

Life is interdependent. Transition to Employee Ownership. Bring work to life.



Your weekly blog on all things EO
with Barry Horner

Episode 19 | Series 1

EO Unvarnished - EO Isn't An Item On Your To-Do List. It Is The List.

It can easily be the standard post-transition refrain: *“I’m buried in the P&L, I’m chasing the next big contract, and with the need to pay out deferred consideration, cash flow is tight. I just don’t have the bandwidth to ‘do’ Employee Ownership right now.”*

If that sounds familiar, here is the unvarnished truth:

You are treating EO as an administrative side project, and that is exactly why you possibly feel overwhelmed. When leaders treat Employee Ownership as a bolt-on, an extra committee to manage or a set of monthly meetings to endure, it becomes a distraction.

From our perspective, a successful trust-owned business, EO isn't an item on your to-do list. It is the list!

The Misconception of Working on EO

The mistake is thinking that working on EO only means debating governance issues, infrequently promoting ‘owner mindset’ thinking or reading the Trust Deed. In reality, every operational challenge that you are currently seeking to resolve is an EO opportunity in disguise.

If you are the only one concerned about winning new clients/work, you aren't running an EO firm, but rather you are running a traditional company with a different tax structure. Your employee-owners are your most credible brand ambassadors. When they see the direct link between a new contract and their own profit share, they stop 'doing the work' and start 'representing the business.'

Why is this still a lonely CEO task? When the team understands the 'why' behind expenditure controls, they find efficiencies you haven't even noticed. When 'owners' see the bank balance as their capital, the culture shifts from spending the company's money to protecting their own investment.

If you are too busy 'running' things to engage the team, you are ignoring your primary engine. EO is the mechanism that allows you to delegate with confidence because the interests of the staff are finally, legally aligned with the interests of the boardroom.

The Cost of Waiting

Waiting for a quiet period to build your EO culture is a tactical error. It is during the high-pressure moments, such as the cash crunches and the growth spurts, that the EO model proves its worth.

If you don't involve the team when things are difficult, they won't feel like owners when things are easy. They will just feel like employees who happened to get a change in paperwork.

Everything is EO

- Recruitment is an EO task.
- Waste reduction is an EO task.
- Client retention is an EO task.
- Increasing revenue is an EO task

If you are too busy for your team, you are missing the very leverage that makes this model superior to the one you left behind. Stop trying to find time to do EO and start using EO to solve the problems that are keeping you so busy.

Reframing the Language, from 'Leader Problems' to 'Owner Challenges'

When sharing business hurdles, shift the narrative:

- **On Growth.** “We need new work to thrive. As owners, you are our best sales team. Every time you spot an opportunity or go the extra mile, you aren’t just doing a job - you are increasing the value of your company.”
- **On Costs.** “When I talk about managing costs, I’m not talking about a spreadsheet; I’m talking about our collective profit. Every pound we save on waste is a pound that stays in the business for our future security and bonuses.”
- **On Pressure.** “EO isn’t a side project, but rather it’s how we handle the pressure we are under right now. This work becomes easier when [insert team number] people are pulling in the same direction, rather than just a handful of leaders.”

If you are still carrying the full weight of the business on your shoulders, you haven’t truly transitioned yet. Your job isn’t to protect the team from the business realities - it’s to empower them to solve them.

The greatest risk to a new EO business isn’t a bad market, but rather it’s a leadership team that remains ‘too busy’ to let go. Real EO doesn’t add to your workload - it multiplies your capacity.

For more information or to discuss anything in this latest Know How; Contact [Barry Horner](#).

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