

BLACKTECHSTARTUP EDUCATION

Scale a Tech-Enabled Service Beyond the Founder

Turn founder-dependent delivery into documented, measurable workflows with clear ownership, quality controls, margin visibility and software/process leverage.

A tech-enabled service can be highly valuable, but investors discount businesses where the founder is the hidden operating system. The diligence question is whether delivery is standardized enough to delegate, measure and improve—and whether software/data/process assets increase throughput or margin over time. “We use AI” does not create scalability if the founder still reviews every output.

Know what weak and strong look like

READINESS AREA	WEAK / DILIGENCE RISK	STRONG / INVESTOR-READY
Workflow	Founder knows sequence; team asks in chat.	Service blueprint documents intake, decisions, handoffs, exceptions and completion criteria.
Ownership	Founder is escalation point for everything.	Named role owns each recurring stage and backup owner is trained.
Quality	Customer satisfaction is subjective.	QA rubric, sampling/acceptance threshold, rework and defect reasons measured.
Margin	Labor treated as overhead.	Direct delivery labor/vendor/software cost captured per job/customer.
Leverage	Automation count celebrated.	Hours, cycle time, error rate and gross margin improve as software/process is deployed.

Map one full delivery unit

Choose the repeatable unit—implementation, campaign, analysis, installation, managed workflow—and map trigger → inputs → work → decision → QA → customer acceptance → follow-up.

Separate standard work from expert exception

Document which decisions can follow rules/templates and which require senior judgment. Create escalation criteria so every unusual case does not automatically reach the founder.

Measure capacity

Track labor minutes/hours by stage, cycle time, queue time, rework and utilization. You cannot automate intelligently until you know where capacity disappears.

Put QA before delegation

Define observable quality: accuracy, completeness, response time, compliance, customer outcome. Sample outputs and track defects by cause. Delegation without QA simply distributes inconsistency.

Turn repeated exceptions into product/process assets

If the same founder intervention appears five times, convert it into a checklist, rule, training example, software feature or guardrail. Scalability is accumulated institutional knowledge.

Run the diligence stress test before investors do

Do not rehearse an answer. Rehearse the evidence. Give yourself a short diligence window and try to produce the underlying records without rebuilding the story from memory. A clean result is reproducible, tied to a source system or signed document, and consistent with the numbers elsewhere in the company.

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- **Workflow:** Put the underlying records on screen and prove this standard: Service blueprint documents intake, decisions, handoffs, exceptions and completion criteria. If the evidence still looks like this weak state—Founder knows sequence; team asks in chat.—record the gap, name an owner and give it a due date instead of explaining it away.
 - **Ownership:** Put the underlying records on screen and prove this standard: Named role owns each recurring stage and backup owner is trained. If the evidence still looks like this weak state—Founder is escalation point for everything.—record the gap, name an owner and give it a due date instead of explaining it away.
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→ **Margin:** Put the underlying records on screen and prove this standard: Direct delivery labor/vendor/software cost captured per job/customer. If the evidence still looks like this weak state—Labor treated as overhead.—record the gap, name an owner and give it a due date instead of explaining it away.

→ **Leverage:** Put the underlying records on screen and prove this standard: Hours, cycle time, error rate and gross margin improve as software/process is deployed. If the evidence still looks like this weak state—Automation count celebrated.—record the gap, name an owner and give it a due date instead of explaining it away.

Do the math investors will do

Delivery economics: $\text{Contribution per job/customer} = \text{revenue} - \text{direct labor} - \text{direct software/vendor usage} - \text{fulfillment costs} - \text{expected rework/support}$. Track contribution per founder hour as a transition metric. The goal is for revenue and contribution to grow while founder delivery hours per unit approach zero for standard cases.

Build the evidence investors can verify

✓ Service blueprint/SOP for core delivery

✓ RACI/owner and backup map

✓ QA rubric and defect/rework log

✓ Time/capacity data by workflow stage

✓ Per-job/customer contribution model

✓ Exception log converted into playbooks/product backlog

✓ Founder-dependency reduction trend

Questions an investor may ask

- ? What breaks if the founder takes two weeks off?
 - ? Which step consumes the most senior labor?
 - ? What percentage of work needs rework?
 - ? How much direct labor is inside gross margin?
 - ? Which repeated founder decisions should become software or process?
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30-day repair sprint

- 1 Days 1–5: map core delivery and direct cost.
 - 2 Days 6–10: define standard vs exception work.
 - 3 Days 11–15: install owners/backups and QA rubric.
 - 4 Days 16–20: collect time/rework/capacity data.
 - 5 Days 21–25: automate/document top repeated bottleneck.
 - 6 Days 26–30: run a founder-absence simulation and fix the failures.
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Research behind this guide

Use the primary and authoritative sources below to verify current rules, market conditions and technical guidance. Terms and regulations can change.

SBA — Manage Your Finances



SEC — Small Business Glossary: Due Diligence



Bessemer Venture Partners — Scaling Tech-Enabled Services



Andreessen Horowitz — Unbundling the BPO With AI



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