Outcome thinking
What am I supposed to do?	What outcome are we trying to achieve?
Who caused this?	What caused this, and how do we prevent it recurring?
Is this my responsibility?	Who is best placed to resolve it, and how do I help close the loop?
What answer does my manager want?	What decision does my manager need to make?
Can I finish this today?	What is the right sequence, and what risk grows if we wait?

KEY TAKEAWAY *Readiness shows in the questions you ask before the work, not only in the answers you produce after it.*

Operating Checks

29. Ask for the recommended position before giving your own.
30. Require the junior to name the weakest point.
31. Discuss what the other party is optimising for.
32. Use live work and let the junior attend the conversation where the recommendation is tested.

7. Correct Without Humiliation

Standards rise fastest where people can expose uncertainty before it becomes an error.

Give feedback privately where status is involved. Describe the behaviour, consequence, required standard and next practice opportunity. Do not turn a single mistake into a judgement about identity.

Good feedback identifies the behaviour, the consequence, the expected standard and the next opportunity to practise. "Be more commercial" or "show more maturity" is not usable. It forces the employee to decode the manager's private meaning.

Give enough examples to establish a pattern, not an indictment. Invite correction where the facts may be incomplete. Then agree on the observable change.

FEEDBACK MODEL "In the last two forecast reviews, you presented the movement but not the decision required. The team spent the meeting reconstructing your recommendation. At Senior CA level I expect the decision, commercial effect and requested authority first. You will lead that section next month using the one-page format."

Example — correction in the bullpen

EXAMPLE *A reviewer spots a material error and calls it out loudly across the open office. The number is corrected, but the junior begins hiding uncertainty. The better response is immediate containment, a private explanation and a supervised opportunity to rebuild the analysis.*

8. Monitor Without Suffocating Ownership

Control should be proportionate to consequence and capability.

Use closer review for new or high-risk work and reduce it as evidence accumulates. Invisible monitoring creates anxiety; absent monitoring creates surprises.

Review Intensity

Mode	Use when	Controls
Direct	New capability or material consequence	Frequent checkpoints; joint stakeholder preparation
Guided	Developing evidence	Milestone reviews; questions before answers
Assured	Reliable repeat performance	Exception reporting; sample review
Delegated	Established judgement and authority	Outcome review and periodic calibration

9. Become Accountable for Work You Did Not Prepare

The reviewer owns the adequacy of the review, not every keystroke in the document.

Know the limits of the review, sample intelligently, preserve evidence of material challenge and make authority visible. Do not approve work you cannot explain or defend.

When someone approves your work, they inherit part of its consequence.

An approval may release money, commit the company to a position, change a forecast, create precedent, affect programme, influence a client relationship or expose the business to later criticism. The person approving does more than confirm that you completed the task. They permit the organisation to rely on it.

The practical implication is simple: the preparer should make the transferred risk visible. If a material assumption, weak fact, time limit or counterargument remains, state it. Concealing it does not remove the risk; it merely transfers it without informed consent.

The After-the-Event Test

A good approval record is written for the decision today and the challenge tomorrow.

Imagine the decision is challenged six months later by an executive, client, auditor or dispute forum. Could the approver explain what was known, what was uncertain, why the recommendation was reasonable and what authority was exercised? Prepare the work for that future conversation.

Operating Checks

33. Confirm who prepared, reviewed, verified and approved.
34. Check that assumptions and unresolved points are visible.
35. Escalate where the reviewer lacks authority, time or specialist competence.
36. Do not let urgency convert a review into an unexplained signature.

10. Build a Repeatable Review System

Consistent review standards allow the team to become faster without becoming fragile.

Use templates, approval briefs, evidence chains, standard review questions, materiality thresholds and feedback logs. The system should make good judgement easier and repeated errors visible.

Turn repeated questions into a personal approval system.

Date / work	Question or correction	What I missed	Checklist change

Reviewer Operating Checklist

Check	Evidence / action
Decision and audience are clear	
Authority is identified	
Facts and assumptions are separated	
Options and consequences are visible	
Weakest point has been tested	
Record and conditions are complete	

Commitments and Review

Use this page to convert the manual into a small number of observable commitments. A manual has no value if the reader cannot identify what will be done differently, where it will be practised and what evidence will prove the change.

Commitment	Practice ground	Evidence / reviewer	Review date

Related Buildit Manuals

- 37. 02 — Think Like the Approver
- 38. 11 — The Commercial Manager's Field Guide
- 39. 13 — Developing People While Delivering the Project

Closing Position

The reviewer creates safe judgement in other people; the doer merely proves they can still do the task themselves.

Notes
