BUSINESS FRAMEWORK · FINANCE OS

The Business OS

From Business Pain to Permanent Solution

A 17-Stage Framework for Founders & Finance Professionals Who Think Like CFOs

01 02 TRIGGER · 03 04 SIGNAL · 05 06 ANALYSIS · 07 08 09 10 11 EXECUTION · 12 13 14 15 16 17 EVOLUTION

17 stages · 5 layers · one complete transformation

Suraj Kumar Lohani

7AM & Realtime CFO — 22+ Years in Operational Finance — Author

The Business OS

From Business Pain to Permanent Solution

A 17-Stage Framework for Founders & Finance Professionals Who Think Like CFOs

Suraj Kumar Lohani

7AM & Realtime CFO

7amandrealtimecfo.com

Dedicated To

Maa Ambe

Aadishakti Bhagwati Maa Ambe — whose grace is the source of everything in these pages.

Shikha

My life partner. My constant. The foundation on which everything else stands.

Eshansh

My son. May you always know: every page of this was written for your future.

And to every founder who has ever sat with a number they did not understand,
and chose to understand it anyway.

About the Author

Suraj Kumar Lohani

Suraj Kumar Lohani is a 7AM & Realtime CFO Automation specialist with over 22 years of hands-on operational finance experience across mid-market businesses in manufacturing, distribution, and services. He is the founder of 7AM & Realtime CFO — a consultancy and product studio focused on building financial visibility and control systems for inventory-driven businesses.

He is the author of Excel for Finance and Accounting — a practitioner-first guide to building financial models and analysis systems using Microsoft Excel. His work spans FP&A, MIS design, working capital management, financial diagnostics, and automation architecture for businesses that have outgrown manual systems but are not yet ready for enterprise ERP.

The Business OS framework emerged from 22 years of sitting with founders, CFOs, FP&A teams, CAs, CPAs, and ACCAs — watching the same problems appear in different businesses, different cities, different industries — and building the thinking system to resolve them permanently. Suraj is the advisor in this book. Aryan is every client he has ever worked with.

Experience

- 22+ years · FP&A, MIS, Working Capital, Business Diagnostics, Finance Automation
- Founder, 7AM & Realtime CFO · Author, Excel for Finance and Accounting
- Specialist in inventory-driven mid-market businesses across India and global markets

Connect

7amandrealtimecfo.com

surajkumarlohani@gmail.com

Acknowledgments

A book is never written by one person. This one is no exception.

To Shikha — who has seen every version of this work, every late night, every moment of doubt, and never once suggested stopping. Her patience and belief made this possible in ways that have no adequate acknowledgment.

To Eshansh — who did not know he was the reason this had to be finished, but was.

To every founder who took the time to share their business pain with me over the last 22 years — in meetings, in calls, in factories, in offices. You are the real authors of this framework. I only wrote down what you showed me.

To the accountants, finance managers, and CFOs who work inside mid-market businesses every day — translating complexity into clarity for founders who did not ask for it and often do not appreciate it. This book is for you as much as it is for the founders you serve.

To every reader who picks up this book with a specific business problem in mind: the 'Your Turn' sections exist because of you. The framework is only as valuable as the honesty you bring to it.

This book was written in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh — in the hours between everything else — with gratitude for the opportunity to do work that matters.

Suraj Kumar Lohani
7AM & Realtime CFO, 2026

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Preface

This book began not as a book, but as a conversation. A conversation I have had, in different forms, with hundreds of founders over more than two decades: What is actually wrong with my business — and why does fixing it never seem to stick?

The founders I work with are not struggling because they lack effort, intelligence, or ambition. They are struggling because they do not have a framework — a structured way of reading their own business, diagnosing what is wrong, acting on it precisely, and building the systems that prevent the same problem from returning.

Every existing framework I found either started too late (assuming the problem was already defined) or ended too early (stopping at a result without asking whether the business had actually changed). The Business OS was built to fill that gap.

It starts at Business Pain — the feeling that something is wrong — because that is where founders actually start. It ends at Permanent Solution — not a number, but a state in which the business continuously improves its own intelligence with each cycle through the framework.

Between those two points are 17 stages. Each stage is one step closer to the answer that has been hiding in your own business data all along.

Aryan Mehta — the founder whose company you will follow through every stage of this book — is fictional. But his numbers, his confusion, his mistakes, and his breakthroughs are drawn from real companies, real decisions, and real consequences that I have witnessed firsthand.

Read this book slowly. Do the 'Your Turn' sections before moving to the next chapter. The framework only works if it is applied — not just understood.

The permanent solution is not at the end of this book. It is in what you do with it.

Suraj Kumar Lohani
Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh · 2026

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Piracy Notice

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, shared, uploaded, transmitted, stored in a retrieval system, or used in any form by any means — electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise — without the prior written permission of the author.

Sharing this book through unauthorized channels, including but not limited to Telegram groups, WhatsApp, file-sharing websites, or torrent networks, is a violation of copyright law and is subject to legal action.

Report Piracy

If you believe you have received an unauthorized copy of this book, or if you have encountered this book being distributed without permission, please report it directly to the author.

surajkumarlohani@gmail.com

7amandrealtimecfo.com

Unauthorized reproduction of this work not only harms the author but also undermines the ecosystem that makes independent publishing and original intellectual work possible. Thank you for respecting the effort behind this book.

Table of Contents

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Table of Contents (continued)

LAYER 5 — EVOLUTION

CLOSING

7AM & REALTIME CFO

THE BUSINESS OS

From Business Pain to Permanent Solution

A 17-Stage Framework for Founders & Finance Professionals

SURAJ KUMAR LOHANI

7AM & Realtime CFO · 22 Years of Operational Finance

7amandrealtimecfo.com

Version 1.0 · 2026

The Business OS is a 17-stage framework that starts where every founder — and every advisor sitting across from a founder — actually starts: with a feeling that something is wrong. It ends where most businesses never get: a permanent solution.

This is not a theory book. Every concept in it was built from 22 years of working inside businesses — watching founders struggle with problems they could not name, make decisions without data, and fix symptoms while the root cause kept growing.

It is not a software guide. There is no system to install, no tool to subscribe to. The Business OS is a framework for thinking — a way of reading your business the way a doctor reads a patient.

The 17 stages are designed to be used in sequence. You do not need to be a finance professional to use them. You need to be honest about your business.

Who This Book Is For

- Founders and business owners of any size — from startup to enterprise — who feel something is wrong but cannot explain it precisely
- CFOs, VP Finance, Directors of Finance, FP&A; Specialists, Financial Controllers, Finance Managers, and Accounts Managers who need a structured diagnostic methodology
- CA, CPA, ACCA, CFA, Fractional CFOs, and Financial Consultants who advise businesses and want a proven framework for client engagements
- Anyone who has fixed a business problem, declared victory, and watched it return three months later

What This Book Is Not

- It is not an accounting guide or software manual
- It is not limited to any business size — the framework works from startup to enterprise
- It is not theory. Every stage in this book was built from real advisory engagements.

Read this book with a pen in hand. The 'Your Turn' sections at the end of every chapter are not optional. They are the difference between reading about the framework and actually using it.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

The Company Behind Every Chapter

Throughout this book, you will follow one company through all 17 stages of the Business OS framework. That company is Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd.

Company	Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd.
Industry	Spices & Condiments Manufacturing
Location	Rajasthan, India
Revenue	₹180 million per year
SKUs	47 active SKUs
Channels	General trade + Modern trade (3 distributors)
Founder	Aryan Mehta — strong in operations, weak in financial reading

Aryan Mehta started his company 11 years ago with two products and one distributor. Today, he runs 47 SKUs across three distribution channels with a team of 34 people. Revenue has grown every year for the past six years.

Yet Aryan cannot tell you why cash is always tight. He cannot explain why his most popular product line is also his most stressful. He cannot point to the one thing he should fix first.

Aryan is not unusual. He is the founder this book was written for.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

ARYAN'S STORY · Starting Numbers

Revenue: ₹180 million. Gross Margin: 28%. Net Margin: 4.2%.

DSO: 73 days (industry benchmark: 30-45 days). DIO: 94 days (benchmark: 45-60 days). DPO: 31 days.

Cash runway: 18 days. Working capital gap: ₹18 million — funded silently by short-term debt.

Top 3 SKUs: 68% of revenue. Those same 3 SKUs: only 31% of total margin.

Aryan does not know any of this yet. He just knows something feels wrong.

As you follow Aryan through the 17 stages, you will watch him discover what is actually wrong, make the right decisions, recover ₹4.2 million in 60 days, and build systems that prevent the same problems from returning.

More importantly, by the time you reach Stage 17, you will see your own business in Aryan's numbers.

Two Columns. Seventeen Stages. One Transformation.

You will learn	You will stop doing
How to read business pain as a precise operational signal	Reacting to crises that were entirely predictable
Why growing revenue can quietly destroy cash flow	Celebrating revenue growth while margins silently collapse
How to find the one constraint that unlocks everything else	Trying to fix ten things at once and changing nothing
The difference between a Result and an Impact	Declaring victory when numbers improve temporarily
How to validate a diagnosis before committing to action	Acting on assumptions dressed up as analysis
Why ownership is the missing link between decision and execution	Assigning tasks with no named owner and no deadline
How to build systems that catch problems before they become pain	Hiring people to manage problems that systems should prevent
What a Standard is and why businesses that do not have one keep breaking	Setting vague targets that nobody holds themselves to

These are not chapter summaries. They are the before and after of working through the Business OS with honesty and discipline.

The framework does not ask you to be smarter. It asks you to be more systematic.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Seventeen Stages. Five Layers. One Journey.

TRIGGER	01 Business Pain · 02 Context
SIGNAL	03 Observation · 04 Confidence
ANALYSIS	05 Diagnosis · 06 Insight
EXECUTION	07 Focus · 08 Ownership · 09 Action · 10 Measurement · 11 Course Correction
EVOLUTION	12 Result · 13 Impact · 14 System · 15 Standard · 16 Prevention · 17 Permanent Solution

Read the stage map before you begin. Return to it after every chapter. You are never lost in this framework — you always know exactly where you are and where you are going.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Something Is Wrong But You Cannot Name It

OBJECTIVE

To establish why this book exists and what problem it solves for founders.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· Why hard work and business pain can exist simultaneously

· Why most frameworks fail the mid-market founder

· Where the Business OS framework begins — and why it begins there

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· The founder's gap

· Why existing solutions do not work

· The thinking layer that is missing

· Introduction to Aryan's situation

You work harder than almost anyone you know.

You are in the office before your team arrives. You take calls on weekends. You know your products better than anyone in the market. You have built something real — a business with employees, customers, revenue, reputation.

And yet.

Cash is always tight. Not dangerously tight, most months — just tight. Enough that you worry about the 7th of the month when salaries go out. Enough that you hesitate before placing that large purchase order even when the demand is there.

Or margins. You know they have been sliding, but every time you sit with your accountant the conversation ends in the same place: costs have gone up, we need to raise prices. You raise prices. Margins stabilise for a quarter, then slide again.

Or inventory. You are told there is stock. You walk the floor and it is full. But when a large order comes in for a specific SKU, it is always the wrong SKU that is overstocked.

The Feeling Before the Problem

Every business problem begins as a feeling. Not a number. Not a slide in a presentation. A feeling.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Something is wrong but you cannot name it precisely. You know the symptoms — tight cash, falling margins, slow collections, confused team, missed targets. But the disease? The real reason these symptoms keep appearing despite everything you do to fix them? That part stays unclear.

This is where the Business OS framework begins.

Why Existing Solutions Do Not Work

The solutions that exist for business problems were built for different problems. Accounting software tells you what happened — it does not tell you what to do next. ERP systems built for large enterprises require implementation teams, months of setup, and infrastructure that most mid-market founders do not have.

Consultants diagnose and depart. Workshops produce frameworks that sit in folders. Business books offer principles that do not survive contact with the reality of a business doing ₹180 million with 47 SKUs and a team of 34.

What is missing is not more information. What is missing is a systematic way of thinking — a framework that starts where founders actually start, guides them through diagnosis to action, and builds the systems to prevent the same problems from returning.

That is the Business OS.

ARYAN'S STORY · The Monday Morning Feeling

It is a Monday morning in October. Aryan Mehta sits across from his accountant in his Rajasthan office. The festive season is three weeks away — the most important selling period of the year for a spices and condiments company.

Revenue is up. The last financial year closed at ₹180 million, the highest in company history. The team is energised. The distributors are pushing hard. Three new modern trade listings came through last month.

But Aryan cannot approve the ₹12 million purchase order sitting on his desk. Not because he does not want to. Because he does not have the cash.

He knows the company is profitable. He knows the orders are real. He knows the season is here. But the bank account does not match what he thought he had.

'Where is the money?' he asks his accountant.

His accountant opens three spreadsheets and talks for twenty minutes. Aryan understands perhaps forty percent of it. He nods. He signs nothing. He goes back to his desk feeling exactly as confused as he did before the meeting — but now with less time.

This is Stage 1. This is Business Pain. And this is where the Business OS begins.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

By the time you finish this book, you will understand exactly what Aryan's accountant was trying to explain — and you will be able to read those numbers yourself, in fifteen minutes, without a twenty-minute explanation.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. What is the one business problem you keep coming back to — the one that gets fixed temporarily and then returns?

Q2. When you think about that problem, what does it feel like? (Cash pressure? Margin confusion? Team misalignment?) Write the feeling before you try to name the problem.

Q3. How long have you been carrying this feeling? Six months? Two years? Write it down honestly.

You have named the feeling. In Chapter 2, you will learn how to use this book to turn that feeling into a permanent solution.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

How to Use This Book

OBJECTIVE
To give you a clear mental model for how the framework works before you enter Stage 1.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
· How Aryan's story functions as a continuous thread
· What each chapter's structure means and how to use it
· The one discipline that separates readers from practitioners

THIS CHAPTER COVERS
· The thread explained
· Chapter structure walkthrough
· The discipline of the 'Your Turn' section
· The stage map revisited

The Thread

Aryan Consumer Goods is not a case study at the end of the book. It is a thread that runs through every chapter. In each stage, you will see Aryan face exactly what that stage addresses — with real numbers, real decisions, and real consequences.

Follow the numbers. In Stage 3, Aryan's DSO is 73 days. In Stage 11, it has dropped to 61 days. In Stage 12, it lands at 47 days. By Stage 15, a Standard has been set: DSO maximum 45 days, no exceptions. These numbers connect across chapters. The story is continuous.

Every Chapter Has the Same Structure

Section	What It Does
Introduction Box	Tells you the objective, what you will learn, and what the chapter covers
What This Stage Means	Defines the stage in plain language with one sharp principle
Why Businesses Skip This	Names the real reason this stage gets ignored
Aryan's Story	Shows the stage through Aryan's numbers and decisions
The Business OS Lens	Gives you 3-4 diagnostic questions for your own business

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Formula Box (where relevant)	Shows the calculation behind the concept with Aryan's numbers applied
Your Turn	Three questions you answer about your own business before moving on
Stage Connector	Links this stage to the next — keeps the journey moving

The One Discipline

The 'Your Turn' section at the end of every chapter is not optional. It is not a suggestion. It is the mechanism by which the framework moves from theory to application.

Readers who skip 'Your Turn' sections finish the book with a good understanding of the framework. Practitioners who complete every 'Your Turn' finish the book with a diagnosis of their own business.

One outcome is interesting. The other is transformational.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Before you continue, write down the name of the business you are reading this book for. Not a concept. The actual business.

Q2. What is the one number in that business that bothers you most right now? Revenue, margin, cash, DSO, inventory — pick one.

Q3. What would it mean for your business if that number were permanently fixed — not patched, permanently fixed?

You have your business in mind. Now we begin. The Foundation Chapter is next — and it will tell you exactly where your business pain is coming from.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Every business problem begins as a feeling — not a number, not a crisis. The Business OS is the only framework that starts here, at the feeling, before the data confirms it.

2. The gap between working hard and getting results is almost never a gap in effort. It is a gap in systematic thinking — a framework that translates feeling into diagnosis, and diagnosis into permanent change.

3. Stage 1 asks only one thing: honesty about what is wrong. Everything else follows from that.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

COMING UP NEXT

Foundation Chapter — The 4 Roots of Business Pain

Before the 17 stages begin, one question needs answering: where does business pain actually come from? The Foundation Chapter identifies four structural roots that create the conditions for pain in almost every mid-market business.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

The 4 Roots of Business Pain

OBJECTIVE

To establish the four structural causes of business pain before the 17 stages begin.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· Why business pain is almost never caused by a single event

· The four structural roots that appear in almost every struggling mid-market business

· How to identify which root is dominant in your business

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· Root 1: Manual Chaos

· Root 2: Inter-Entity Blindness

· Root 3: Inter-Department Silence

· Root 4: Communication Breakdown

Before Stage 1, there is a question that most frameworks never ask: why does the pain exist in the first place?

Business pain is not random. It does not arrive without cause. In mid-market businesses — companies doing ₹50 million to ₹2 billion — the same four structural roots appear again and again. They are not symptoms. They are the conditions that make symptoms inevitable.

Root 1 — Manual Chaos

The business runs on people, not processes. Every number that matters lives in someone's head, someone's WhatsApp, or someone's personal spreadsheet that nobody else understands.

When that person is unavailable, the number is unavailable. When that person leaves, the knowledge leaves with them. When two people have the same number written differently, nobody knows which one is right.

Manual chaos is not a technology problem. It is a discipline problem. It is what happens when a business grows faster than the systems that were supposed to run it.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

ARYAN'S STORY · Manual Chaos at Aryan Consumer Goods

Aryan's company has a purchase register, a sales register, and a stock register — all maintained manually by three different people in three different formats.

When Aryan asks 'what is our inventory value today?', it takes two hours and three phone calls to produce a number. That number is accurate as of three days ago.

When his accountant asks for the DSO figure for the last quarter, it takes half a day to calculate — by which time the question that prompted it has already been decided by gut feel.

Manual chaos does not mean the business is disorganised. Aryan's team is hardworking and dedicated. Manual chaos means the business has outgrown the systems it started with and nobody has stopped to rebuild them.

Root 2 — Inter-Entity Blindness

As businesses grow, founders create new entities. A separate company for a new product line. A trading entity to manage imports. A holding company for tax efficiency. A partnership for a new venture with a family member.

Each entity is a separate legal structure. But in a founder's mind, they are one business. Money moves between them based on need, not policy. Loans are informal. Margins are transferred without documentation. One entity funds another's working capital without anybody tracking the actual cost.

The result is that no single entity shows the real financial picture. The business that looks profitable on paper is borrowing from the one that is actually cash-generative — and nobody has done the consolidated view.

ARYAN'S STORY · Inter-Entity Blindness — A Common Pattern

Aryan does not have multiple entities — yet. But his three distributors function like quasi-entities. He extends credit to them informally. He sometimes pre-finances their inventory purchases. He carries their risk inside his own working capital.

The ₹13.8 million locked unnecessarily in debtors is not because Aryan is careless. It is because he has never mapped the actual financial relationship between his company and his distribution network.

Inter-entity blindness does not require multiple companies. It exists anywhere that money moves between parties without a clear, documented, measured structure.

Root 3 — Inter-Department Silence

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

The sales team measures success in revenue. The operations team measures success in production output. The finance team measures success in collections. Each department is performing well by its own metric — and the business is suffering as a result.

Sales promises delivery timelines that operations cannot meet. Operations builds inventory of fast-moving products without knowing that sales has already negotiated a de-listing with the major modern trade account. Finance chases collections without knowing that sales has agreed to extended credit terms as part of a deal.

Nobody is lying. Nobody is being careless. They simply have no shared language, no shared number, and no shared meeting where the whole picture is visible at once.

ARYAN'S STORY · Inter-Department Silence in Practice

Aryan's top SKU — a premium chilli powder — is overstocked at 110 days of inventory. The operations team is proud of this. 'No stockout risk,' they say.

What operations does not know: the sales team has received three complaints about the product's packaging from a major modern trade buyer. A de-listing decision is expected next month.

Finance does not know either. They are chasing payment from that very buyer, offering a 2% discount for early settlement.

Three departments. Three conversations. Zero coordination. And ₹8 million of inventory about to become a problem that nobody saw coming.

Root 4 — Communication Breakdown

Information exists. The problem is that it does not travel. The accountant has the P&L; but the founder does not read it. The sales head has the collection aging but does not share it in the weekly meeting. The operations head knows production costs have risen by 8% but has not connected that to the gross margin discussion that happened three weeks ago.

Communication breakdown is not about people not talking. Most businesses have too many meetings. It is about the right number, in the right format, reaching the right decision-maker at the right time.

When communication breaks down, decisions are made on assumptions. Assumptions made in good faith are still assumptions. And a business run on assumptions is one crisis away from a problem it never saw coming.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

ARYAN'S STORY · Communication Breakdown — The Silent Margin Killer

Aryan's gross margin dropped from 34% to 28% over 18 months. His accountant mentioned it twice — once in passing during a quarterly review, once in a note at the bottom of a report.

Aryan registered neither. Not because he was not listening. Because neither mention came with a clear number, a clear cause, and a clear ask for a decision.

By the time the margin drop became impossible to ignore, ₹10.8 million in annual profit had already been lost. The information was always there. The communication was not.

Root	What It Creates	Where It Shows Up
Manual Chaos	Numbers that are delayed, inconsistent, or unavailable	Stage 3 (Observation) — you cannot observe what you cannot measure
Inter-Entity Blindness	A financial picture that is always incomplete	Stage 5 (Diagnosis) — the root cause is invisible across entities
Inter-Department Silence	Right action in the wrong place at the wrong time	Stage 8 (Ownership) — nobody owns the cross-functional problem
Communication Breakdown	Good information that never reaches the right decision-maker	Stage 4 (Confidence) — you cannot trust data you never fully receive

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Which of the four roots feels most familiar to your business right now? Manual Chaos, Inter-Entity Blindness, Inter-Department Silence, or Communication Breakdown?

Q2. Give one specific example of how that root is creating pain in your business today. Be specific — not 'communication is poor' but 'the sales team does not share collection data with finance before the Monday meeting'.

Q3. Who in your business currently owns the responsibility for fixing this root? If the answer is nobody, write that down. That is your first piece of diagnosis.

You have named the root. Now the 17 stages begin. Stage 1 — Business Pain — is where the journey officially starts.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Business pain is not random. It has structural roots — conditions created, often unknowingly, as the business grew faster than the systems supposed to run it.

2. The four roots — Manual Chaos, Inter-Entity Blindness, Inter-Department Silence, and Communication Breakdown — do not need to be fully resolved before Stage 1 begins. They need to be named.

3. Most businesses have more than one root active simultaneously. The one that feels most familiar is usually the one creating the most pain for the longest time.

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 01 — Business Pain

The 17 stages begin here. Stage 1 establishes the exact signal that something is wrong — what business pain actually is, how to name it precisely, and why every improvement journey must start here.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

01

Business Pain

LAYER: TRIGGER

Something feels wrong before the numbers confirm it.

CHAPTER THREE

OBJECTIVE

To understand Business Pain as a precise operational signal, not a vague complaint.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· Why pain is a signal, not a problem statement

· How to distinguish business pain from personal stress

· Why this is where every real business turnaround begins

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· What business pain actually is

· The pain signal diagram

· Aryan's first pain signal

· How to name your pain precisely

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

Suraj placed a single blank page on the table in front of Aryan.

"Before we look at any numbers," he said, "I want you to write one sentence. The one business feeling that keeps coming back to you — no matter what you fix, no matter what meeting you have, no matter how good the revenue looks."

Aryan looked at the blank page for a long moment. Then he wrote: Cash is always tight even when everything looks good.

Suraj read it. Nodded.

"That is Stage One. Business Pain. It is not a problem statement. It is not a diagnosis. It is a signal — your business telling you that something underneath the surface needs attention."

Aryan frowned. "Every framework I have seen starts with 'define your problem.' You are starting with a feeling."

"Every framework I have seen fails founders," Suraj said. "Because founders do not start at problem definition. They start at three in the morning when they cannot sleep. They start at the end of the month when the bank balance does not match what they thought it would be. They start here." He pointed at the sentence on the page. "That is where we start too."

Aryan looked at the sentence again. "So what do we do with it?"

"We keep it on the table," Suraj said. "Everything we find in the next seventeen stages will explain it. By the time we reach Stage Seventeen, you will understand exactly where that feeling came from — and it will not come back."

Aryan did not look entirely convinced. But he did not put the page away either.

What This Stage Means

Business Pain is the emotional and operational signal that precedes every business problem. It is not the problem itself. It is the signal that a problem exists.

Most frameworks start with problem definition. They assume you already know what the problem is and need help solving it. But founders do not start at definition. They start at feeling.

Something feels wrong. Cash is tight but you cannot explain why. Sales are growing but the business does not feel healthy. The team is busy but results are poor. This feeling — this signal — is where the Business OS begins.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Business Pain is not weakness. It is information. The founder who feels it, names it, and takes it seriously is the founder who catches the problem before it becomes a crisis.

Why Businesses Skip This

Most founders skip Stage 1 because they are embarrassed by not having a clear problem statement. In business culture, leaders are supposed to have answers. Admitting you have a feeling — not a problem definition — feels like admitting incompetence.

The result: founders jump directly to solutions for problems they have not properly named. They implement cost-cutting when the problem is pricing. They hire more salespeople when the problem is collections. They buy more inventory when the problem is SKU mix.

Pain unnamed becomes pain unresolved.

ARYAN'S STORY · The October Feeling

Revenue ₹180 million. Highest year ever. Festive season three weeks away. A ₹12 million purchase order on the desk.

And no cash to approve it.

Aryan Mehta has been in business for 11 years. He knows his products, his distributors, his market. He does not know why — despite everything looking good from the outside — the cash is always, always tight.

That tightness. That confusion. That specific anxiety on the 1st of each month before checking the bank balance. That is Business Pain.

Aryan cannot yet name it precisely. He will. But for now, the signal is real and he is paying attention. That is all Stage 1 requires.

The Business OS Lens

Stage 1 does not ask you to solve anything. It asks you to be honest about what you are feeling.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. What is the one business feeling that keeps returning despite your best efforts to resolve it?
2. When does it appear? End of month? After a large order? During a planning meeting?
3. Who in your business feels it with you — or is it a feeling you carry alone?
4. If you had to translate this feeling into one number that captures it, what would that number be?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

Name the pain in one sentence. Not a list of symptoms — one sentence that captures the single most persistent feeling about the business. Write it at the top of a blank page and keep it visible throughout every stage that follows. That sentence is your north star. Every analysis, every number, every action should eventually explain it.

If you are the owner, you are writing about what you feel. If you are the advisor, you are asking your client to write it — because the founder's own words will always be more precise than a diagnosis formed from the outside.

The business that can name its pain accurately is already ahead of the one that cannot.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

STARTING POSITION — STAGE 1

Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd. · ₹180M · Spices & Condiments

OVERVIEW

DSO	DIO	DPO	Cash Runway
Not measured	**Not measured**	**Not measured**	**~18 days**
Measurement pending	Measurement pending	Measurement pending	Sensed — not measured

Gross Margin	Net Margin
~28%	**~4.2%**
Approximate — not validated	Approximate — not validated

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

Revenue Signal	Team
₹180M	**34 people**
Growing — 6 consecutive years	Capable — 3 distribution channels

SKUs	Pain Duration
47 active	**3 years**
3 channels — General + Modern trade	Cash tight despite strong revenue

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

No formulas applicable at this stage — measurement begins Stage 3.

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	Observation	DSO 73d	Measured	
05	Diagnosis	Guessing	SKU mix found	
09	Action	No plan	₹4.2M target	
11	Course Correction	DSO 73d	DSO 61d	
12	Result	Cash 18d	Cash 41d	
12	Result	DSO 73d	DSO 47d	
15	Standard Set	No floor	DSO max 45d	
16	Prevention	DSO 73d	Alert at 41d	

Pain signal felt. Numbers not yet measured. Stage 3 will read them precisely.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Business Pain is a signal, not a problem. It is the business telling you something is wrong before the numbers confirm it. The founder who listens to that signal catches problems months earlier than the one who waits for a crisis.

2. No other framework starts here — and that is precisely why so many improvement efforts fail. They begin mid-journey, after the problem is acute, when the cost of correction is highest.

3. The discipline of Stage 1 is honesty: name the feeling before you jump to a fix. An unnamed pain is an unresolved pain.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Name your business pain in one sentence. Not a list of problems — one sentence. Example: 'Cash is always tight even when sales are strong.'

Q2. How long have you been carrying this pain? Write the honest number of months or years.

Q3. What have you already tried to fix it? And did it work permanently or temporarily?

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 02 — Context

The same business pain means different things in different environments. A cash crisis three weeks before peak season demands completely different action than the same crisis in a slow month. Stage 2 maps the five context dimensions that shape every decision that follows.

You have named the pain. Stage 2 — Context — will show you why the same pain means different things in different businesses.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

02
Context

LAYER: TRIGGER

Who is feeling the pain, and in what environment.

CHAPTER FOUR

OBJECTIVE

To establish why context shapes every stage that follows.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· Why the same problem requires different solutions in different contexts

· How to map the five dimensions of context that matter most

· Why diagnosing without context produces correct answers to wrong questions

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· What context means in the Business OS

· The five context dimensions

· Aryan's context map

· How context changes the action

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

Before Suraj asked a single question about numbers, he pulled out a different sheet.

"Tell me about right now," he said. "Not your business in general — right now. Today. This week."

Aryan looked uncertain. "What do you mean?"

"Season. Situation. Resources. October — what does October mean for Aryan Consumer Goods?"

Aryan straightened. "Festive season. Three weeks away. Biggest selling period of the year for us."

"Cash position?"

"That is the problem. We have a purchase order on my desk — twelve million rupees. We need to place it. The season is here. And I do not have the cash to approve it."

Suraj wrote this down. "Decision-making authority — who needs to say yes before anything changes?"

"Just me. No board. No investors. My company."

"Your team?"

"Rahul has been my sales head for eight years. My accountant has been with me for six. Good people."

Suraj looked up. "Aryan, I want you to notice something. Your constraint right now is not strategy. It is not your team. It is not even your products. It is one thing — cash. And cash is solvable."

Aryan blinked. "That simply?"

"The diagnosis is not simple yet. But the constraint is clear. That is what context does — it tells us where to look and how fast we need to move." He tapped the paper. "We have three weeks. Let us not waste them."

Aryan looked at the purchase order on his desk. For the first time since he had called Suraj, something in his expression shifted. Not relief exactly. But direction.

What This Stage Means

Context is the environment in which the business pain exists. A business facing a cash crisis in October — peak season — needs different action than one facing the same crisis in February, when orders are slow.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

A founder with full decision-making authority can act in days. A founder with a board, investors, or family partners may take weeks to align on the same decision.

A business with three months of cash runway has different options than one with eighteen days.

Context does not change the diagnosis. It changes the urgency, the approach, the risk tolerance, and the timeline. Without mapping context first, the right solution applied in the wrong context becomes the wrong solution.

Why Businesses Skip This

Context gets skipped because it feels like delay. Founders in pain want action, not analysis. 'Just tell me what to do' is the most common request.

The problem: a solution without context is a solution without calibration. Speed of execution is a context variable. Resource availability is a context variable. Stakeholder alignment is a context variable. Ignoring them does not make them disappear — it makes them unexpected obstacles.

ARYAN'S STORY · Aryan's Context Map

October. Three weeks to festive season. That context alone changes everything.

This is not a time for long-term restructuring. This is a time for rapid liquidity. The ₹12 million purchase order on Aryan's desk is not a problem — it is an opportunity, if the cash can be freed in time.

Aryan has full decision-making authority — no board, no investors, no partners. He can act today if he chooses to.

His team: 34 people. His sales head, Rahul, has been with him eight years. His accountant has been with him six. The capability is there.

His distributors are strained — they have been extending credit beyond their capacity because Aryan's payment terms have been inconsistently enforced.

Context summary: High urgency. High authority. Capable team. The constraint is cash — not strategy, not talent, not market. Cash. That context defines everything that follows.

The Business OS Lens

Map five dimensions of your context before proceeding to Stage 3.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. What is the current season or cycle for your business — peak, trough, or transition?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

2. Who has decision-making authority for the changes this situation requires?

3. What is your current cash position — and how many days of operations does it cover?

4. What is your team's current capacity — are they stretched, available, or somewhere between?

5. What are the external conditions — is the market growing, flat, or contracting?

CASH RUNWAY FORMULA

Cash Runway = Available Cash ÷ Monthly Operating Burn

Aryan's Cash: ₹2.9 million available

Monthly Burn: ₹5.0 million (salaries, fixed costs, payments)

Cash Runway = ₹2.9M ÷ ₹5.0M × 30 = 17.4 days ≈ 18 days

Status: CRITICAL — action required within 10 days

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

Map five dimensions before touching a single number. Season. Decision-making authority. Cash position. Team capacity. Market conditions.

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

For each dimension, write one honest sentence. Not what you want it to be — what it actually is. A seasonal business in October has different options than the same business in February. A founder with full authority moves faster than one with investors who need alignment. A team at full capacity cannot absorb a new initiative, no matter how important it is.

Context does not change the problem. It determines what you can actually do about it right now. Without this map, the right solution applied in the wrong conditions becomes the wrong solution.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

CONTEXT MAP — STAGE 2

Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd. · ₹180M · Spices & Condiments

OVERVIEW

Season	Cash Runway	Urgency	Constraint
October	**~18 days**	**HIGH**	**CASH**
Festive season: 3 weeks away	Critical — sensed not measured	Purchase order: ₹12M pending	Not strategy, not team

Authority	Team
FULL	**Capable**
No board, no investors	Rahul (8yr) + Accountant (6yr)

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

Festive PO	Days to Season
₹12M	**21 days**
Cannot approve without cash	Hard deadline — cannot move

Market	Decision Speed
Growing	**Days**
Strong festive demand expected	Full authority — can act today

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

CASH RUNWAY

Cash Runway = Available Cash ÷ Monthly Operating Burn

= ₹2.9M ÷ ₹5.0M × 30

= 17.4 days ≈ 18 days | Target: 30+ days

Status: CRITICAL — action required within 10 days

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	Observation	DSO 73d	Measured	
05	Diagnosis	Guessing	SKU mix found	
09	Action	No plan	₹4.2M target	
11	Course Correction	DSO 73d	DSO 61d	
12	Result	Cash 18d	Cash 41d	
12	Result	DSO 73d	DSO 47d	
15	Standard Set	No floor	DSO max 45d	
16	Prevention	DSO 73d	Alert at 41d	

Context locked. October urgency + full authority + capable team. Constraint: cash only.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Context is not an excuse. It is a calibration tool. The same root cause in two different businesses can require opposite actions depending on season, authority structure, and cash position.

2. The five dimensions — season, authority, cash, team, and market — are not background information. They are active constraints that define what is possible, what is urgent, and what must wait.

3. A solution without context is a solution without a realistic chance of working in the real world.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Write your five context dimensions as they exist today: season, authority, cash, team, market.

Q2. Which context dimension is the biggest constraint on your ability to act? Be specific.

Q3. Given your context, what is the maximum timeline within which you need to see a measurable result?

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 03 — Observation

With context mapped, it is time to put hard numbers on the feeling. Stage 3 introduces the six diagnostic numbers that reveal the true health of any mid-market business — DSO, DIO, DPO, Gross Margin, Cash Runway, and Working Capital Cycle — and shows you how to calculate each one.

Context is mapped. Stage 3 — Observation — now translates that feeling and context into hard numbers.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

03
Observation

LAYER: SIGNAL

Translating the feeling into measurable, financial data.

CHAPTER FIVE

OBJECTIVE

To develop the ability to read business numbers the way a doctor reads a diagnostic chart.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· The six numbers that reveal the true health of a mid-market business

· How to calculate DSO, DIO, and DPO — and what they actually mean

· Why observation is a skill, not a report

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· The six diagnostic numbers

· DSO / DIO / DPO explained

· Aryan's full observation

· What normal looks like

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

Suraj asked Aryan's accountant to pull one report. A single page. The key numbers.

When it arrived, Suraj placed it on the table between them and said, "Read it."

"I have read it," Aryan said.

"Read it again. Out loud."

Aryan looked uncomfortable. He picked up the page. "DSO, seventy-three days." He paused. "What does that mean exactly?"

"Keep going."

"DIO, ninety-four days. DPO, thirty-one days. Gross Margin, twenty-eight percent. Cash Runway, eighteen days." He set the page down. "Working Capital Cycle, one hundred and thirty-six days. I do not know what that means either."

"Do you know what your payment terms are with your distributors?" Suraj asked.

"Forty-five days. Sometimes sixty."

"Your customers are taking seventy-three days to pay. Your own terms say forty-five. That difference — twenty-eight days — is money that belongs in your bank account. It is sitting in your customers' accounts instead."

Aryan was quiet for a moment. "How much money?"

Suraj did the calculation on the page. "Thirteen point eight million rupees."

The room was very quiet.

"Thirteen point eight million," Aryan repeated slowly.

"That is your purchase order. Twice over." Suraj placed his pen down. "The money is not missing, Aryan. It is just in the wrong place. That is what Stage Three does — it shows you where to look. And Stage Four will show you whether what we are seeing is real."

Aryan picked up the page again. This time, he read it differently.

What This Stage Means

Observation is the translation from feeling to data. Stage 1 gave you a feeling. Stage 3 gives you a number.

A doctor does not treat a feeling. A doctor reads your blood pressure, temperature, heart rate, and blood count — then forms a hypothesis. A business leader needs to do the same. Business pain has diagnostic numbers. Learning to read them is the most valuable skill this book can give you.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

The six numbers that matter most for a mid-market inventory-driven business are: DSO, DIO, DPO, Gross Margin, Cash Runway, and Working Capital Cycle. When all six are visible at once, the business picture becomes clear. When even one is missing, diagnosis becomes guesswork.

Why Businesses Skip This

Observation is skipped because reading financial numbers is uncomfortable. Most founders did not study finance. Most were built for sales, operations, or product — not for P&L; analysis.

The solution is to hire an accountant and ask for reports. But asking for reports is not observation. Observation means reading those reports yourself — understanding what each number means, what the benchmark is, and what the gap tells you about the business.

ARYAN'S STORY · Aryan Reads His Numbers for the First Time

Aryan's accountant prepares a one-page summary. For the first time, Aryan sits with it alone — no explanation, no interpretation. Just the numbers.

DSO: 73 days. (He does not know what this means yet. But 73 days of something sounds long.) DIO: 94 days. (Also long. But inventory of what? And compared to what?) DPO: 31 days. (Is this good or bad? He does not know.) Gross Margin: 28%. (He knew this was falling. Seeing it written is different from knowing it.) Cash Runway: 18 days. (He knew cash was tight. Eighteen days is a number. It lands differently.) Working Capital Cycle: 136 days. (He has no idea what this means. Not yet.)

Six numbers. Aryan stares at them for a long time. He does not understand all of them. But he feels — for the first time — that the problem might be nameable.

The Business OS Lens

Produce your own six-number observation before moving to Stage 4.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. What is your current DSO — and how does it compare to your payment terms with customers?
2. What is your current DIO — and how does it compare to your lead times from suppliers?
3. What is your gross margin — and has it moved in the last 12 months?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

4. What is your cash runway today — and what would it be if your top three customers paid tomorrow?

KEY DIAGNOSTIC FORMULAS

DSO = (Total Debtors ÷ Annual Revenue) × 365

Aryan DSO = (₹36M ÷ ₹180M) × 365 = 73 days | Benchmark: 30-45 days

DIO = (Inventory Value ÷ COGS) × 365

Aryan DIO = (₹42M ÷ ₹163M) × 365 = 94 days | Benchmark: 45-60 days

DPO = (Total Creditors ÷ Purchases) × 365

Aryan DPO = (₹14M ÷ ₹165M) × 365 = 31 days | Benchmark: 30-45 days

Working Capital Cycle = DSO + DIO - DPO = 73 + 94 - 31 = 136 days | STATUS: CRITICAL

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

Pull one report. One page. The six numbers. Calculate each one yourself — do not accept a summary from your accountant without understanding the calculation behind it.

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

DSO. DIO. DPO. Gross Margin. Cash Runway. Working Capital Cycle. Write each number down. If you cannot calculate it, that tells you something important about the visibility your business currently has.

Then do one comparison for each number: where are you, and where should you be? The gap between those two numbers — translated into rupees — is the first real picture of what Stage One was actually trying to tell you.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

STARTING POSITION — STAGE 3 Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd. · ₹180M · Spices & Condiments

OVERVIEW

DSO	DIO	DPO	Cash Runway
73 days	**94 days**	**31 days**	**18 days**
Benchmark: 30–45 days	Benchmark: 45–60 days	Benchmark: 30–45 days	Target: 30+ days

Gross Margin	Net Margin
28%	**4.2%**
Benchmark: 35–42%	Benchmark: 8–12%

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

Top 3 SKUs — Revenue Share
68%
But only 31% of margin

Cash Locked in Debtors
₹36M
₹13.8M locked unnecessarily

Inventory Value
₹42M
DIO 94 days — overstocked

Working Capital Gap
₹18M
Funded by debt silently

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

DSO — DAYS SALES OUTSTANDING
DSO = (Total Debtors ÷ Annual Revenue) × 365
= (₹36M ÷ ₹180M) × 365
= 73 days | Benchmark: 30–45 days | Gap: 28 days
Cash locked unnecessarily: ₹13.8M

DIO — DAYS INVENTORY OUTSTANDING
DIO = (Inventory Value ÷ COGS) × 365
= (₹42M ÷ ₹163M) × 365
= 94 days | Benchmark: 45–60 days | Gap: 34 days
Overstocked by ₹15.6M equivalent

WORKING CAPITAL GAP
WC Gap = (DSO + DIO - DPO) days × Daily Revenue
= (73 + 94 - 31) × (₹180M ÷ 365)
= 136 days × ₹0.493M = ₹67M working capital needed
Aryan has ₹49M — gap of ₹18M funded silently by debt

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	**Observation**	DSO 73d	**Measured**	Signal
05	Diagnosis	Guessing	SKU mix found	
09	Action	No plan	₹4.2M target	
11	Course Correction	DSO 73d	DSO 61d	
12	Result	Cash 18d	Cash 41d	
12	Result	DSO 73d	DSO 47d	
15	Standard Set	No floor	DSO max 45d	
16	Prevention	DSO 73d	Alert at 41d	

WC Cycle: 136 days · Six numbers read for the first time · Annual Revenue: ₹180M

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Observation is the translation from feeling to data. Stage 1 gave you a pain signal. Stage 3 gives you a number — something you can diagnose, benchmark, and act on.

2. The six diagnostic numbers together give you a complete picture: how fast you collect, how long inventory sits, how long you delay payments, what margin you keep, how many days you can survive, and how much working capital your cycle requires.

3. Financial literacy is not about accounting. It is about reading the health signals of your business the way a doctor reads a chart — before the patient is in crisis.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Calculate your DSO and DIO today. Use last month's numbers if needed. Write both figures.

Q2. Compare your DSO to your stated payment terms with customers. What is the gap?

Q3. Which of your six numbers feels most surprising — not the worst, the most surprising?

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 04 — Confidence

Seeing a number is not the same as trusting it. Most founders see the right data and still doubt their own reading. Stage 4 shows you how to validate observations against industry benchmarks and a trusted advisor so you can move to diagnosis with justified confidence.

You have your numbers. Stage 4 — Confidence — will help you trust what you are seeing before you act on it.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

04

Confidence

LAYER: SIGNAL

Validating the observation before committing to diagnosis.

CHAPTER SIX

OBJECTIVE

To build justified trust in your own financial reading before acting on it.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· Why knowing and trusting are two different things

· How benchmarks validate or challenge your observation

· The three validation steps that separate confident diagnosis from guesswork

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· The confidence gap explained

· Industry benchmarks for key metrics

· Aryan's validation process

· The three validation steps

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

Suraj called Aryan's CA that afternoon and put him on speaker.

"I am going to read you some numbers," Suraj said. "Tell me what you see."

He read them. DSO seventy-three days. DIO ninety-four days. Cash runway eighteen days.

The CA was quiet for a moment. Then: "Aryan, your DSO should be thirty-five to forty days for your trade channels. You are running thirty-three days over. That is almost fourteen million rupees parked with your customers for no reason."

Aryan wrote the number down. Circled it.

After the call, Suraj turned to him. "How do you feel about those numbers now?"

"Different," Aryan admitted. "When I saw them on the page, I thought maybe my industry was different. Maybe seventy-three days was normal for spices."

"That doubt is not weakness," Suraj said. "It is what happens when you read numbers without a benchmark. A number without a comparison is just a number. A number compared to what it should be — that is a fact."

Aryan looked at the circle around fourteen million. "So this is real."

"This is real," Suraj said. "And now that you trust what you are seeing, we can ask the harder question. Why is it happening?"

He wrote Stage Five on the top of a fresh page.

"That is where we are going next."

Aryan nodded. For the first time, the numbers on the page were not just numbers. They were a story he could almost read.

What This Stage Means

Confidence is the validation step between Observation and Diagnosis. It answers the question: is what I am seeing real?

Most founders see the right numbers and still doubt themselves. 'Maybe my industry is different.' 'Maybe 73-day DSO is normal for spices.' 'Maybe the accountant has a different explanation.'

This doubt is not irrational. It is the product of reading numbers without benchmarks. A number without a benchmark is just a number. A number compared to industry standard, compared to your own history, and confirmed by your team becomes a fact you can act on.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Confidence does not mean certainty. It means: I have validated this observation sufficiently to proceed to diagnosis.

Why Businesses Skip This

Confidence gets skipped because it feels like overthinking. 'I can see the number. Why do I need to validate it?'

The cost of skipping confidence: founders diagnose the wrong problem with full conviction. They are not uncertain — they are certainly wrong. An observation that has not been benchmarked, checked against history, and confirmed with the team is an observation that is one step removed from an assumption.

ARYAN'S STORY · Aryan Calls His CA

Aryan calls his CA — a man he has worked with for nine years — and reads him the six numbers.

His CA pauses. Then: 'Aryan, your DSO is not just high. For your business, for your trade channels, it should be 35 to 40 days. You are 33 days longer than you should be. That is ₹13.8 million sitting with your customers that should be in your bank account.'

Aryan writes: ₹13.8 million. Circled.

'And your DIO of 94 days,' his CA continues. 'Your supplier lead time is 21 days. You are carrying more than four months of stock against a 21-day lead time. There is no operational reason for that. That is excess inventory — and excess inventory is locked cash.'

Two numbers. Two benchmark comparisons. Two validations. Aryan now trusts what he is seeing.

This is Confidence. Not certainty — but trust, justified by benchmark.

The Business OS Lens

Validate each of your six observations against three sources.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. What is the industry benchmark for your DSO — and where does your current number sit relative to it?

2. Has your gross margin moved more than 3 percentage points in the last 12 months? If yes, is that movement consistent or erratic?

3. Who in your team or advisory circle can confirm or challenge your reading of these numbers?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

4. Which number in your observation are you least confident about — and why?

CONFIDENCE CHECK — BENCHMARK COMPARISON

Aryan's DSO: 73 days | Industry Standard: 30-45 days | Gap: 28-43 days

Cash Locked Unnecessarily = Gap Days × Daily Revenue

= 28 days × (₹180M ÷ 365) = 28 × ₹0.493M = ₹13.8 million

Aryan's DIO: 94 days | Industry Standard: 45-60 days | Gap: 34-49 days

Excess Inventory Value = Gap Days × Daily COGS

= 34 × (₹163M ÷ 365) = 34 × ₹0.447M = ₹15.2 million locked in excess stock

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

Do not act on an observation until you have validated it against three sources. Industry benchmark. Your own historical data. One trusted advisor who will tell you honestly what they see.

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

For the most urgent number from Stage Three, find its benchmark. Calculate the gap. Translate the gap into currency. Then sit with someone — your CA, a peer, a mentor — and read them the number and the benchmark and ask: is this real?

The founder who second-guesses a correct observation loses time. The advisor who moves to diagnosis without validation risks a well-executed solution to the wrong problem. Thirty minutes of validation is worth three months of misdirected action.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

CONFIDENCE CHECK — STAGE 4

Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd. · ₹180M · Spices & Condiments

OVERVIEW

DSO Gap	DIO Gap	Cash Locked	Excess Stock
28 days	**34 days**	**₹13.8M**	**₹15.2M**
Above 45-day benchmark	Above 60-day benchmark	Debtors — unnecessarily	DIO 34 days above standard

CA Validation	Total Lock-up
CONFIRMED	**₹29M**
DSO 35–40d for trade channels	₹13.8M debtors + ₹15.2M stock

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

DSO vs Standard	DIO vs Standard
73 vs 45d	**94 vs 60d**
28 days over — validated	34 days over — validated

GM vs Benchmark	Confidence Level
28 vs 38%	**HIGH**
10% below — validated	3 validation sources confirmed

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

DSO BENCHMARK COMPARISON

DSO Gap = Actual DSO - Industry Benchmark
= 73 days - 45 days
= 28 days above standard
Cash locked unnecessarily: 28 × ₹0.493M = ₹13.8M

TOTAL LOCK-UP CALCULATION

Total Lock-up = DSO Gap Amount + Excess Inventory
= ₹13.8M (debtors) + ₹15.2M (inventory)
= ₹29M sitting outside the business
This is your purchase order — twice over

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	**Observation**	DSO 73d	**Measured**	Signal
05	Diagnosis	Guessing	SKU mix found	
09	Action	No plan	₹4.2M target	
11	Course Correction	DSO 73d	DSO 61d	
12	Result	Cash 18d	Cash 41d	
12	Result	DSO 73d	DSO 47d	
15	Standard Set	No floor	DSO max 45d	
16	Prevention	DSO 73d	Alert at 41d	

Observation confirmed by CA. Ready to diagnose root cause.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Confidence is the bridge between observation and diagnosis. Without it, even correct data gets second-guessed and the founder stays stuck making decisions on gut rather than validated fact.

2. The benchmark comparison is the most powerful tool in Stage 4. When Aryan learned his DSO was 28 days above industry standard, the Rs.13.8 million consequence became specific, credible, and actionable.

3. You do not need certainty to proceed. You need justified confidence — the belief that what you are seeing is real enough to diagnose and act on.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Compare your DSO and DIO to industry benchmarks. Write the gap in days and translate it into rupees locked unnecessarily.

Q2. Share your six numbers with one trusted advisor — accountant, CFO, or experienced peer. What did they say?

Q3. After benchmarking and validation, which number is now your highest priority to address?

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 05 — Diagnosis

Confidence built means the observation is real. Now comes the most analytically demanding stage: finding the root cause. Stage 5 uses a structured five-why approach to find the real reason behind your most urgent business problem — not the most visible one.

Confidence built. Stage 5 — Diagnosis — now finds the root cause of what you have observed and validated.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

05

Diagnosis

LAYER: ANALYSIS

Finding the root cause behind the validated observation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

OBJECTIVE

To develop the discipline of moving from symptom to cause — and never treating one as the other.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· Why symptoms and causes look identical from the surface

· The diagnosis framework: from observable signal to root cause

· Why wrong diagnosis executed perfectly still produces the wrong result

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· Symptom vs cause: the critical distinction

· The diagnosis tree

· Aryan's SKU mix diagnosis

· The three diagnosis tests

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

It took one afternoon and a spreadsheet to change everything Aryan thought he knew about his own business.

Suraj had asked for revenue and margin by SKU. All forty-seven of them. When the data came back, he did not say anything immediately. He let Aryan look at it.

"Find your top three products by revenue," Suraj said.

Aryan pointed them out. Premium packaging. Modern trade. The products he was most proud of. The ones driving the company's growth story.

"What is their combined revenue?"

Aryan did the sum. "One hundred and twenty-two million. Sixty-eight percent of total."

"Now look at their margin contribution."

Aryan looked. Looked again. "Thirty-one percent."

The room was quiet for a long moment.

"Suraj," Aryan said finally. "That cannot be right."

"Check it."

He checked it. It was right. His three most celebrated products — the ones he had been scaling aggressively for three years — generated sixty-eight percent of revenue and only thirty-one percent of the company's margin.

"The other forty-four SKUs," Suraj said quietly, "generate thirty-two percent of your revenue and sixty-nine percent of your margin."

Aryan sat back in his chair.

"You have been scaling the wrong products," Suraj said. Not harshly. Just as a fact. "Not because you made a bad decision. Because you made the decision without this data."

Aryan stared at the spreadsheet for a long time. "Eleven years," he said.

"Eleven years," Suraj agreed. "That ends today."

What This Stage Means

Diagnosis is the move from what you can see to what is actually causing it.

Cash is tight. That is a symptom. Why is cash tight? Collections are slow. Why are collections slow? Payment terms are not enforced consistently. Why not? Because the sales team is incentivised on booking, not collection. That is the cause.

Or: Cash is tight. Why? Inventory is excessive. Why? The company carries strategic buffer stock against a 21-day lead time. Why? Because there was a stockout crisis three years ago and the operations head decided to never let it happen again. Nobody has reviewed that decision since.

Same symptom. Different causes. Different actions required. This is why diagnosis is the most consequential stage in the framework.

Why Businesses Skip This

Diagnosis gets skipped in favour of the most obvious fix. Cash is tight — call customers and collect. Margins are falling — cut costs. Inventory is high — stop buying.

These actions are not wrong. They are frequently right. But they are right only if the diagnosis that produced them is right. If margins are falling because of SKU mix — not because of cost — then cutting costs solves nothing and the margin problem returns in six months.

ARYAN'S STORY · The SKU Mix Discovery

Aryan and his accountant spend one full afternoon on the SKU analysis. 47 SKUs. Revenue and margin for each.

The results are uncomfortable.

Top 3 SKUs — premium packaging, modern trade channel — account for 68% of total revenue. Aryan is proud of these. They are his growth story. But their gross margin: 31% of total company margin contribution. On ₹122 million of revenue, these three SKUs generate ₹14 million of gross margin.

The remaining 44 SKUs — 32% of revenue — generate 69% of gross margin. On ₹58 million of revenue, they produce ₹32 million of margin.

The diagnosis is precise: Aryan has been aggressively scaling his least profitable products while the margin-generative SKUs are understaffed, underfunded, and undermarketed.

The root cause of falling margins is not cost. It is portfolio strategy executed without margin data.

The Business OS Lens

Run the diagnosis test on your highest-priority problem.

Diagnostic Questions:

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

1. Take your most urgent symptom and ask 'why' five times in sequence. Where does the chain end?

2. Is the cause operational, structural, or behavioural? (Operational = process. Structural = incentive or measurement. Behavioural = habit or decision.)

3. If you fixed this cause tomorrow, which other symptoms would also disappear automatically?

4. Who in your business created this cause — not to assign blame, but to understand where the solution must begin?

SKU MARGIN CONTRIBUTION ANALYSIS

Margin Contribution % = (SKU Gross Margin ÷ Total Gross Margin) × 100

Top 3 SKUs: Revenue ₹122.4M | Gross Margin ₹14.1M | Contribution: 31%

Bottom 44 SKUs: Revenue ₹57.6M | Gross Margin ₹31.4M | Contribution: 69%

Diagnosis: Aryan is funding low-margin growth with high-margin working capital.

Root Cause = Portfolio strategy executed without margin visibility.

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

Ask why five times. Not metaphorically — literally. Take the most urgent symptom from Stage Three, write it at the top of a page, and ask why it is happening. Write the answer. Then ask why that is happening. Write the answer. Keep going until the chain ends at something that was a decision, a habit, or a structure that was put in place — or never put in place — at some point in the past.

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

The root cause is almost never the first answer. It is rarely even the second. The founder who stops at the obvious explanation will fix the symptom. The advisor who pushes to the real cause will fix the business.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

DIAGNOSIS — STAGE 5 Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd. · ₹180M · Spices & Condiments

OVERVIEW

Root Cause	Top 3 Revenue	Top 3 Margin	Years Unnoticed
SKU Mix	**68%**	**31%**	**11 years**
Not costs, not pricing	₹122.4M of ₹180M	₹14.1M of ₹45.5M	Scaling wrong products

Other 44 SKUs	Margin Gap
32% rev	**37%**
But 69% of total margin	Revenue share vs margin share

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

Top 3 Revenue	Top 3 Margin
₹122.4M	**₹14.1M**
68% of total	Only 31% of total

Other 44 Revenue	Other 44 Margin
₹57.6M	**₹31.4M**
32% of total	69% of total

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

MARGIN CONTRIBUTION — ROOT CAUSE

Margin Contribution % = (Product Margin ÷ Total Margin) × 100

Top 3 SKUs: ₹122.4M revenue / ₹14.1M margin

= 68% revenue share vs 31% margin share

Gap of 37%: high-revenue SKUs destroying overall margin

SKU MIX IMPACT

Effective Margin = Total Margin ÷ Total Revenue × 100

= ₹45.5M ÷ ₹180M × 100

= 25.3% blended | Benchmark: 35–42%

Scaling top 3 SKUs has diluted margin by ~10% over 11 years

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	**Observation**	DSO 73d	**Measured**	Signal
05	**Diagnosis**	Guessing	**SKU mix found**	Done
09	**Action**	No plan	**₹4.2M target**	
11	**Course Correction**	DSO 73d	**DSO 61d**	
12	**Result**	Cash 18d	**Cash 41d**	
12	**Result**	DSO 73d	**DSO 47d**	
15	**Standard Set**	No floor	**DSO max 45d**	
16	**Prevention**	DSO 73d	**Alert at 41d**	

Root cause found. 11 years of data confirms it. SKU mix — not costs, not pricing.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Diagnosis is the most consequential stage. A wrong diagnosis executed perfectly with excellent people produces the wrong result every time. Getting the root cause right is not optional.

2. The key distinction is between operational causes (broken process), structural causes (broken incentive), and behavioural causes (broken decision habit). Each requires a completely different type of action.

3. Aryan's discovery — that portfolio strategy was the root cause, not costs — changed his entire approach. The same numbers, read at a deeper level, produced completely different decisions.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Write your symptom at the top of a page. Ask 'why' five times. Write each answer.

Q2. At which 'why' did you stop — and why did you stop there? Is that truly the root cause or still a symptom?

Q3. What data would you need to confirm this diagnosis beyond reasonable doubt?

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 06 — Insight

Diagnosis tells you what is causing the problem. Insight tells you what that cause reveals about your business — its history, its decision-making culture, and its blind spots. Stage 6 moves you from analytical finding to strategic narrative.

Diagnosis complete. Stage 6 — Insight — takes the root cause and reveals the deeper story it is telling about your business.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

06
Insight

LAYER: ANALYSIS

The deeper truth that the diagnosis reveals about the business.

CHAPTER EIGHT

OBJECTIVE

To develop the ability to move from analytical finding to strategic narrative.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· Why diagnosis produces facts but insight produces understanding

· How to find the hidden story behind a root cause

· Why insight is the bridge between analysis and focused action

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· What insight is and why it matters

· From diagnosis to narrative

· Aryan's distributor insight

· How to articulate your own insight

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

Suraj had been looking at the debtors aging report for several minutes without speaking. Aryan waited.

"Aryan," Suraj said finally, "I want to ask you something about your distributors."

"Go ahead."

"How long has Distributor A been with you?"

"Seven years."

"Has his business grown in that time?"

"Significantly. He is one of our best performers."

"Where does he get his working capital?"

Aryan opened his mouth. Then closed it.

"Think about it," Suraj said. "His business is growing. He is carrying your products. But you are extending him ninety days of credit, and he is using every day of it." Suraj turned the report around so Aryan could see it. "You are not his supplier, Aryan. You are his informal lender. Fourteen million rupees, interest-free, for the last two years at least."

Aryan stared at the aging report as if he had never seen it before.

"I did not agree to that," he said.

"You did not disagree to it either. It happened by drift. By not setting a clear structure and enforcing it." Suraj put the report down. "This is the insight, Aryan — not the collection problem. The collection problem is a symptom. The real problem is that you have a distribution relationship that was never properly structured. Fix the structure and the cash comes back. Just chasing payments gives you the cash once and the problem returns."

Aryan nodded slowly. "So calling them and asking for payment is not the answer."

"It is part of the answer," Suraj said. "But it is not the solution. Let me show you the difference."

What This Stage Means

Insight is the moment when numbers stop being numbers and become a story.

The diagnosis told you what is causing the problem. Insight tells you what that cause reveals about the business — its strategy, its culture, its blind spots.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Aryan's diagnosis: he has been scaling low-margin SKUs while neglecting high-margin ones.

Aryan's insight: he has been making sales decisions without margin data for eleven years. The business grew on revenue momentum. It was never built on margin awareness. Every decision — pricing, promotion, distributor incentive, production priority — has been made without reference to contribution margin. The whole business is a revenue machine that has been silently destroying its own profitability.

That is not a diagnosis. That is a revelation. And it changes what needs to happen next.

Why Businesses Skip This

Insight gets skipped because analysis teams want to jump to action. 'We know the cause. Let us fix it.' This urgency is understandable — and often the enemy of real change.

Without insight, actions fix the symptom of the diagnosis. With insight, actions address the structural condition that made the diagnosis inevitable. The difference: one produces a result that lasts six months. The other produces a permanent change.

ARYAN'S STORY · The Distributor Insight

Aryan stares at his debtors aging report. ₹36 million. 73 days average.

His first reaction: 'My customers are not paying on time.'

His insight — reached only after looking at the data differently: 'I have been financing my distributors' working capital for two years without knowing it.'

Distributor A carries ₹14 million of Aryan's receivables — 90 days average. Distributor A's business grows by 18% each year. Where does his growth capital come from? Aryan's extended credit. Aryan is not a supplier to Distributor A. He is, effectively, an informal lender.

Distributor B carries ₹9 million — 45 days. Within terms. No issue. Distributor C carries ₹13 million — 88 days. A structural problem identical to A.

The insight: Aryan has two distribution relationships that function as credit facilities for his distributors, funded entirely by Aryan's own working capital, with no interest, no documentation, and no strategic intent. This is not a collections problem. It is a relationship structure problem.

That insight changes the entire action plan.

The Business OS Lens

Move from your diagnosis to your insight.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Diagnostic Questions:

1. Your diagnosis identified a cause. What does that cause reveal about how your business makes decisions?

2. How long has this cause been in place — and what does its age tell you about how embedded it is?

3. If this insight were correct, which other problems in your business would it also explain?

4. What would need to change in how your business operates — not just what it does, but how it decides — for this insight to lead to permanent change?

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

Read the root cause from Stage Five and ask a different question. Not what does this cause — but what does this reveal?

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

Write one sentence that begins: What this really means is... That sentence is your insight. It will tell you whether the action required is operational — fix a process — or structural — change how decisions get made. These require completely different interventions. An operational fix without a structural insight produces a result that lasts six months. A structural insight produces a permanent change.

Write that sentence before moving to Stage Seven. It will keep every action that follows aligned with the right level of change.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

OVERVIEW

Hidden Truth	Dist A Locked	Dist C Locked	Total Silent
Dist. WC	**₹14M**	**₹13M**	**₹27M**
Funding distributors silently	90 days aging	88 days aging	Informal lending since 2022

WC Gap	Annual Cost
₹18M	**~₹2.2M**
Funded by debt at ~12% cost	Interest on bridging debt

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

WC Needed	WC Available
₹67M	**₹49M**
DSO+DIO-DPO × daily revenue	Current working capital

Gap Amount	Root Type
₹18M	**Structure**
Funded silently by debt	Not a collections problem

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

WORKING CAPITAL CYCLE

WC Cycle = DSO + DIO - DPO

= 73 + 94 - 31

= 136 days | Industry standard: 75–90 days

Aryan is financing 46 extra days of operations

DISTRIBUTOR WC ANALYSIS

Distributor Lock-up = Days Over Terms × Daily Revenue

Dist A: (90 - 45) × ₹0.493M = ₹22.2M / Dist C: (88 - 45) × ₹0.493M = ₹21.2M

₹27M informal loan to two distributors — interest free

Not a collections problem. A relationship structure problem.

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	**Observation**	DSO 73d	**Measured**	Signal
05	**Diagnosis**	Guessing	**SKU mix found**	Done
09	**Action**	No plan	**₹4.2M target**	
11	**Course Correction**	DSO 73d	**DSO 61d**	
12	**Result**	Cash 18d	**Cash 41d**	
12	**Result**	DSO 73d	**DSO 47d**	
15	**Standard Set**	No floor	**DSO max 45d**	
16	**Prevention**	DSO 73d	**Alert at 41d**	

Insight: Aryan has been financing distributor WC for 2 years without knowing it.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Insight is what separates a fix that holds from one that needs redoing in six months. When you understand not just the cause but what it reveals about how your business decides, you can change the condition — not just the symptom.

2. Aryan's insight — that he had been financing his distributors' working capital for two years without knowing it — changed his distribution relationships permanently. That is insight-level change.

3. Write your insight as a sentence beginning with: 'What this really means is...' That sentence will keep your action plan aligned with the right level of change throughout execution.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. State your diagnosis in one sentence. Now write the insight it reveals — the deeper story — in two or three sentences.

Q2. How long has the condition described in your insight been true? Write the honest number.

Q3. Who in your business needs to understand this insight before any action can succeed? Name them.

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 07 — Focus

With insight in hand, you face the hardest practical discipline in the framework: choosing one thing. Stage 7 introduces the constraint principle — every system has one bottleneck, and removing it improves the entire system.

The insight is clear. Stage 7 — Focus — now channels that understanding into one single priority.

07
Focus

LAYER: EXECUTION

Choosing the one constraint that, if removed, makes everything else easier.

CHAPTER NINE

OBJECTIVE

To develop the discipline of choosing one priority when multiple urgent problems compete for attention.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· Why fixing ten things at once changes nothing

· How to identify the one constraint that unlocks all other improvements

· The difference between urgent and important in a business context

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· The constraint principle

· How to prioritise when everything feels urgent

· Aryan's focus decision

· The focus test

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

Suraj placed four pieces of paper on the table. Each one had a problem written at the top. DSO. SKU mix. Excess inventory. Communication gaps.

"Pick one," he said.

Aryan looked at all four. "We need to fix all of them."

"We will. But not simultaneously. Pick one."

Aryan hesitated. "The SKU mix is the biggest strategic issue."

"It is," Suraj agreed. "But it cannot be fixed in three weeks. The festive season is three weeks away and your purchase order is still sitting on your desk. Which of these four problems, if fixed right now, puts cash in your account before the season starts?"

Aryan looked at the papers again. "Collections."

"Yes. Collections is your constraint. Remove that constraint and you can place the order. You can run the festive season. You can breathe. Then, with cash in the account and the season behind you, we come back to SKU mix and we fix it properly." Suraj collected the other three papers and set them aside. "The other problems are real. They will have their turn. But in business, everything has a sequence. Right now, the sequence says collections first."

Aryan looked at the single piece of paper left on the table. Just one problem. One constraint.

"It feels like we are ignoring three things," he said.

"We are deferring three things," Suraj said. "There is a difference. Ignoring means forgetting. Deferring means scheduling. Those three problems now have a date. They just do not have today."

What This Stage Means

Focus is the discipline of choosing one constraint — the single point that, if resolved, makes the most other things easier or automatic.

By Stage 7, Aryan has identified multiple problems: slow collections, poor SKU mix, low margins, excess inventory, communication gaps. All are real. All need attention. But all of them cannot be addressed simultaneously without diluting every effort to the point of ineffectiveness.

The constraint principle: every system has one bottleneck. Strengthen that bottleneck and the whole system improves. Strengthen anything else and nothing changes.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Finding your one constraint is not about ignoring the others. It is about sequencing correctly — because fixing the right thing first creates the energy, the cash, and the confidence to fix everything else.

Why Businesses Skip This

Focus is skipped because it feels like neglect. 'If I only fix collections, what about the margin problem? What about the inventory?' The instinct to address everything simultaneously is understandable.

But multi-front action without prioritisation produces multi-front mediocrity. Three problems receive 33% effort each. None gets resolved. Twelve months later, the same conversation happens again.

ARYAN'S STORY · Aryan Chooses Collections

Aryan has four problems on the table: slow collections, SKU mix, excess inventory, and communication gaps between sales and finance.

His instinct is to fix all four. His CA asks him one question: 'If you could only fix one thing in the next 30 days, which one would release the most cash for the festive season purchase order?'

The answer is immediate: collections.

₹13.8 million is locked in two distributors with no structural reason for the delay. Recovering even 30% of that — ₹4.2 million — funds the purchase order. Funds the festive season. Relieves the cash pressure that is driving every other decision.

Collections first. Not because the other problems do not matter — they do, and they will be addressed in sequence. But collections is the constraint. Remove it, and the business breathes again.

That is Focus.

The Business OS Lens

Apply the constraint test to your situation.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. List your top three business problems right now. For each one, ask: 'If this were fixed, which other problems would automatically improve?'
2. Which problem, if fixed, releases the most cash or capacity?
3. Which problem, if not fixed, makes all other improvements temporary?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

4. What is your honest assessment of what you can actually accomplish in the next 30 days with your current team?

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

List every confirmed problem from the previous stages. Score each one on two dimensions: how much would fixing it improve the business, and how quickly could it be resolved given the current context.

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

Then ask one question: which of these problems, if resolved, makes the most other problems easier or automatic? That is your constraint. That is your focus.

The instinct is to address everything. Resist it. A business that fixes one constraint properly outperforms a business that partially addresses five simultaneously. Sequence is strategy.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

FOCUS DECISION — STAGE 7 Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd. · ₹180M · Spices & Condiments

OVERVIEW

Constraint	Target	DSO Now	Cash Now
Collections	**₹4.2M**	**73 days**	**18 days**
Unlocks ₹4.2M in 30 days	Recovery target — 30 days	Target: 45 days (Day 60)	Target: 35+ days (Day 30)

SKU Mix	PO Deadline
Deferred	**3 weeks**
Sequenced — post festive season	Festive season — hard deadline

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

Priority 1	Priority 2
Collections ₹4.2M available now	**SKU Mix** Next cycle — January

Priority 3	Sequence Logic
Inventory Sequenced for Q2	**LOCKED** Cash PO Season SKU

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

CONSTRAINT RELEASE CALCULATION

Cash Release = DSO Gap × Daily Revenue

= 28 days × ₹0.493M daily revenue

= ₹13.8M total recoverable | 30-day target: ₹4.2M

₹4.2M target = enough to place ₹12M PO with supplier credit

SEQUENCE LOGIC

Cash freed (Day 30) Purchase order placed Festive season

SKU mix impact: 3-month analysis January implementation

Fixing both simultaneously = diluted focus = delayed cash

One constraint. One focus. Correct sequence is the strategy.

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	**Observation**	DSO 73d	**Measured**	Signal
05	**Diagnosis**	Guessing	**SKU mix found**	Done
09	Action	No plan	₹4.2M target	
11	Course Correction	DSO 73d	DSO 61d	
12	Result	Cash 18d	Cash 41d	
12	Result	DSO 73d	DSO 47d	
15	Standard Set	No floor	DSO max 45d	
16	Prevention	DSO 73d	Alert at 41d	

Collections chosen. Everything else sequenced. Festive season can now be executed.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Focus is a discipline, not a decision. It requires overcoming the instinct to address everything simultaneously — an instinct that feels responsible but produces multi-front mediocrity without resolving anything permanently.

2. The constraint principle is counterintuitive: the fastest way to improve a system is to find its one bottleneck and remove it. Improving anything else produces only partial results.

3. Aryan chose collections because it was the constraint that unlocked everything else. Correct sequencing was the real work of Stage 7.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Write your top three problems. Score each one on two dimensions: impact if fixed (1-10) and speed of resolution (1-10). Multiply the scores.

Q2. Which problem scored highest? Is that your constraint — or is there a dependency you have not yet mapped?

Q3. Write your one focus area for the next 30 days. One sentence. No caveats.

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 08 — Ownership

Focus without ownership is a well-designed plan that nobody executes. Stage 8 addresses the most common failure mode in mid-market businesses — the founder becoming the bottleneck. You will learn the three conditions of real ownership and how to transfer responsibility without losing control.

Focus is set. Stage 8 — Ownership — now ensures that the right person carries the responsibility for executing it.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

08
Ownership

LAYER: EXECUTION

Ensuring the right person owns the action with full accountability.

CHAPTER TEN

OBJECTIVE

To close the most common gap between decision and execution in mid-market businesses.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· Why owner-dependency is the structural disease of the mid-market

· What genuine ownership means versus nominal assignment

· How to transfer ownership without losing control

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· The ownership gap defined

· The three conditions of real ownership

· Aryan assigns Rahul

· How to test whether ownership is real

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

Suraj asked Aryan one question that made him uncomfortable.

"If you were not here for thirty days, would this collection problem get solved?"

Aryan thought about it. "Probably not."

"Why not?"

"Because nobody else would push it the way I would."

"And that," Suraj said, "is the problem." He leaned forward. "Aryan, you are the best person in your company for almost every important task. And that is why your company cannot grow beyond you. Every urgent thing waits for you. Every decision needs you. You are not the leader of this business — you are its bottleneck."

Aryan looked like he wanted to argue. But did not.

"Who is your sales head?" Suraj asked.

"Rahul."

"Does he know your distributor relationships well?"

"Better than anyone else in the company."

"Then Rahul owns this. Not you." Suraj was direct but not unkind. "Call him in. Tell him this is his project. Give him the target — four point two million recovered in thirty days. Give him the authority to negotiate. And then get out of his way."

Aryan was quiet for a moment. "What if he handles it differently than I would?"

"He will," Suraj said. "And that is fine. The outcome matters. Not the method. Your job now is to set the target and give him the tools. Not to do it for him." He paused. "Can you do that?"

Aryan picked up his phone. "I will call Rahul now."

What This Stage Means

Ownership is the most skipped stage in every business framework — and the most critical.

Focus tells you what to fix. Ownership tells you who will fix it. Without a named owner, a deadline, and a metric, the best-focused strategy in the world sits in a meeting room and dies.

The mid-market structural disease is owner-dependency: the founder is the de facto owner of every critical action, every important decision, and every urgent problem. This is not leadership. It is bottleneck.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Real ownership has three conditions. One: a named individual, not a team or a department. Two: a clear outcome with a measurable target. Three: authority to act — meaning the owner has been explicitly told they can make decisions without coming back to the founder for permission.

Why Businesses Skip This

Ownership gets skipped because assigning it feels like trust — and founders who have been burned by delegation mistakes have learned to hold ownership themselves.

The cost: the founder becomes the constraint. Every initiative slows to the speed of the founder's bandwidth. And the founder's bandwidth is always the scarcest resource in the building.

ARYAN'S STORY · Aryan Assigns Rahul

Aryan calls Rahul — his sales head of eight years — into his office. He puts the debtors aging report on the table. Two lines highlighted: Distributor A (₹14 million, 90 days) and Distributor C (₹13 million, 88 days).

'Rahul, this is your project. Not mine. Not the accountant's. Yours.'

Rahul nods.

'The target: ₹4.2 million recovered in 30 days. You choose how. You decide the conversations. You decide the payment structures. If you need to offer something, come to me once — tell me what and why — and I will give you a yes or no in the same day. But the execution is yours.'

'What if they push back?'

'They will push back. That is why I am giving this to you and not to someone else. You have the relationship. Use it.'

Rahul leaves with a target, a timeline, and authority. That is ownership — not a task assignment, but a responsibility transfer.

The Business OS Lens

Test the ownership assignment in your business.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. For your chosen focus area — who is the right person to own it? (Not the best person. The right person — capable, available, and trusted by the key stakeholders.)

2. Can you give that person a target, a timeline, and authority to act without returning to you for every decision?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

3. What is your check-in cadence — not supervision, but structured accountability?

4. What happens if the target is not met? Is that consequence understood by both parties?

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

Name the owner. Not a team. Not a department. One person, by name.

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

For the chosen focus area, identify the person who has the relationship, the capability, and the availability to lead the resolution. Then give them three things before they start: a specific measurable target, a clear timeline, and explicit authority to act without returning for permission on every decision.

If you are the owner, the hardest part of this stage is stepping back once the assignment is made. If you are the advisor, the hardest part is helping the owner see that their involvement in execution is often the very thing slowing it down.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

OWNERSHIP ASSIGNED — STAGE 8

Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd. · ₹180M · Spices & Condiments

OVERVIEW

Owner	Target	Authority	Starts
Rahul	**₹4.2M**	**GRANTED**	**Monday**
Sales Head — 8 years	Recovered by Day 30	Negotiate independently	All actions in motion

Founder Role	Check-in
Step Back	**Weekly**
Set target + give tools only	Outcome only — not method

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

Named Person	Measurable
Rahul	**₹4.2M**
Not a team — one name	Specific number + date

Authority	Founder Dep.
Explicit	**Removed**
Told verbally + confirmed	Aryan not in execution

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

OWNERSHIP TEST

Real Ownership = Named Person + Measurable Target + Explicit Authority

Rahul + ₹4.2M by Day 30 + Authority to negotiate

= OWNERSHIP CONFIRMED — all 3 conditions met

Without any one condition: nominal ownership, not real

FOUNDER DEPENDENCY CHECK

Founder Dependency = Actions requiring founder approval daily

Before: Every collection call needs Aryan involved

After Stage 8: Rahul owns execution — Aryan checks outcome weekly

Dependency removed. Bottleneck cleared. Rahul starts Monday.

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	Observation	DSO 73d	Measured	Signal
05	Diagnosis	Guessing	SKU mix found	Done
09	Action	No plan	₹4.2M target	
11	Course Correction	DSO 73d	DSO 61d	
12	Result	Cash 18d	Cash 41d	
12	Result	DSO 73d	DSO 47d	
15	Standard Set	No floor	DSO max 45d	
16	Prevention	DSO 73d	Alert at 41d	

Ownership is not delegation. It is transfer of responsibility with target and authority.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Ownership is the most critical and most skipped stage in every business framework. A focus without an owner is a suggestion. A project without an owner is a conversation that repeats in every weekly meeting.

2. Real ownership requires three things: a named individual, a clear measurable outcome, and explicit authority to act. Remove any one and the ownership is nominal — not real.

3. The founder's role in Stage 8 is to transfer responsibility clearly — stating the target, the timeline, and the authority — and then step back, checking on the outcome rather than the method.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Name the owner for your focus area. Full name, not a role title.

Q2. Write the exact target and deadline you will give them. Be specific: not 'improve collections' but 'recover ₹X by [date]'.

Q3. What authority will you explicitly grant them that they do not currently have?

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 09 — Action

Ownership is assigned. Now the action plan must be specific enough to actually get done. Stage 9 shows you the anatomy of a real action — the four components that transform a strategic priority into a specific task with a named person, a target, and a deadline.

Ownership is assigned. Stage 9 — Action — now defines exactly what gets done, by whom, and when.

09

Action

LAYER: EXECUTION

The specific, named, time-bound execution step.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

OBJECTIVE

To understand what separates a real action from a well-intentioned suggestion.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· The anatomy of an action that actually gets executed

· Why vague actions fail even when executed by capable people

· How to convert a strategic priority into five concrete daily actions

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· What makes an action real

· The action anatomy

· Aryan's five actions

· Converting your focus into actions

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

Rahul came into the room and Aryan handed him the aging report.

"These two lines," Aryan said, pointing to Distributor A and Distributor C.

Suraj watched as Rahul read the numbers. Saw him understand.

"What is my brief?" Rahul asked.

"Four point two million. Thirty days," Aryan said.

Rahul nodded. He was already thinking.

"Before you leave," Suraj said, "I want five specific actions from you. Not directions. Actions. Each one with a named step, a named person, and a date."

Rahul looked slightly surprised. Then he sat down and wrote. It took him eight minutes. When he was done, Suraj read the list.

Call Vikram personally. Propose one point five million by the tenth in exchange for a discount on the next order. Visit Distributor C — understand if this is operational or deliberate. Build a daily collections tracker. Share it with Aryan every Friday. Set up a standing Monday call with both finance teams until aging normalizes.

"This is good," Suraj said. He looked at Aryan. "Do you have any changes?"

Aryan shook his head.

"Rahul," Suraj said, "one more thing. When you go to Vikram, do not go as someone chasing a payment. Go as someone who is restructuring a partnership. The relationship has value. The conversation has to honor that while also being clear about the new terms." He paused. "The money will come faster if Vikram feels respected than if he feels pressured."

Rahul stood up. "Understood."

After he left, Aryan turned to Suraj. "That was different."

"That was what ownership looks like," Suraj said. "When it is done right."

What This Stage Means

An action is not a plan. It is not an intention. It is not a direction.

An action has four components: who, what, by when, and how will we know it is done.

'Improve collections' is not an action. 'Rahul calls Distributor A's owner personally on Monday, presents the aging report, and proposes a ₹1.5 million payment by the 15th' is an action.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

The difference is not detail for detail's sake. The difference is executability. Vague actions produce vague results. Specific actions produce specific accountability.

Why Businesses Skip This

Action specificity gets skipped because it feels like micromanagement. 'Rahul knows what to do. I do not need to define each step.'

The problem: Rahul may know the goal. He may not know which specific approach is authorised, which relationships he can leverage, or what the acceptable trade-off between speed and relationship is. Without specificity, Rahul makes assumptions — and assumptions made in execution are the most expensive kind.

ARYAN'S STORY · Rahul's Five Actions

Rahul maps five specific actions for the first two weeks.

Action 1: Call Distributor A's owner (Vikram) personally. Not his accountant. Present the aging report. Acknowledge the relationship. Propose ₹1.5 million by the 10th in exchange for a ₹500K discount on the next order.

Action 2: Visit Distributor C's office. Understand why the delay has occurred — is it operational or is it a deliberate float? Different cause requires different response.

Action 3: Prepare a revised credit policy for both distributors — maximum 45 days, enforced from the next order cycle. Present to Aryan for approval by end of Week 1.

Action 4: Build a daily collections tracker — date, distributor, amount outstanding, last contact, next action. Share with Aryan every Friday.

Action 5: Set up a standing Monday call with both distributors' finance teams — 20 minutes, same time, every week, until the aging normalises.

Five actions. Specific. Named. Dated. Measurable. That is Stage 9.

The Business OS Lens

Convert your focus into five specific actions.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. For each action you plan, can you answer all four questions: who, what, by when, and how will we know it is done?
2. Which of your planned actions requires a relationship conversation rather than a task execution?
3. What is the one action that, if not done in the first 48 hours, will slow everything else?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

4. What permissions, approvals, or resources does the action owner need before they can start?

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

Convert the focus into five specific actions. For each one, answer four questions before writing it down: who does it, what exactly, by when, and how will we know it is complete.

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

An action that cannot answer all four questions is not an action — it is an intention. Intentions do not move numbers. Actions with named owners, specific outcomes, and defined deadlines do.

Write the five actions on a single page. Share it with the owner before anything else moves forward. The conversation about whether the actions are specific enough is worth having before execution starts rather than after Day Fifteen when the results are unclear.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

ACTIONS DEFINED — STAGE 9

Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd. · ₹180M · Spices & Condiments

OVERVIEW

Actions Set
5 defined
Named, dated, measurable

Action 1
Dist A call
₹1.5M by Day 10 (Vikram)

Action 2
Dist C visit
Understand delay — Day 5

Action 5
Weekly call
Monday — both finance teams

Owner
Rahul
All 5 start Monday

Framework
SMART
Specific, Measurable, Time-bound

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

Named
5/5
Every action has a person

Specific
5/5
Exact amount + exact date

Deadline
5/5
All have Day X target

Success Criteria
5/5
How we know it is done

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

ACTION ANATOMY
Real Action = Who + What Exactly + By When + How We Know It Is Done
Action 1: Rahul calls Vikram (Dist A) personally — ₹1.5M by Day 10
Action 2: Rahul visits Dist C — understand root of delay by Day 5
Any action missing one element is an intention, not an action

COLLECTION PLAN — TOTAL TARGET
Action 1 (Dist A): ₹1.5M + Action 2-3 (Dist C): ₹1.8M + Actions 4-5: ₹0.9M
= ₹4.2M total target in 30 days
= ₹4.2M | Purchase order: ₹12M | Supplier credit: 60 days
₹4.2M cash + ₹7.8M supplier credit = ₹12M PO placed on time

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	**Observation**	DSO 73d	**Measured**	Signal
05	**Diagnosis**	Guessing	**SKU mix found**	Done
09	**Action**	No plan	**₹4.2M target**	Done
11	Course Correction	DSO 73d	DSO 61d	
12	Result	Cash 18d	Cash 41d	
12	Result	DSO 73d	DSO 47d	
15	Standard Set	No floor	DSO max 45d	
16	Prevention	DSO 73d	Alert at 41d	

5 actions. All named. All dated. All measurable. Execution starts Monday.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. An action without a named owner, a specific outcome, and a deadline is not an action — it is a topic for the next meeting. The specificity of Stage 9 converts strategy into execution and ambition into accountability.

2. Rahul's five actions were effective because each answered four questions: who does it, what exactly, by when, and how do we know it is done. That clarity eliminates costly assumptions at the execution layer.

3. The founder's role in Stage 9 is to approve the plan, ensure each action has what it needs to start, and then let the owner run — being available for decisions, not involved in execution.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. List five specific actions for your focus area. For each: who does it, what exactly is it, by when, and what does success look like.

Q2. Which action needs to happen first — and what would happen to the others if it did not?

Q3. What is the one action that only you — as the founder — can take to unblock everything else?

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 10 — Measurement

Actions without measurement are intentions. Stage 10 shows you how to build the measurement infrastructure that makes accountability real — establishing the baseline, the target, and the weekly review cadence that tells you whether the actions are working before it is too late to adjust.

Actions are defined. Stage 10 — Measurement — now establishes the baseline and target so you can know whether the actions are working.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

10

Measurement

LAYER: EXECUTION

Converting intention into accountability through baseline, target, and timeline.

CHAPTER TWELVE

OBJECTIVE

To establish the measurement infrastructure that makes results visible and accountability real.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· Why a target without a baseline is not accountability — it is hope

· How to design a measurement scorecard for any business problem

· The three questions every measurement must answer

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· Baseline vs target vs timeline

· Aryan's measurement scorecard

· The weekly review cadence

· Building your own scorecard

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

Before Rahul started, Suraj stopped him.

"One thing before you make a single call," he said. He pulled out a fresh sheet. "Write down where we are today. Exact numbers."

Rahul and Aryan went through it together. DSO seventy-three days. Total debtors thirty-six million. Cash runway eighteen days.

"Now write down where we need to be," Suraj said. "Not where we want to be. Where we need to be."

DSO forty-five days. Cash recovered four point two million. Cash runway thirty-five days.

"And when?"

Aryan looked at the calendar. "Thirty days for the cash. Sixty days for the DSO."

Suraj wrote it all down and handed it back to them. "This is your scorecard. Not a wish list — a scorecard. Every Monday morning you look at this and you answer one question: are we on track or are we not?" He looked at Rahul. "You produce these numbers. Not your accountant. Not Aryan. You. Because the person who produces the measurement owns the outcome."

Rahul took the sheet.

"One more thing," Suraj said. "Day fifteen. We review. Not day thirty — day fifteen. Because if something is not working, I want to know on day fifteen when we can still change direction. Not on day thirty when the opportunity is gone."

Aryan nodded. "Day fifteen. What time?"

"Morning. Before anything else." Suraj closed his notebook. "The plan is live. Let it run."

What This Stage Means

Measurement converts intention into accountability.

Before Rahul starts his five actions, two numbers must be established: the baseline (where you are today) and the target (where you will be in 30 days). Without a baseline, there is nothing to measure against. Without a target, there is no way to know if the action is working.

The third element is the timeline — not a deadline for the action, but a measurement cadence. Daily? Weekly? Monthly? The cadence determines how quickly you can catch a problem with the action plan and correct it before too much time is lost.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Why Businesses Skip This

Measurement is skipped because it feels bureaucratic. 'We know what we are trying to do. We do not need a scorecard.'

The cost: three weeks into execution, nobody can agree on whether progress is on track. The owner thinks it is fine. The founder thinks it is slow. The accountant has a different number. Without a baseline and a shared measurement system, every progress conversation becomes a negotiation about which number is right.

ARYAN'S STORY · Aryan's Measurement Scorecard

Aryan and Rahul spend 30 minutes setting the scorecard before any action begins.

Metric 1 — DSO: Baseline 73 days. Target 45 days. Timeline: 60 days. Review: every Monday. Metric 2 — Total Debtors Outstanding: Baseline ₹36 million. Target ₹23 million. Timeline: 60 days. Metric 3 — Cash Recovered: Baseline ₹0. Target ₹4.2 million. Timeline: 30 days. Metric 4 — Cash Runway: Baseline 18 days. Target 35 days. Timeline: 30 days. Metric 5 — Distributor A Aging: Baseline 90 days. Target 45 days. Timeline: 45 days.

Five metrics. Five baselines. Five targets. Five timelines. One weekly review — Monday morning, 20 minutes, same format every week.

This is not a management system. It is a clarity system. Everyone knows what success looks like. Nobody needs to argue about it.

The Business OS Lens

Build your measurement scorecard.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. What is the single most important metric for your focus area — the one number that, if it moves, confirms the actions are working?
2. What is the honest baseline for that metric today? (Not last month. Today.)
3. What is the realistic target — not the aspirational target — for 30 days and 60 days?
4. Who will produce this number each week, and in what format will it be shared?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

MEASUREMENT SCORECARD DESIGN

DSO Baseline: 73 days Target: 45 days | Gap: 28 days | Timeline: 60 days

Cash Recovered: Baseline ₹0 Target ₹4.2M | Timeline: 30 days

Cash Runway: Baseline 18 days Target 35 days | Timeline: 30 days

Weekly check formula: Are we on track? = (Actual Progress ÷ Expected Progress) × 100

On track = 85-100%. Needs attention = 70-84%. Corrective action required = below 70%.

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

Establish three numbers before the first action is taken. The baseline — where you are today. The target — where you need to be. The timeline — by when.

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

Then set the review cadence. Weekly is almost always right. Monthly is too slow — by the time you see a problem, you have lost three weeks. Daily is too frequent — it creates noise without improving decisions.

The person who produces the scorecard each week should be the owner of the action, not the founder and not the advisor. When the owner produces the measurement, they own the outcome. When someone else produces it, they are passengers.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

MEASUREMENT SET — STAGE 10

Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd. · ₹180M · Spices & Condiments

OVERVIEW

DSO Baseline	Cash Baseline	Recovery Target	Review Cadence
73 days	**18 days**	**₹4.2M**	**Monday**
Target: 45 days by Day 60	Target: 35 days by Day 30	Target by Day 30	Weekly — 20 min fixed

Scorecard Owner	Day 15 Check
Rahul	**LOCKED**
Not accountant — not Aryan	Course correction review set

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

Baseline Set	Target Set
73-day DSO	**45-day DSO**
Starting point locked	End point locked

Timeline Set	Progress Check
60 days	**Day 15**
Measurement window locked	Course correction possible

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

MEASUREMENT SCORECARD DESIGN

Progress Rate = (Actual Recovery ÷ Expected Recovery) × 100

Day 15 expected: ₹2.1M / Day 30 target: ₹4.2M

Day 15 at 85–100% = On Track / 70–84% = Adjust / Below 70% = Stop

Scorecard produced by Rahul every Monday — owner produces the number

DSO TRAJECTORY

DSO Improvement needed = 73 - 45 = 28 days in 60 days

Week 1 target: 68d / Week 2: 63d / Week 4: 55d / Day 60: 45d

Weekly improvement required: ~4.5 days per week

Cash runway target: 18 35 days within 30 days

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	**Observation**	DSO 73d	**Measured**	Signal
05	**Diagnosis**	Guessing	**SKU mix found**	Done
09	**Action**	No plan	**₹4.2M target**	Done
11	**Course Correction**	DSO 73d	**DSO 61d**	
12	**Result**	Cash 18d	**Cash 41d**	
12	**Result**	DSO 73d	**DSO 47d**	
15	**Standard Set**	No floor	**DSO max 45d**	
16	**Prevention**	DSO 73d	**Alert at 41d**	

Baseline locked. Target locked. Timeline locked. Day 15 review pre-scheduled.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Measurement is not bureaucracy. It converts intention into accountability and accountability into verifiable results. Baseline, target, and timeline are the difference between a managed project and a guessing game.

2. The weekly review cadence is the most underrated element of Stage 10. Deviations caught weekly can be corrected in time. Deviations caught monthly have already become expensive.

3. When the owner produces the measurement, they own the outcome. When the founder produces it, the owner is a passenger. Who creates the number matters as much as the number itself.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Write your measurement scorecard: three metrics, three baselines, three targets, three timelines.

Q2. Who will produce these numbers each week? Is that person currently capable of doing so without help?

Q3. What will you do if, at the Day 15 review, you are tracking at 50% of target?

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 11 — Course Correction

Every plan diverges from reality the moment it meets the real world. Stage 11 gives you the framework for the Day 15 midpoint review — the structured check that tells you whether to continue, adjust, or stop. You will see how one 30-minute review saved Rs.800K.

The scorecard is set. Stage 11 — Course Correction — now gives you the framework for what to do when the numbers are not moving as expected.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

11

Course Correction

LAYER: EXECUTION

Reading mid-execution data and adjusting when the action is off-track.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

OBJECTIVE

To develop the discipline of reviewing execution honestly and adjusting before it is too late.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· Why course correction is not failure — it is intelligence

· The three responses to a mid-execution review: continue, adjust, stop

· How to conduct a 15-minute course correction review

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· What course correction is

· The three-response framework

· Aryan's Day 15 review

· How to run a course correction meeting

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

Day fifteen. Suraj, Aryan, and Rahul sat around the same table where the plan had been made.

Rahul placed the tracker on the table. DSO had moved from seventy-three to sixty-one days. Cash recovered: one point eight million.

"Where are we against target?" Suraj asked.

Rahul did the calculation. "Eighty-six percent of where we expected to be at day fifteen."

"Which distributor is performing and which is not?"

"Vikram has committed. The payment structure is agreed — one point five million by the twentieth. He will deliver." Rahul paused. "Distributor C is different. He is not struggling. He is floating."

"What does that mean?" Aryan asked.

"He took on a new product line last month. He is using our credit as a buffer while he manages cash across both suppliers. It is deliberate."

Suraj turned to Aryan. "Same framework, different diagnosis. Two different actions required."

He drew a line down the center of a page. On one side: Distributor A — continue. On the other: Distributor C — change approach.

"With Vikram, the plan is working. Do not change what is working." He wrote on the right side. "With Distributor C, the relationship conversation is not enough. He needs a structured credit review. No new orders until a payment plan is formally agreed."

Aryan looked at the two columns. "So we are on track, but not for the same reason we thought."

"Correct," Suraj said. "That is exactly what a day fifteen review is for. The plan was your best guess. Today's data is your first real information. Acting on it is not failure — it is intelligence."

What This Stage Means

Every plan diverges from reality the moment it makes contact with the real world. This is not a failure of planning — it is the nature of execution in complex systems.

Course Correction is the discipline of reading the divergence, understanding its cause, and deciding: continue with the current approach, adjust the approach, or stop and replace the action with a better one.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Most businesses do not do this. They either ignore the divergence and hope the target is still reached — or they declare failure and abandon the initiative entirely. The Business OS takes a third path: structured, disciplined, time-bound review at the midpoint of every action sequence.

Why Businesses Skip This

Course correction is skipped because of pride. Admitting that the plan is not working feels like admitting the plan was wrong. The result: bad plans get executed to completion. Resources are consumed. Time is lost. And the post-mortem produces the same analysis that a Day 15 review would have produced — except three weeks later and at full cost.

ARYAN'S STORY · Day 15 Review

Day 15. Rahul presents the numbers.

DSO: down from 73 to 61 days. Cash recovered: ₹1.8 million against a ₹2.1 million Day 15 target. Tracking at 86%.

Rahul's assessment: Distributor A (Vikram) has committed to a payment structure — ₹1.5 million by the 20th. It will come. Distributor C is the problem. The delay is not operational — it is deliberate. Distributor C is managing cash flow by using Aryan's credit facility as a buffer.

Decision: Continue with Distributor A — the approach is working. Adjust with Distributor C — move from a relationship conversation to a structured credit review. No new orders until a payment plan is agreed.

That decision — made at Day 15, not Day 30 — saves two weeks and approximately ₹800K in additional interest and pressure.

This is Course Correction.

The Business OS Lens

Design your Day 15 review before you start execution.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. What would '50% of target at Day 15' look like for your specific metric?
2. For each possible outcome at Day 15 (ahead, on track, behind), what is your pre-decided response?
3. Who attends the Day 15 review, and who has decision-making authority to change course?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

4. What is the one signal that would tell you the action approach itself is wrong — not just slow?

COURSE CORRECTION CALCULATION

Progress Rate = (Actual Result ÷ Target) × 100

Day 15: Cash Recovered ₹1.8M ÷ Target ₹4.2M = 43% vs 50% expected

Progress Rate: 86% of expected ADJUST (not stop, not panic)

Forecast at current rate: ₹3.6M by Day 30 vs ₹4.2M target

Gap: ₹0.6M Accelerate Distributor C action immediately

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

Schedule Day Fifteen before Day One. This is not optional.

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

At Day Fifteen, look at the actual numbers against the expected numbers. Calculate the progress rate. Then make one of three decisions: continue the current approach, adjust the approach, or stop and replace it with something better.

The decision has to be made without ego. The plan was a best guess. Day Fifteen data is the first real information. The business that acts on real information outperforms the business that defends its original plan regardless of what the data says.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

DAY 15 REVIEW — STAGE 11

Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd. · ₹180M · Spices & Condiments

OVERVIEW

DSO Day 15	Cash Recovered	Dist A	Dist C
61 days	**₹1.8M**	**On Track**	**ADJUST**
Was 73 — moving right	86% of Day 15 target	₹1.5M committed by Day 20	Deliberate delay detected

Progress Rate	Decision
86%	**Adjust**
vs 100% target — continue	Continue A, change C

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

Day 15 DSO	Day 15 Cash
61 days	**₹1.8M**
Was 73 — 12 days improved	86% of ₹2.1M target

Dist A	Dist C
₹1.2M in	**₹0.6M in**
Payment structure agreed	Needs new approach

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

PROGRESS RATE CALCULATION

Progress Rate = (Actual Recovery ÷ Expected Day 15 Recovery) × 100

= ₹1.8M ÷ ₹2.1M × 100

= 86% | Threshold: 85%+ | Decision: CONTINUE

86% on track. No change to overall strategy — adjust Dist C approach only

DISTRIBUTOR ANALYSIS — DAY 15

Dist A: ₹1.2M received / ₹1.5M committed by Day 20 / STATUS: CONTINUE

Dist C: ₹0.6M received / New product line — using credit as buffer

Dist C action: Formal credit review — no new orders until plan agreed

Same target (₹4.2M). Adjusted route for Dist C. Day 30 still achievable.

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	Observation	DSO 73d	Measured	Signal
05	Diagnosis	Guessing	SKU mix found	Done
09	Action	No plan	₹4.2M target	Done
11	Course Correction	DSO 73d	DSO 61d	Day 15
12	Result	Cash 18d	Cash 41d	
12	Result	DSO 73d	DSO 47d	
15	Standard Set	No floor	DSO max 45d	
16	Prevention	DSO 73d	Alert at 41d	

Day 15 data is the first real information. 86% on track — continue with adjusted approach.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Course Correction is what separates intelligent execution from stubborn execution. The plan was your best guess. Day 15 data is the first real information. Acting on it — even when it means changing course — is the highest form of operational discipline.

2. The three-response framework — continue, adjust, stop — removes ego from the mid-execution review. The question is not whether the plan worked but what the data says you should do now.

3. Aryan's decision to continue with Distributor A and adjust with Distributor C — made in a 30-minute Day 15 meeting — was worth Rs.800K and two weeks of pressure. This is the compounding value of structured course correction.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Set your Day 15 checkpoint now. What number, at Day 15, would tell you the plan is working?

Q2. What would tell you the approach needs to change — not just run harder, but change?

Q3. Who has the authority and access to make a course correction decision without it becoming a political event in your organisation?

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 12 — Result

The execution cycle is complete. Stage 12 documents the precise measurable outcome — the before-and-after comparison that tells you whether the actions worked. You will see Aryan's full 60-day scoreboard and learn why a positive result is necessary but not sufficient on its own.

Course correction is built in. Stage 12 — Result — now records what the numbers actually show at the end of the execution period.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

12
Result

LAYER: EVOLUTION

The measurable, short-term outcome of the executed actions.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

OBJECTIVE

To understand what a genuine Result is — and what it is not sufficient for on its own.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· What constitutes a real result versus a temporary improvement

· Why results should be documented precisely and shared clearly

· The critical distinction: what the Result is, and what it does not yet prove

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· Defining a result

· Aryan's 60-day result

· Documenting and sharing results

· Why Result alone is not enough

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

Day sixty. Suraj arrived to find Aryan standing at the same window as the first day. But the posture was different.

"Numbers?" Suraj asked.

Aryan handed him the scorecard. DSO forty-seven days. Cash recovered four point two million. Cash runway forty-one days. Total debtors twenty-three point one million.

Suraj read it without speaking. Then he set it down.

"The festive season order was placed on day twenty-eight," Aryan said. "Season revenue up twenty-three percent on last year."

Suraj nodded. "How do you feel?"

"Like we fixed something." Aryan paused. "But you are going to tell me we are not done."

"You got there faster than most people do," Suraj said. He picked up the scorecard again. "These are results. Real results. Four point two million. Twenty-six days of DSO improvement. A festive season executed well." He looked at Aryan. "And they are not a solution. They are a beginning."

Aryan sat down. "Because the problem will come back."

"Because the problem will come back if nothing in the business actually changed. The numbers improved. Now we need to ask the harder question — did the business change? Did the people change? Did the way decisions get made change?" Suraj placed the scorecard face down on the table. "Results are what you report to stakeholders. What happens next is what actually matters."

What This Stage Means

A Result is the short-term, measurable outcome of executing the actions defined in Stage 9 and tracked through Stages 10 and 11.

It is not an estimate. It is not a projection. It is a before-and-after comparison using the exact metrics, baselines, and targets defined in Stage 10.

Results matter for two reasons. First, they confirm that the diagnosis and actions were correct. Second, they create the internal momentum and credibility needed for the longer-term changes required in Stages 13 through 17.

But results, on their own, are not sufficient. Numbers can improve temporarily without anything in the organisation fundamentally changing. The Result confirms the action

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

worked. It does not confirm the change will last.

Why Businesses Skip This

Results get misread — not skipped. Founders look at improving numbers and declare the problem solved. They stop the Monday reviews. They reassign Rahul to the next project. They move on.

Six months later, DSO is back to 68 days. The same conversation happens again. This pattern — improve, declare victory, regress — is the most common and most expensive failure mode in mid-market business improvement.

> **ARYAN'S STORY · 60 Days Later**
>
> Day 60. The numbers.
>
> DSO: 47 days. Down from 73 days. Target was 45 days. Two days away from target. Total Debtors Outstanding: ₹23.1 million. Down from ₹36 million. ₹12.9 million recovered. Cash Recovered: ₹4.2 million in 30 days — target hit exactly. Cash Runway: 41 days. Up from 18 days. Distributor A: 42 days aging. Within the new standard. Distributor C: 51 days aging. Better. Not yet at standard. Ongoing.
>
> The festive season purchase order was placed on Day 28. The season was executed. Revenue for the festive period was up 23% on last year.
>
> Aryan is pleased. As he should be. These are real results. ₹4.2 million recovered. Cash runway more than doubled. DSO almost at target. The business has more room to breathe than it has had in two years.
>
> But Aryan's CA says one thing before leaving the room: 'These are results. Not yet a solution. Do not stop here.'

The Business OS Lens

Document your result precisely.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. Compare your actual result to your baseline and target for each metric. What is the precise number?
2. What percentage of target did you achieve? What explains the gap, if any?
3. Which action had the highest impact? Which had the lowest?
4. What have you learned about the root cause from watching the actions work — or not work?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

Document the result precisely. Not approximately, not narratively — precisely. Write the baseline, the target, and the actual outcome for every metric in the scorecard.

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

Share the result with stakeholders. Then immediately ask the harder question that Stage Thirteen will answer: did the numbers improve because something in the business actually changed, or because someone applied focused effort that will relax the moment they move on to the next priority?

That question determines whether you stop here or keep building.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

RESULT — STAGE 12 Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd. · ₹180M · Spices & Condiments

OVERVIEW

DSO	Cash Recovered	Cash Runway	Debtors
47 days	**₹4.2M**	**41 days**	**₹23.1M**
Was 73 days (-26 days)	Target achieved Day 30	Was 18 days (+23 days)	Was ₹36M (₹12.9M freed)

Gross Margin	Festive Season
28%	**Executed**
Unchanged — next cycle focus	PO placed Day 28 — +23% rev

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

Top 3 SKUs Rev	Cash in Debtors
68%	**₹23.1M**
Unchanged — next cycle	Was ₹36M — ₹12.9M freed

Inventory	WC Gap
₹42M	**₹9M**
Unchanged — next cycle	Was ₹18M — halved

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

DSO RESULT

DSO Improvement = Starting DSO - Final DSO
= 73 days - 47 days
= 26-day improvement | Target was 28 days | 93% of target achieved
₹4.2M recovered · Festive PO placed Day 28 · Revenue +23% vs last year

CASH RUNWAY RESULT

Cash Runway Improvement = Final Runway - Starting Runway
= 41 days - 18 days
= +23 days improvement | Target was 35 days | Target exceeded
Business went from 18-day survival mode to 41-day operational comfort

WORKING CAPITAL STATUS

WC Gap = (DSO + DIO - DPO) × Daily Revenue
Before: 136 × ₹0.493M = ₹67M needed / After: 110 × ₹0.493M = ₹54M
= WC requirement reduced by ₹13M | Gap: ₹18M ₹9M
Working capital cycle: 136 110 days. ₹9M gap remains — next cycle.

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	**Observation**	DSO 73d	**Measured**	Signal
05	**Diagnosis**	Guessing	**SKU mix found**	Done
09	**Action**	No plan	**₹4.2M target**	Done
11	**Course Correction**	DSO 73d	**DSO 61d**	Day 15
12	**Result**	Cash 18d	**Cash 41d**	+₹4.2M
12	**Result**	DSO 73d	**DSO 47d**	-26 days
15	Standard Set	No floor	DSO max 45d	
16	Prevention	DSO 73d	Alert at 41d	

Results confirmed. ₹4.2M recovered. Festive season executed. Now: did the business change?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. A Result is the honest accounting of what changed — not what was planned, but what actually happened, measured against the baseline set in Stage 10. No rounding, no narrative. The number against the target.

2. Aryan's Rs.4.2 million recovery and 26-day DSO improvement validated the diagnosis and enabled the festive season. But they are not the end of the story — they are the beginning of Stage 13.

3. The most common mistake after a positive result is stopping: reviews stop, the owner moves on, and improvement begins its slow regression. Stage 13 exists precisely to prevent that pattern.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Fill in your result: metric, baseline, target, actual. Three lines.

Q2. What does the gap between your target and actual tell you about your original diagnosis — was it right, partially right, or wrong?

Q3. What is the one thing you would do differently in the action plan if you ran this cycle again?

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 13 — Impact

Results change numbers. Impact changes behaviour. Stage 13 asks the harder question: did the business actually change, or did the numbers just improve temporarily? You will learn the four indicators of real impact and see how Aryan's team operates differently six months later — without anyone telling them to.

Results documented. Stage 13 — Impact — now asks the harder question: did the business actually change, or just the numbers?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

13

Impact

LAYER: EVOLUTION

The lasting, behavioural and structural change produced by the work.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

OBJECTIVE

To understand the distinction between a result that shows in the numbers and an impact that shows in the business.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· Why results and impact are fundamentally different

· How to measure behavioural change in a business

· Why organisations that stop at Result always regress

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· Result vs Impact: the complete distinction

· Aryan's impact — six months later

· The four indicators of real impact

· How to assess impact in your business

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

Six months later. Suraj stopped by the Rajasthan office unannounced.

He arrived on a Monday morning. When he walked in, Rahul was already at the head of the conference table, running the weekly review. On the screen behind him: a single slide. Five numbers. DSO. Cash. Debtors aging for both major distributors. Cash recovered in the last seven days.

Suraj stood at the door and watched without interrupting.

Rahul walked through each number. The team asked questions. A decision was made about Distributor C, who had started drifting again. Rahul assigned an owner. Set a deadline. The meeting ended in twenty minutes.

When everyone had left, Aryan came to stand next to Suraj.

"You did not need to be there," Suraj said.

"I was not there," Aryan said. "I came in for something else and walked past."

Suraj smiled. "That is impact. Not the forty-seven-day DSO. Not the four point two million. This — what just happened in that room — is impact. The team doing it themselves. The right numbers on the screen. The decision made without you."

Aryan was quiet for a moment. "Six months ago Rahul would not have run that meeting."

"Six months ago you would not have let him," Suraj said. He turned toward the door. "There are a few more things to build before this becomes permanent. But the hardest part — making it real — is already done."

What This Stage Means

Impact is what happens in the business after the Result — not in the numbers, but in the people, the habits, and the decisions.

A Result says: DSO dropped from 73 to 47 days. An Impact says: the sales team now brings the collections aging report to every Monday meeting without being asked.

A Result says: ₹4.2 million was recovered in 30 days. An Impact says: the founder no longer has to personally call distributors to collect — because the process now runs without him.

Impact is cultural and behavioural. It lives in what people do automatically, what decisions get made differently, and what questions get asked in meetings that were not asked before.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Why Businesses Skip This

Impact is the stage most often declared without evidence. 'The team has changed. We think differently now.' These statements are made at the result review meeting with no data, no comparison, and no test.

Real impact is observable. Either the sales head brings the collections report to Monday meetings or he does not. Either pricing decisions reference contribution margin or they do not. Either the founder is copied on every collections email or he is not. Impact is not a feeling — it is a visible, documentable change in how the business operates.

ARYAN'S STORY · Six Months Later

Six months after the initial action plan. The numbers are still good. DSO has held at 49 days — slightly above target, but nothing like the 73-day baseline.

But the real story is not the numbers. It is the behaviour.

Rahul now opens every weekly sales meeting with a one-slide collections summary. Date, distributor, amount outstanding, next action. He built the template himself. Nobody asked him to.

Distributor A (Vikram) now gets a structured invoice with payment terms highlighted. Aryan's team built a collections checklist — seven steps from invoice to payment confirmation. Rahul owns it.

Aryan himself has changed. He reads the DSO number before he reads the revenue number each Monday. He did not do that six months ago.

That is Impact. Not because anyone told them to. Because the work made the importance of the number visible — and visibility changed behaviour.

The Business OS Lens

Assess the impact in your business.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. Name three things people in your business now do automatically that they did not do before this work began.
2. Name one decision that was made differently — with better data or clearer accountability — because of what was built in this cycle.
3. Is the founder less involved in the day-to-day management of the area that was focused on?
4. If the owner who ran this project left tomorrow, would the improvement hold?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

Look for evidence of behavioural change. Not numbers — behaviour.

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

Name three things that people in the business now do automatically that they did not do before this work began. If you cannot name three, the result has not yet become impact. If you can name them, ask whether those behaviours would survive the departure of the person who drove them.

Real impact is resilient to personnel change. It lives in the process and the culture, not in the individual. If the improvement would disappear when a key person leaves, the system has not yet been built.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

IMPACT ASSESSMENT — STAGE 13

Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd. · ₹180M · Spices & Condiments

OVERVIEW

DSO Month 6	Behaviour	Founder Dep.	Collections
49 days	**CHANGED**	**Near Zero**	**SELF-RUN**
Holding within standard	Team self-manages reviews	Was daily — now weekly glance	No prompting needed

System Status	Personnel Risk
Manual	**HIGH**
Monday dashboard — not automated yet	Improvement lives in Rahul

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

Habit Change	Data Use
YES	**YES**
Monday review runs unprompted	Team reads numbers independently

Founder Dep.	Personnel Risk
Reduced	**HIGH**
Daily weekly glance	Leaves if Rahul leaves

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

IMPACT TEST

Real Impact = Behaviour change visible 6+ months after result

Result Month 1: DSO 47 days / Result Month 6: DSO 49 days

Holding within standard — behaviour change is real

Team runs collections review without prompting. Impact confirmed.

PERSONNEL RESILIENCE TEST

System Strength = Impact survives key personnel departure

Current: Improvement lives in Rahul's habits — not in process

Risk: If Rahul leaves, collections regresses within 60 days

Verdict: Impact achieved. System not yet built. Stage 14 next.

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	**Observation**	DSO 73d	**Measured**	Signal
05	**Diagnosis**	Guessing	**SKU mix found**	Done
09	**Action**	No plan	**₹4.2M target**	Done
11	**Course Correction**	DSO 73d	**DSO 61d**	Day 15
12	**Result**	Cash 18d	**Cash 41d**	+₹4.2M
12	**Result**	DSO 73d	**DSO 47d**	-26 days
15	**Standard Set**	No floor	**DSO max 45d**	
16	**Prevention**	DSO 73d	**Alert at 41d**	

Impact is real. But it lives in people, not process. Stage 14 builds the system.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Impact is the test of whether the work was real. A business with results at month three but not month nine was never truly changed — it was temporarily adjusted. Real impact lives in habits and decisions made differently.

2. The four indicators — changed habits, changed data use, reduced founder dependency, resilience to personnel change — are observable and testable. Point to two of them six months later, and the result has become impact.

3. Aryan's team runs collections review without being asked. His founder dependency dropped from daily involvement to a weekly glance. That happened because the work made importance visible — and visibility changed behaviour.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. List three specific behavioural changes that have occurred in your business since the actions began. Observable, specific changes — not feelings.

Q2. Would the improvement in your key metric hold if the person who drove it were absent for two weeks? Why or why not?

Q3. What is the one cultural shift — in decision-making, in what data is reviewed, in what questions get asked — that this work has produced?

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 14 — System

Impact shows the business changed. System makes sure it stays changed. Stage 14 introduces the four-component system design that converts behavioural change into operational infrastructure, ensuring the improvement runs automatically without depending on anyone's memory.

Impact is real. Stage 14 — System — now builds the process that makes this impact permanent and repeatable.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

14
System

LAYER: EVOLUTION

The process or tool that prevents the problem from recurring.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

OBJECTIVE

To build the operational infrastructure that makes the improvement self-sustaining.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· What a System is in the context of the Business OS
· The four components of a business system that actually holds
· How to design a system that runs without the founder

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· What a system is
· The four components of a holding system
· Aryan's Monday dashboard
· How to design your system

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

Suraj asked Aryan one question that had a surprisingly difficult answer.

"If Rahul leaves tomorrow, what happens to collections?"

Aryan thought about it. "We would struggle for a while."

"How long?"

"A month. Maybe two."

"That is too long," Suraj said simply. "It means the improvement lives in Rahul, not in the business. And anything that lives in a person can walk out the door." He opened his notebook. "We need to build the system that runs the improvement regardless of who is in the seat."

They spent two hours on it. What was the trigger that started the process — a date, a time, a threshold? Who owned each step? What did the output look like? What happened when the output showed a problem?

When they were done, Suraj reviewed what they had built. A data pull every Friday at four. A standard five-number summary. A weekly Monday review with a fixed agenda. An escalation rule if DSO crossed fifty-five days.

"Now ask the question again," Suraj said.

Aryan ran through it in his mind. "If Rahul leaves, whoever replaces him picks up this process on their first Monday."

"Without needing Rahul to explain it," Suraj said. "Without needing you to manage it. The system carries the improvement forward." He closed his notebook. "That is what we are building. Not a better Rahul. A better system."

What This Stage Means

A System is the operational infrastructure that prevents a problem from recurring by making the correct action automatic.

Without a system, improvement depends on the memory, discipline, and bandwidth of the person who drove it. With a system, the improvement happens because the process requires it — regardless of who is in the seat.

A system has four components: a trigger (when does the process activate), an owner (who is responsible for running it), an output (what it produces each time), and an escalation path (what happens when the output shows a problem).

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Why Businesses Skip This

Systems get skipped because building them feels like bureaucracy. 'We have momentum. Let us keep executing. We can document later.'

Later never comes. The result regresses. The owner moves on. A new crisis absorbs the team's attention. And the problem that was fixed at such cost begins its slow return.

ARYAN'S STORY · The Monday Collections Dashboard

Rahul builds what he calls the Monday Dashboard — a one-page summary, five numbers, produced every Friday afternoon, reviewed every Monday morning.

The five numbers: Total Debtors Outstanding. DSO (current vs 45-day standard). Distributor A aging. Distributor C aging. Cash recovered in the last 7 days.

The trigger: Rahul's assistant pulls the data from the accounting system every Friday at 4 PM. No manual entry. The format is fixed — the same five numbers in the same order every week.

The owner: Rahul. He reviews it before the Monday meeting. He flags any number above the standard. He brings the flag — with a proposed action — to Aryan.

The escalation: if DSO exceeds 55 days, Aryan is notified immediately. No waiting for Monday.

This system does not require Aryan's involvement in the weekly cycle. It requires his attention only when the standard is breached. That is the design goal.

The Business OS Lens

Design your system.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. What is the trigger that should activate your system — a date, a threshold, or a request?
2. Who owns the system — and does that person have the skills and access to run it without help?
3. What does the system produce each cycle — a number, a report, a decision, an action?
4. What is the escalation path when the output shows a problem?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

Design the system before the urgency fades. The window between a successful result and a regression is shorter than most people think.

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

For the improvement that was just achieved, define four things: the trigger that starts the process, the person who owns it, the output it produces, and the escalation path when that output shows a problem.

Test the system by asking: if the person currently running it were unavailable for four weeks, would the system still function? If the answer is no, the system is not yet a system — it is a person with a good habit.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

SYSTEM BUILT — STAGE 14

Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd. · ₹180M · Spices & Condiments

OVERVIEW

System	Metrics	Trigger	Escalation
BUILT	**5 weekly**	**Auto**	**DSO >55d**
Monday Dashboard live	DSO, Cash, Aging, DIO, Margin	Every Friday 4PM data pull	Aryan notified same day

Personnel Risk	Founder Dep.
REMOVED	**Zero**
Process runs without Rahul	System runs — Aryan reviews

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

Trigger	Owner
Auto	**Rahul**
Friday 4PM — no one needs to remember	Responsible for Monday review

Output	Escalation
5 numbers	**Pre-agreed**
Fixed format — every week	No meeting needed to act

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

SYSTEM DESIGN FORMULA

Self-Running System = Auto Trigger + Named Owner + Fixed Output + Escalation Rule
Trigger: Friday 4PM auto / Owner: Rahul / Output: 5-metric summary
Escalation: DSO >55d = Aryan same-day notification
Test: If Rahul is absent, whoever covers picks up on their first Monday

PERSONNEL RESILIENCE TEST — AFTER

System Strength = Impact survives key personnel departure
Before Stage 14: Improvement lives in Rahul — risk HIGH
After Stage 14: Process runs regardless of personnel — risk REMOVED
The system now carries the improvement forward permanently

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	**Observation**	DSO 73d	**Measured**	Signal
05	**Diagnosis**	Guessing	**SKU mix found**	Done
09	**Action**	No plan	**₹4.2M target**	Done
11	**Course Correction**	DSO 73d	**DSO 61d**	Day 15
12	**Result**	Cash 18d	**Cash 41d**	+₹4.2M
12	**Result**	DSO 73d	**DSO 47d**	-26 days
15	Standard Set	No floor	DSO max 45d	
16	Prevention	DSO 73d	Alert at 41d	

Process-dependent, not memory-dependent. The system runs without the founder.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. A System is the answer to the question every experienced operator asks after a successful improvement: how do we ensure this does not regress? The system runs the improvement. The people run the system. The founder runs the business.

2. The four components — trigger, owner, output, escalation — require discipline to implement correctly. The trigger must be automatic, the owner capable, the output specific, and the escalation pre-agreed before it is ever needed.

3. Aryan's Monday Dashboard does not require him to remember to check collections. It runs because the process requires it. That shift — from memory-dependent to process-dependent — is what makes improvement genuinely permanent.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Design your system in four components: trigger, owner, output, escalation. Write one sentence for each.

Q2. What data source does the system depend on — and is that source reliable, timely, and accessible to the owner?

Q3. If you were absent for four weeks, would this system still run? If not, what is missing?

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 15 — Standard

A system tells you how the process runs. A Standard tells you what is acceptable. Stage 15 introduces the non-negotiable floor — the minimum below which automatic action occurs without waiting for a meeting or a decision.

The system is designed. Stage 15 — Standard — now defines the floor below which the system automatically triggers action.

15
Standard

LAYER: EVOLUTION

The non-negotiable floor that defines what is acceptable for this business.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

OBJECTIVE

To define the explicit, documented minimums that prevent the business from drifting back into pain.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· Why a standard is not a target — it is a floor

· How to set standards that are enforceable and meaningful

· The relationship between Standard and System

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· Standard vs target: the distinction

· Aryan's three non-negotiables

· How to write a standard that holds

· Standards in practice

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

"I want you to write something," Suraj said.

He pushed a blank page across the table to Aryan.

"Three sentences. Each one starts the same way: Below this number, we act immediately, without debate."

Aryan looked at the page. Then at Suraj. "That is a standard."

"That is a standard," Suraj agreed. "The difference between your business running on judgment and your business running on principle. Right now, every time DSO creeps up, someone has to decide if it is serious enough to act on. Sometimes yes, sometimes no, sometimes maybe. Standards remove that decision. Below the line — action. Above the line — normal."

Aryan picked up the pen.

DSO maximum forty-five days. No exceptions. Any distributor above this limit — no new orders until a payment plan is agreed.

Cash runway minimum thirty days. If it falls below this, the weekly review moves from Monday to daily.

No purchase order above five hundred thousand rupees without a working capital check.

He set the pen down and looked at what he had written.

"These feel arbitrary," he said.

"They are not arbitrary — they are benchmark-grounded and adjusted for your business," Suraj said. "And here is the thing about standards, Aryan. An imperfect standard enforced consistently beats a perfect standard that nobody holds." He picked up the page. "May I?"

He walked to the conference room wall and put it up.

"Now everyone who walks into this room knows what normal looks like," he said. "And what is not acceptable."

What This Stage Means

A Standard is the non-negotiable minimum below which automatic action is required.

A target is aspirational: we aim for DSO of 35 days. A standard is structural: DSO above 45 days is unacceptable — and when it reaches 45, the system triggers without waiting for a meeting.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Standards remove the need for judgment in repetitive situations. You do not need to decide whether a DSO of 47 days is a problem worth acting on. The standard says: above 45, act. Below 45, continue.

This is how businesses stop being run on the founder's gut and start being run on principles.

Why Businesses Skip This

Standards get skipped because they feel arbitrary at first. 'How do we know 45 days is the right number?' The answer: it is not a perfect number. It is a defensible, benchmark-grounded number that is better than no number.

A business with an imperfect standard outperforms a business with no standard in every time horizon.

ARYAN'S STORY · Aryan's Three Non-Negotiables

Aryan writes three standards on a single page. He gives a copy to Rahul, to his accountant, and to his operations head.

Standard 1: DSO maximum 45 days. No exceptions. If any distributor exceeds 45 days, no new orders until a payment plan is agreed.

Standard 2: Cash runway minimum 30 days. If cash runway falls below 30 days, the weekly review moves from Monday to daily until it recovers.

Standard 3: No purchase order above ₹500,000 without a working capital check. The check takes 20 minutes. It is not optional.

Three standards. Not ten. Not a policy manual. Three clear lines — above which the business operates normally, below which action is immediate and non-negotiable.

Aryan signs the page. It goes on the wall in the conference room.

The Business OS Lens

Define your three non-negotiables.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. What is the minimum cash runway below which your business is in structural danger?
2. What is the maximum DSO or collection period above which the business model starts to break?
3. What is the inventory level above which carrying cost exceeds strategic value?

4. Who has the authority to enforce these standards — and is that authority clearly understood?

STANDARD-SETTING FRAMEWORK

Standard = Benchmark × Business Risk Tolerance

DSO Standard = 45 days (Industry benchmark 35d + 10d tolerance)

Cash Runway Standard = 30 days (Minimum to absorb one unexpected payment cycle)

Purchase Order Check Standard = ₹500K+ (Any order that materially affects WC cycle)

Below the standard = automatic action. At the standard = amber alert. Above standard = normal operation.

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

Write three standards. Just three. Each one defines a floor — a minimum below which automatic action is required, without discussion, without debate, without waiting for a meeting.

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

Each standard should be specific enough to be enforceable. Not "maintain healthy cash levels" — but "cash runway must not fall below thirty days." The standard that can be interpreted will be interpreted differently by different people. The standard that is a number will be enforced consistently.

Sign the standards. Put them on the wall or in a document that everyone can see. A standard that exists only in the founder's head is not a standard — it is a preference.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

STANDARDS SET — STAGE 15

Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd. · ₹180M · Spices & Condiments

OVERVIEW

Standard 1	Standard 2	Standard 3	Status
DSO ≤ 45d	**Cash ≥ 30d**	**PO >₹500K**	**SIGNED**
Non-negotiable ceiling	Non-negotiable floor	WC check required first	On the conference room wall

Enforcement	Review
Automatic	**Annual**
Below floor = action, no debate	Standards reviewed every December

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

DSO Standard
45 days max
Breach: no new orders for distributor

Cash Standard
30 days min
Breach: daily review activated

PO Standard
₹500K trigger
WC check before approval

Visibility
PUBLIC
Conference room wall — all can see

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

STANDARD SETTING FORMULA
Standard = Benchmark × Business Context × Risk Tolerance
DSO: Industry 45d × Aryan's credit risk × festive exposure = 45d max
Cash: 30d min = enough to absorb a distributor payment delay
A standard that can be interpreted will be interpreted differently. Must be a number.

STANDARDS VS TARGETS
Target = Where you want to be / Standard = Floor below which you act
DSO Target: 40 days / DSO Standard: 45 days (breach triggers action)
Standard is not aspirational — it is non-negotiable
Three standards on the wall replace a hundred judgment calls per year

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	**Observation**	DSO 73d	**Measured**	Signal
05	**Diagnosis**	Guessing	**SKU mix found**	Done
09	**Action**	No plan	**₹4.2M target**	Done
11	**Course Correction**	DSO 73d	**DSO 61d**	Day 15
12	**Result**	Cash 18d	**Cash 41d**	+₹4.2M
12	**Result**	DSO 73d	**DSO 47d**	-26 days
15	**Standard Set**	No floor	**DSO max 45d**	Locked
16	Prevention	DSO 73d	Alert at 41d	

Standards replace judgment. Below the floor = automatic action, no debate, no meeting.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. A Standard is the most powerful single sentence in a business: 'Below this number, we act immediately, without debate.' It removes the cost of deciding whether a problem is serious enough — and replaces judgment with operational clarity.

2. Aryan's three Standards — DSO maximum 45 days, cash runway minimum 30 days, no purchase order above Rs.500K without a working capital check — are not policies. They are operating principles with automatic consequences.

3. A business with three clear Standards and the discipline to enforce them will consistently outperform a business with ten aspirational targets and no floor. The floor is what prevents regression.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Write your three business standards. For each: the metric, the floor, and the consequence of breaching it.

Q2. Who currently enforces these standards in your business — or are they enforced inconsistently?

Q3. Which standard, if implemented tomorrow, would have the most immediate positive impact on your business?

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 16 — Prevention

Standards define the floor. Prevention ensures you never reach it. Stage 16 introduces leading indicators — the signals that appear before a Standard is breached — and the amber alert system that catches problems while they are trends rather than crises.

Standards are set. Stage 16 — Prevention — now builds the early warning system that catches problems before they breach the standard.

16

Prevention

LAYER: EVOLUTION

The early warning system that catches problems before they become Business Pain.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

OBJECTIVE

To close the loop between the standards and the beginning of the framework.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· The difference between a reactive business and a proactive one

· How to design leading indicators that predict problems before they arrive

· Why prevention is the marker of a genuinely mature business

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· Reactive vs proactive: the fundamental shift

· Leading vs lagging indicators

· Aryan's prevention system

· Designing your early warning system

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

Seven months after the original collection crisis, Suraj received a message from Aryan.

It said: DSO at forty-one days. Moving wrong direction. Handled.

Suraj called him. "Tell me what happened."

Aryan walked him through it. The Monday dashboard had shown DSO moving from forty-four to forty-one days over two weeks. Not a breach — the standard was forty-five. But the direction was wrong.

Rahul had called Distributor C on Thursday. Not on Monday when it would be urgent. On Thursday when it was just a trend.

"He is managing cash across two suppliers," Aryan said. "New product line. We set up a micro-payment structure for sixty days. Four hundred thousand a week. The aging has already started to normalize."

Suraj was quiet for a moment. "Aryan. Do you know what just happened?"

"We caught it early."

"You caught it before it was a problem. Stage One of our framework is Business Pain — the feeling that something is wrong. You never reached Stage One. The system caught the signal before you felt the pain." Suraj paused. "That is what we have been building toward. Not a faster way to fix problems. A business that catches them before they need fixing."

There was a long pause on the line.

"Seven months ago," Aryan said slowly, "I could not tell you why cash was tight."

"And now?"

"Now the dashboard tells me before I have to ask."

"Now," Suraj said, "we are ready for Stage Seventeen."

What This Stage Means

Prevention is the shift from reactive to proactive.

A reactive business feels pain, diagnoses it, acts on it, and produces results. This is the full Business OS cycle — and it is valuable. But it starts with pain.

A proactive business has leading indicators — signals that appear before the pain does. DSO trending from 42 to 47 days over three weeks is a leading indicator. It is not pain yet. The standard has not been breached. But the direction of travel is clear.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

A business with prevention systems catches the trend at 47 days and acts. A business without prevention systems catches it at 73 days when it has become acute pain with a ₹13.8 million consequence.

Why Businesses Skip This

Prevention gets skipped because it requires investment in monitoring before a problem exists. 'We will set it up when things calm down.' Things do not calm down. And without prevention, the same problems return on predictable schedules.

ARYAN'S STORY · The Amber Alert

Seven months after the original collections crisis. Everything is running well.

One Monday morning, Rahul's dashboard shows a change: DSO has moved from 44 to 47 days in two weeks. Still within the 45-day standard — barely. No breach. No crisis.

But Rahul flags it. The direction of travel is wrong. Distributor C's aging has moved from 48 to 53 days — still within range, but moving in the wrong direction.

Rahul does not wait for Monday. He calls Distributor C on Thursday. A short call. Friendly. 'I noticed your aging has moved a bit. Everything okay?'

Turns out Distributor C has taken on a new product line from another supplier and is managing cash flow across two suppliers simultaneously. Not a crisis — an early signal.

Rahul agrees a micro-payment structure for the next 60 days. ₹400K per week, every week, until the aging normalises.

The DSO never breaches 45. The problem never becomes pain. Stage 1 is never reached.

This is Prevention.

The Business OS Lens

Design your early warning system.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. What is the leading indicator for your most important standard? (What number moves before the standard is breached?)
2. How early does that leading indicator typically appear before the breach? Days? Weeks?
3. Who monitors the leading indicator — and how often?
4. What is the pre-agreed response to an amber signal — before it becomes red?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

For each of the three standards written in Stage Fifteen, identify one leading indicator — a number that moves before the standard is breached.

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

Then answer three questions: how often should this indicator be monitored, who monitors it, and what is the pre-agreed action when it shows a trend in the wrong direction?

The pre-agreed action is the key. If the team has to call a meeting to decide what to do when the amber alert fires, the response will always be too slow. The business that has already decided what to do acts in hours. The business that decides in the moment acts in days.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

PREVENTION ACTIVE — STAGE 16

Aryan Consumer Goods Pvt. Ltd. · ₹180M · Spices & Condiments

OVERVIEW

DSO Signal	Response	Breach	Pain?
41 days	**IMMEDIATE**	**AVOIDED**	**NONE**
Amber — 45d standard not breac	Thursday call — no meeting	DSO never reached 45 days	Stage 1 never triggered

Leading Indicator	Alert Type
DSO moving	**AMBER**
From 44 47 over 2 weeks	Pre-breach — trend only

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

Standard	Amber Alert
45 days	**41 days**
Current DSO: 41 — not breached	Trigger: wrong direction

Response Time	Outcome
Thursday	**No breach**
2 days after alert fired	Pain never arrived

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

LEADING INDICATOR FORMULA

Amber Alert = Direction change detected before Standard is breached
Week 1: DSO 44d / Week 2: DSO 47d / Standard: 45d
Trend: wrong direction | Alert fires at 41d | Action: immediate
Same distributor. Same number. Different system. Different cost.

PREVENTION COST COMPARISON

Reactive cost: 73-day DSO crisis = ₹14M locked + 3 weeks pressure
Proactive cost: 41-day amber = 1 Thursday call + micro-payment plan
Prevention ROI: ₹14M problem ₹0 cost intervention
Business caught at amber instead of red. Stage 1 never triggered.

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	**Observation**	DSO 73d	**Measured**	Signal
05	**Diagnosis**	Guessing	**SKU mix found**	Done
09	**Action**	No plan	**₹4.2M target**	Done
11	**Course Correction**	DSO 73d	**DSO 61d**	Day 15
12	**Result**	Cash 18d	**Cash 41d**	+₹4.2M
12	**Result**	DSO 73d	**DSO 47d**	-26 days
15	**Standard Set**	No floor	**DSO max 45d**	Locked
16	**Prevention**	DSO 73d	**Alert at 41d**	Proactive

Prevention = catching problems before they become pain. DSO never breached 45d.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Prevention is the marker of a genuinely mature business. A reactive business waits for Pain to arrive. A proactive business catches the leading indicator at amber — before Pain, before Standard breach, before crisis — at a fraction of the cost.

2. The difference between a 73-day DSO as an acute crisis and a 47-day DSO as an early signal is the Prevention system. Same distributor. Different infrastructure. Completely different cost and consequence.

3. For every Standard you have set, there is a number that moves before the Standard is breached. That is your leading indicator. Identify it, monitor it, and act on it before it becomes a problem.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Name one leading indicator for each of your three standards. A leading indicator is a number that moves before the standard is breached.

Q2. What monitoring cadence will catch the leading indicator in time to act — daily, weekly, monthly?

Q3. Who has pre-agreed authority to act on an amber signal without waiting for a meeting?

COMING UP NEXT

Stage 17 — Permanent Solution

You have completed the first full cycle of the Business OS. Stage 17 shows you what happens when you run it a second time, a third time, and a fourth. Each cycle starts at a better point, requires less effort, and makes the business permanently smarter.

Prevention is in place. Stage 17 — Permanent Solution — now explains why each cycle through this framework makes the business permanently smarter.

17

Permanent Solution

LAYER: EVOLUTION

The state in which the business continuously improves its own intelligence with each cycle.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

OBJECTIVE

To understand the compounding nature of the Business OS and why each cycle produces permanently stronger businesses.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

· Why the Business OS is a cycle, not a checklist

· How each iteration reduces the distance to the starting point of the next

· What a business looks like when it has run multiple cycles

THIS CHAPTER COVERS

· The cycle explained

· Aryan's second and third cycles

· What permanent solution means in practice

· How to know when your business has reached it

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

THE CONVERSATION

Eighteen months after the first meeting, Suraj sat across from Aryan in the same office where it had all started.

The purchase order that had been sitting on Aryan's desk that October morning had long since been placed, fulfilled, and followed by three more festive seasons. The DSO had held between forty-two and forty-eight days for fourteen consecutive months. Rahul still ran the Monday review. The standards were still on the wall.

"Ready for the second cycle?" Suraj asked.

Aryan slid a piece of paper across the table. On it, the gross margin trend for the last eighteen months. Steady decline. Slow, but consistent.

"SKU mix," Aryan said. "Like you said it would be."

Suraj looked at the chart. "Where did you get this data?"

"The Monday dashboard. We added margin by SKU three months ago. The trend has been there the whole time. I just did not know what to do with it until now."

"What stage did you start this cycle at?"

Aryan thought about it. "Observation. I had the data already. I did not have to wait for the pain."

"Last time you started at Stage One," Suraj said. "This time, Stage Three." He set the chart down. "Next time, with the right prevention system, you will catch it at Stage Sixteen before it becomes a trend at all."

Aryan looked at the margin chart. Then at the standards on the wall. Then at Suraj.

"Is this what permanent looks like?" he asked.

"This is what permanent looks like," Suraj said. "Not a fixed business. A business that keeps getting better at fixing itself."

What This Stage Means

Permanent Solution is not the end of the Business OS. It is the beginning of a different quality of business.

The first time you run the framework, you start at Business Pain. You feel the problem, map the context, observe the numbers, build confidence, diagnose the root, find the insight, choose focus, assign ownership, take action, measure, course correct, record the result, embed the impact, build the system, set the standard, and activate prevention.

The second time a problem approaches, you do not start at Pain. You start at Observation — because the system catches it first.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

The third time, Prevention catches it before Observation is needed.

The fourth time, the Standard holds — and the problem never fully develops.

Each cycle makes the business permanently smarter. Not because the problems stop existing — but because the organisation's ability to catch and resolve them improves with every iteration. This is Permanent Solution.

Why Businesses Skip This

Permanent Solution is not a stage that gets skipped. It is a stage that is never reached by organisations that stop at Result. They run one cycle, produce good numbers, and consider the work done.

Then the same problem returns. Another cycle. More results. Another regression. The business never builds the cumulative intelligence that comes from completing all 17 stages and running the cycle multiple times.

ARYAN'S STORY · Aryan's Second Cycle

Eighteen months after the first cycle. Aryan Consumer Goods is not the same company.

The collections crisis of eighteen months ago did not return. DSO has held between 42 and 48 days for fourteen consecutive months. Rahul's dashboard has caught two early signals — both addressed at the amber stage, neither allowed to develop into pain.

But a new pain has emerged: gross margin. The SKU mix problem that was identified but not acted on during the first cycle is now the focus.

This time, Aryan does not start at Pain. He starts at Observation. The margin trend data is already in the dashboard. The DIO by SKU has been tracked for six months. The diagnosis comes in one afternoon rather than three days.

This is not because Aryan got smarter. It is because the business got smarter. The systems, the data, the habits built in the first cycle made the second cycle faster, more confident, and more focused.

By the fourth cycle — if Aryan runs this for four years — the business will be catching problems through Prevention before they become Business Pain. The Standard will hold. And the distance from problem emergence to permanent resolution will have shrunk from months to weeks.

That is Permanent Solution.

The Business OS Lens

Assess where your business is in the cycle.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Diagnostic Questions:

1. How many times have you addressed the same problem in your business in the last three years?

2. At what stage did you start the last time you addressed it? Pain? Observation? Prevention?

3. What would need to be true for your business to catch the next version of your biggest problem at Observation rather than Pain?

4. What is the one system that, if built this cycle, would permanently reduce the frequency of your most recurring problem?

HOW TO APPLY THIS STAGE

Map where your business currently starts when a problem emerges. Stage One — when you feel the pain. Stage Three — when you see the number. Stage Sixteen — when the leading indicator fires.

Run this analysis on the business in front of you — your own, or the one you are sitting across from. The process is identical.

Then ask: what one system, standard, or process, if built in this cycle, would move the starting point of the next cycle one stage earlier?

That question is the compounding logic of the Business OS. Each cycle makes the business permanently smarter. Not because the problems stop — they never stop — but because the organisation's ability to catch and resolve them improves with every iteration. That improvement, accumulated over years, is what permanent actually means.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

OVERVIEW

Cycle 1 Entry	Cycle 2 Entry	DSO Now	Business IQ
Stage 1	**Stage 3**	**42–48d**	**HIGHER**
Business Pain — 73d DSO	Margin trend in dashboard	14 months within standard	Each cycle builds on last

Standard Hold	Next Issue
14 months	**Margin**
DSO within 42–48d range	SKU mix — Stage 3 already

KEY DIAGNOSIS NUMBERS

Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Stage 1 start 73d DSO — 18d cash — pain	**Stage 3 start** Margin trend — no pain yet

Improvement	Business
1 stage earlier Each cycle catches sooner	**Self-fixing** Framework embedded in team

FORMULA BOX — ARYAN APPLIED

COMPOUNDING CYCLE FORMULA

Permanent Solution = Each cycle entry point moves 1 stage earlier
Cycle 1: Started at Stage 1 (felt the pain) / Cycle 2: Stage 3 (saw the number)
Cycle 3: Stage 16 (prevention catches it) / Cycle 4: Standard holds
Not a fixed business. A business that gets better at fixing itself.

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE GROWTH

Cycle 1 cost: 3 months + ₹14M locked + full management attention
Cycle 2 cost: 2 weeks + data analysis + 1 focused action
Cycle 3 cost: 1 Thursday call + micro-payment plan
Each iteration: problem compressed. Resolution faster. Cost lower.

SCOREBOARD — PROGRESS STAGE BY STAGE

#	Stage	Before	After	Status
03	Observation	DSO 73d	Measured	Signal
05	Diagnosis	Guessing	SKU mix found	Done
09	Action	No plan	₹4.2M target	Done
11	Course Correction	DSO 73d	DSO 61d	Day 15
12	Result	Cash 18d	Cash 41d	+₹4.2M
12	Result	DSO 73d	DSO 47d	-26 days
15	Standard Set	No floor	DSO max 45d	Locked
16	Prevention	DSO 73d	Alert at 41d	Proactive

This is what permanent looks like. Not a fixed business. A business that fixes itself.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Permanent Solution is not the absence of problems. Every business will always face new challenges. Permanent Solution is the state in which your business catches them earlier, resolves them faster, and learns more deeply with each cycle.

2. The first cycle started at Pain. The second starts at Observation. The third is caught by Prevention. The fourth never fully develops because the Standard holds. Each iteration compresses the distance between problem emergence and resolution.

3. Aryan's second cycle was faster, more confident, and more precise than the first — not because he changed, but because the business did. That is the ultimate purpose of the Business OS: a business that is smarter than the problems it will face.

YOUR TURN

Write your answers before moving to the next chapter.

Q1. Map your business on the cycle: where does it currently catch most problems — Pain, Observation, or Prevention?

Q2. Name the one change — in data, in system, in standard, or in culture — that would move your business one stage earlier in the next cycle.

Q3. Write the answer to this question: what would your business look like in three years if you ran the Business OS cycle twice a year with discipline?

COMING UP NEXT

Chapter 18 — Your 30-Day Business OS Action Plan

The framework is complete. Now it is time to apply it. The 30-Day Plan translates all 17 stages into four structured weeks — taking you from naming your Business Pain all the way to writing your first three Standards and designing your first Prevention system.

You have reached Stage 17. The framework is complete. What comes next is execution — and execution is where every permanent solution is actually built.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Your 30-Day Business OS Action Plan

OBJECTIVE
To translate the 17-stage framework into a 30-day executable plan for your business.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
· How to sequence the stages across four weeks
· What daily action looks like for each week
· How to know when the first cycle is complete

THIS CHAPTER COVERS
· Week 1: Trigger and Signal (Stages 1-4)
· Week 2: Analysis and Execution Start (Stages 5-9)
· Week 3: Execution and Measurement (Stages 10-11)
· Week 4: Evolution Begins (Stages 12-15)

Week	Stages	Daily Action	Output
Week 1 Days 1–7	Stages 1–4 Trigger + Signal	Name the pain. Map context. Read the six diagnostic numbers. Benchmark each against industry standards.	Six-number observation. Context map. Confidence validation from one trusted advisor.
Week 2 Days 8–14	Stages 5–8 Analysis + Ownership	Diagnose root cause. Find the insight. Choose one focus constraint. Assign a named owner with target and authority.	Root cause document. Insight statement. Focus decision written. Owner assigned with explicit authority.
Week 3 Days 15–21	Stages 9–11 Action + Measurement	Define five specific actions. Build measurement scorecard. Execute and track. Run Day 15 course correction review.	Action list with owner, metric, deadline. Scorecard live. Course correction applied if needed.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Week 4 Days 22–30	Stages 12–15 Evolution Starts	Document the result. Identify behavioural impact. Design the prevention system. Write three standards.	Result documented vs baseline. Impact assessed. System designed. Three non-negotiable standards written.

The 30-day plan is a first cycle. It is not the complete framework — Stages 16 and 17 require months, not days, to fully embed. But 30 days of disciplined work through Stages 1 to 15 will produce measurable results, visible impact, and the foundation for Prevention and Permanent Solution.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The 30-day plan is not the complete framework — it is the foundation cycle. Every business that completes it once runs the second cycle faster, more confidently, and with better data.

2. Day 1 and Day 15 are the two most important days. Day 1 starts the diagnosis. Day 15 forces the course correction conversation that determines whether the cycle succeeds.

3. Stages 16 and 17 — Prevention and Permanent Solution — require months. The first 30 days build the platform on which they rest.

COMING UP NEXT

Chapter 19 — The Questions That Run This Framework

Chapter 19 is a reference guide: 34 diagnostic questions, two per stage. Return to it whenever you are stuck. The question that makes you pause is pointing at your next priority.

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

The Questions That Run This Framework

Two diagnostic questions for every stage. Return to this chapter any time you are stuck.

01 Business Pain	Q1: What is the one thing in your business that keeps returning despite your best efforts to fix it?	Q2: How long have you been carrying this — and what has it already cost you?
02 Context	Q1: What is the season, authority structure, and cash position that shapes what you can do right now?	Q2: Which context variable is the biggest constraint on your ability to act?
03 Observation	Q1: What do your six diagnostic numbers say today — and which one surprises you most?	Q2: Which number, if it moved 20% in the right direction, would change the most other things?
04 Confidence	Q1: Have you benchmarked each number against industry standards and validated your reading with one trusted advisor?	Q2: Which observation are you least certain about — and what would it take to become certain?
05 Diagnosis	Q1: What is the root cause — not the symptom — of your most urgent problem?	Q2: If you fixed this root cause tomorrow, which other symptoms would automatically resolve?
06 Insight	Q1: What does the root cause reveal about how your business makes decisions?	Q2: How long has this condition been true — and what has it cost in that time?
07 Focus	Q1: If you could only fix one thing in the next 30 days, which constraint would unlock the most?	Q2: What are you avoiding focusing on because it requires a difficult conversation?
08 Ownership	Q1: Who — by name — owns the resolution of your chosen focus area?	Q2: Have you explicitly given them the authority to act without returning to you for every decision?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

09 Action	Q1: Can you answer who, what, by when, and how will we know for each planned action?	Q2: What is the one action that only you can take to unblock everything else?
10 Measure ment	Q1: What is the exact baseline, target, and timeline for your most important metric?	Q2: Who produces this number each week — and in what format is it shared?
11 Course Correction	Q1: What would 50% of target at Day 15 look like — and what is your pre-decided response?	Q2: What signal would tell you the action approach is fundamentally wrong, not just slow?
12 Result	Q1: What is the precise before-and-after for each metric in your scorecard?	Q2: What have you learned about the root cause from watching the actions work or not work?
13 Impact	Q1: Name three things people in your business now do automatically that they did not do before.	Q2: Would the improvement hold if the person who drove it were absent for two weeks?
14 System	Q1: What is the trigger, owner, output, and escalation path for your prevention system?	Q2: If you were absent for four weeks, would this system still run?
15 Standard	Q1: What are your three non-negotiable floors — the minimums below which automatic action occurs?	Q2: Who has the authority to enforce these standards without waiting for your approval?
16 Prevention	Q1: What is the leading indicator for your most important standard?	Q2: What is the pre-agreed response to an amber signal — before it becomes red?
17 Permanent Solution	Q1: Where does your business currently catch most problems — Pain, Observation, or Prevention?	Q2: What would your business look like in three years if you ran this cycle twice a year with discipline?

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. These 34 questions are not a checklist. They are diagnostic instruments. A question that makes you pause is a question pointing at your next priority.

2. The most powerful use of this chapter is during a cycle — open it at the current stage, answer both questions for your business, and let the answers guide your next action.

3. You do not need to answer all 34 at once. Answer the two questions for the stage you are in right now.

COMING UP NEXT

Chapter 20 — A Note from the Author

The final chapter is a short, direct note about why the Business OS was built, what 22 years of operational finance actually teaches, and the one thing every founder who finishes this book should do next.

Twenty-two years.

That is how long I have been inside businesses — not studying them, not advising them from a distance, but working in them. Managing the books of companies that did not understand their own numbers. Watching founders make decisions based on gut feel when the data, sitting right in front of them, was telling a completely different story.

I wrote this book because the gap I saw twenty-two years ago still exists today. Mid-market founders — running businesses worth hundreds of millions — do not have a framework for thinking about their own financial reality. They have accountants. They have auditors. They have monthly P&Ls.; What they do not have is a system for turning that data into decisions.

The Business OS is that system.

It is not perfect. The first cycle will feel uncomfortable. The diagnosis questions will surface things you would rather not see. The ownership conversations will be difficult. The standards will be challenged the first time they are enforced.

That discomfort is the point. A business that is comfortable with its own dysfunction has learned to live with pain. A business that is uncomfortable with dysfunction has decided to remove it.

Aryan Mehta is a fictional founder. But I have met hundreds of Aryan Mehtas. They work hard. They care deeply about their businesses and their teams. They are not failing — they are succeeding despite operating without a framework that matches the complexity of what they have built.

This book is for them. It is for you.

Run the 30-day plan. Work through the 'Your Turn' questions. Find your one constraint. Assign a named owner. Measure honestly. Course correct without ego.

The permanent solution is not a number. It is a way of running your business.

Suraj Kumar Lohani

7AM & Realtime CFO · 7amandrealtimecfo.com

Keep This. Return to It After Every Chapter.

TRIGGER	**01 Business Pain · 02 Context**	*Where the journey begins — with the feeling that something is wrong.*
SIGNAL	**03 Observation · 04 Confidence**	*Where feeling becomes data — and data becomes trusted diagnosis.*
ANALYSIS	**05 Diagnosis · 06 Insight**	*Where root cause is found — and the deeper story is revealed.*
EXECUTION	**07 Focus · 08 Ownership · 09 Action · 10 Measurement · 11 Course Correction**	*Where the right thing is chosen, owned, executed, and adjusted.*
EVOLUTION	**12 Result · 13 Impact · 14 System · 15 Standard · 16 Prevention · 17 Permanent Solution**	*Where numbers change, then behaviours change, then the business changes permanently.*

The Business OS · From Business Pain to Permanent Solution

7AM & Realtime CFO · 7amandrealtimecfo.com

7amandrealtimecfo.com | www.linkedin.com/in/surajkumarlohani | surajkumarlohani@gmail.com | +91-7011283542

Every business has a problem it cannot name.
This book gives it a name — and a permanent solution.

Business Pain is the feeling that something is wrong before the numbers confirm it. Most founders have felt it. Most frameworks miss it entirely — they start at problem definition, when the founder has been living with the problem for years.

The Business OS is a 17-stage framework that starts where every founder actually starts — with a feeling — and walks through every stage from Business Pain to Permanent Solution. It is built for founders who want to understand their own business deeply, and for every finance professional who sits across from them.

Follow Aryan Mehta — founder of a ₹180M spices company — as Suraj, his advisor, takes him from 'cash is always tight and I cannot explain why' to a business that catches its own problems before they become crises.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **17 stages across 5 layers**
  Trigger Signal Analysis Execution Evolution
- **Complete financial diagnostics**
  DSO, DIO, DPO, Working Capital, Margin — with Aryan's real numbers
- **The Conversation format**
  Every stage shown as a live advisory dialogue between Suraj and Aryan
- **Implementation guides for both audiences**
  Whether you are the founder or the advisor, the process is identical
- **Aryan's Dashboard in every chapter**
  Overview, Formula Box, and Scoreboard — tracking the full journey

> *"The framework does not ask you to be smarter.*
> *It asks you to be more systematic."*

About the Author

Suraj Kumar Lohani is a 7AM & Realtime CFO Automation specialist with 22+ years of operational finance experience. He is the founder of 7AM & Realtime CFO, author of Excel for Finance and Accounting, and an advisor to founders and finance teams across India. The Business OS is built from two decades of sitting with the same problems in different businesses — and finally building the framework to resolve them permanently.

ISBN BARCODE

Business / Finance / Strategy

ISBN: 978-XX-XXXX-XXX-X